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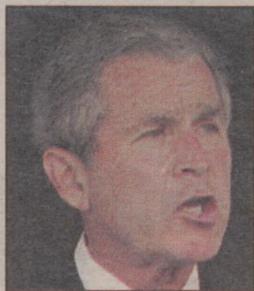
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MAY 2, 2003

INSIDE



Gay Houstonians mourn the loss of Rene Perez, most commonly known on stage as entertainer Lexy Bowen.
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President Bush, via his White House spokesman, voices support for Sen. Rick Santorum after the lawmaker's anti-gay comments.
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Gay Houstonian Steve Kirkland and his partner keep it simple when maintaining the extensive garden at their Sixth Ward home.
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Anti-gay foster care bill stalls in House committee

But both chambers of the Legislature approve a state Defense of Marriage Act

By PENNY WEAVER

Gay Texans were dealt both a victory and a defeat via the state Legislature this week.

On Monday, lawmakers said an anti-gay foster care bill does not have the support it needs to pass and will not be moved out of committee. That likely signals the end of the proposal.

But on Wednesday, the Legislature approved a Defense of Marriage Act that gay political leaders have repeatedly called a "slap in the face" to gay Texans. That proposal now goes to Gov. Rick Perry, who is

expected to sign the measure into law.

"The far right continues to push its agenda of oppression and intolerance on Texans and the entire nation," said Randall Ellis, executive director of the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas.

"One week the far right in Texas attempts to ban gays and lesbians from serving as foster parents, the next week they are pushing a bill that only serves to remind gays and lesbians that they are second class citizens, not entitled to the same civil rights as heterosexuals," he said.

House Bill 1911, which hit a nerve with gay parents, now appears permanently stalled. Filed by Rep. Robert Talton (R-Pasadena), H.B. 1911 would prohibit unmarried Texans from serving as foster parents.

Originally, the measure stated that the

Please see ANTI-GAY on Page 4



An anti-gay foster care bill filed by Texas Rep. Robert Talton (R-Pasadena), left, appears permanently stalled in committee, with not enough support to go before the House for a full vote, lawmakers said. Texas Gov. Rick Perry, right, soon will receive for consideration a Defense of Marriage Act, which would prevent gay marriages or civil unions from being recognized in this state. Both houses of the Legislature have approved the proposal.

AIDS declared 'emergency' in South

Health officials issue 'manifesto' for region hardest hit by HIV

By LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN

A coalition of health officials representing 14 Southern states and the District of Columbia issued a strongly worded "manifesto" last week declaring HIV and AIDS an "emergency" that disproportionately affects the region.

"We want people to take action based on the manifesto — we didn't want to just call it a 'report' and have someone put it up on the shelf," said Miguel Miranda, a strategic planner for the HIV section of the Georgia Department of Human Resources and a member of the writing team that created the document. "We want people to read this and ask themselves, 'What can I do to impact this epidemic?'"



Southerners tend to not talk in public about sensitive issues, and certainly one of those is HIV, because of its relationship to sexual behavior and drug use, according to Dr. Gene Copello, co-chair of the Southern AIDS Coalition. (Photo courtesy of Florida AIDS Action)

Heralded by advocacy groups and public health workers alike, the 40-page "call to action" demands more attention and better funding for prevention and treat-

ment in the South.

"We wanted to be very clear that we are setting out a platform of concerns about HIV and AIDS in the South and an agenda for change," said Gene Copello, co-chair of the Southern AIDS Coalition and executive director of Florida AIDS Action. "We are in a state of emergency."

More cases, less funding

The manifesto, developed by the Southern States AIDS & STD Directors Work Group and endorsed by the coalition, documents the "disparate" impact of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases in the region.

The South, it notes, was home to 38 percent of the U.S. population last year, but an estimated 40 percent of people with AIDS and 46 percent of new AIDS cases.

Six of the 10 metropolitan areas with the highest AIDS case rates are in the South, based on 2001 data, as are 18 of the 25 metropolitan areas with AIDS case rates about the national average for areas with

Please see AIDS CRISIS on Page 6

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obituaries

Rene Perez, a.k.a. Lexy Bowen, 35, activist and fund-raiser

Rene Perez, a.k.a. Lexy Bowen, 35, died on Thursday, April 24, 2003.

Perez was born Aug. 18, 1967, in Pasadena, Texas. He was a parishioner of St. Christopher Catholic Church.

Perez was a dedicated activist, performer and fund-raiser in the Houston GLBT community, according to friends. He served as Imperial Princess Royale XIII of the Royal, Sovereign & Imperial Court for the Single Star of Houston, Inc. (R.S.I.C.S.S.), and was awarded Most Improved Member kudos in 1996.

Perez was a member of the Colt 45's and received Pledge of the Year award in 1997 and held the office of vice president. Throughout the years, according to friends, he was a member of Soiree Aubergine, Garden Party, and Krewe of Olympus. As a performer, Perez received awards and accolades from around the country. He won the title of Miss Gay Charity Houston in 2001 and was the reigning Miss Chances.

This past year, Perez became a founding member of Imperial Court of Houston - The Space City Empire and was elected by the membership to serve as the first Empress. Although his health did not allow him to continue, he was given the title Empress Emeritus, and continued to perform and raise money for the organization.

Friends recall Perez as having a heart the size of Texas. He also will be remembered for his talent and devotion to the community.

Survivors include his father, Jesus Perez, and stepmother, Diana Perez of Houston; mother, Emma Vela Garcia, and stepfather, Robert Garcia, also of Houston;



Houston performer Rene Perez (inset) was perhaps best known as his alter ego, Lexy Bowen.

three brothers: Jessie Perez and wife Michelle of Washington state; Eddie Perez and wife Monica of Texas City; Gilbert Perez of Houston; a sister, Jessica Foss, and husband, Michael, of Ohio; two stepsisters: Shannon Cambiaso and Michelle Bridges; and many nephews, nieces and friends.

A celebration of life will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday, May 3, at E.J.'s, 2517 Ralph St. For more information, call Sean Carter at 713-204-3161 or Jeff Grieder at 713-644-6001. The event will include a potluck dinner, and participants are asked to bring a food item to contribute to the meal.

Ralph Bagby, 75, military veteran and businessman

Ralph Donald Bagby, of Highland Village, 75, died on Wednesday, April 23, 2003. He was the father of longtime gay rights and political activist Clarence Burton Bagby of Houston.

A native Texan, Ralph Bagby fought for his country's freedom in the U.S. Navy during World War II in the Pacific Theater. He was in the insurance and real estate development business.

He is survived by his wife, Faye Hiller Bagby; sister, Eleanor Bagby Langley, and husband, John, of Arlington; daughter, Elizabeth Bagby Schooler, and husband Joel; and sons, Milton Parks Bagby, and wife, Wanda, and Clarence Burton Bagby and life partner, Ronald L. Grose, all of Houston. He also is survived by his stepchildren, Margaret Hill Becker, and Daniel Hill and wife Kerri, all of Dallas; grandchildren, James, Robert and Caledonia Qualman; Jennifer, Joy and Joel Schooler; Eric White; and Jordan Bagby; stepgrandchildren Alexandra and Alysse Becker; and by numerous nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Clarence Orla and Janet Bright Bagby; his second wife, Caledonia Rosalee Parks Bagby; a brother, Ross Kenneth Bagby, Sr.; and a sister, Marjorie Bagby Youngblood.

A memorial service was held on Thursday, May 1, at Westmoreland Chapel in South Main Baptist Church of Houston with Rev. M. Eugene Vickrey officiating. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the American Heart Association.

PENNY WEAVER

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GUEST SPEAKER: Houston City Council member Annise Parker will address the Houston Gay & Lesbian Political Caucus this week. **Page 5.**



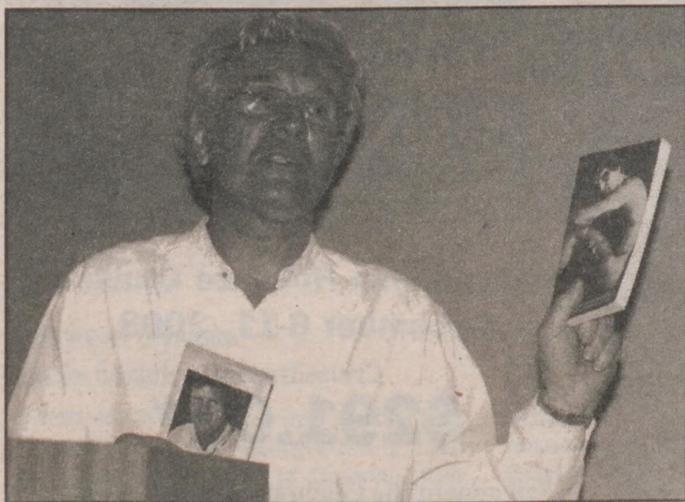
CONTROVERSY: Despite his anti-gay remarks, Sen. Rick Santorum still is supported by many Republican leaders. **Page 8.**



VIEWPOINT: Columnist Ella Tyler wonders if former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean, now a Democratic presidential nominee candidate, will get enough gay support. **Page 11.**

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Gay athlete speaks in Houston



Former football player David Kopay, the first professional United States athlete in any sport to come out as gay, spoke at Rice University in Houston on Friday, April 18. Kopay came out in 1975. He was co-captain of the University of Washington football team in the 1964 Rose Bowl and later played for the San Francisco 49ers, the Detroit Lions, the Washington Redskins, the New Orleans Saints, and the Green Bay Packers. He wrote 'The David Kopay Story,' first published in 1977. (Photos by James Null)

Collection shows Montrose through the years



Dennis Cooney, bartender at Decades, 1205 Richmond, shows off a 'wall of fame' that the establishment has dubbed its 'Decades of Friends.' As of July, Decades will have been open in Montrose for five years, and Cooney said the club decided to honor its clientele and display some local gay history through the project. People

are invited to bring a photo of themselves from 10 or more years ago into the neighborhood bar. Cooney then scans in each picture, transforms it into black and white, and displays all in the club. Patrons have had some fun trying to identify current regulars through their old photos. 'It's an older crowd,' Cooney said. [The project is] just a tribute to our customers. We're survivors, all of us.' He said the submitted photos are up to 60 years old. (Photo by Penny Weaver)

local news

Bill author: DOMA 'does discriminate'

ANTI-GAY, continued from Page 1

state should "prevent the placement of a child in a foster home with any unmarried individuals." Last week, as the House State Affairs Committee heard testimony regarding the bill, Talton substituted the phrase "unmarried individuals" with "homosexual or bisexual."

That move confirmed what gay activists had said since the lawmaker filed the bill: that it was directed at preventing gay Texans from serving as foster parents.

Lobbying by opponents damaged anti-gay bill

Rep. Kenny Marchant (R-Carrollton), chairman of the Republican-dominated House State Affairs Committee, said Monday that H.B. 1911 doesn't have the support needed to pass.

Marchant said compelling testimony by bill opponents was a factor in trashing the bill, along with the \$15.7 million price tag.

A number of gay rights advocates and social workers on April 22 denounced Talton's proposed legislation, calling it cruel and crazy. There aren't enough foster homes as it is, said opponents, and there is no evidence that a parent's sexual orientation is harmful to a child, they noted.

Rep. Elliott Naishtat (D-Austin) said an

estimated 1,560 foster homes with single parents would be closed by the bill, displacing 2,252 children.

"So if they're displaced, where do they end up?" Naishtat said. In state-paid institutions, he said, answering his own question.

Opponents said they worry that even if the bill doesn't pass the Legislature on its own that it could surface as an amendment to another bill in the final weeks of the legislative session.

Ellis said he will continue to work against the proposal until May 12, the last day a bill can be voted out of a committee. LGRL called H.B. 1911 "one of the most serious and potentially damaging bills" of the current Texas Legislature's 78th session.

The stall of H.B. 1911 is good news for folks like Ken Lambrecht and Ken Stein, who plan to adopt their 2-year-old foster daughter.

"She's not being raised by two gay men, but two wonderful families," Stein said.

Committee Vice Chairman Jerry Madden (R-Richardson), told the Austin American-Statesman that he recognized the great feeling that Stein had for the issue.

"I'm a conservative Republican, but I believe that the system is well served by everyone working in the process," Madden told the Austin newspaper. "He was an excellent witness."

Talton has refused to comment to the media regarding the anti-gay foster care bill.

Anti-gay DOMA headed for governor's desk

The state's version of a Defense of Marriage Act cleared its last major hurdle on Wednesday to becoming state law.

The House approved the bill on a vote of 118 to nine. The proposal prevents the recognition of gay marriages or civil unions in Texas, and a similar bill already was approved by the Senate. State Sen. Jeff Wentworth (R-San Antonio) authored the Senate version of DOMA.

"We just need those things not to happen in the state of Texas," said Rep. Warren Chisum (R-Pampa), who co-authored the House bill.

Chisum said 36 other states have passed so-called defense of marriage laws.

"The compelling state interest is to protect marriage in this state," he said.

According to LGRL, Chisum "made it crystal clear on the House floor what he was after."

"I have never said this bill does not discriminate," Chisum said. The bill was designed to recognize only marriage between one man and one woman, he said, adding, "This bill does discriminate against any other kind."

Ellis condemned Chisum's comments.



Rep. Warren Chisum (R-Pampa) said the state Defense of Marriage act 'does discriminate' against any kind of marriage other than that between one man and one woman.

"To have a lawmaker standing up there and endorsing discrimination — of any kind — should be an insult to every Texan," he said. "There should be no place for this in our state."

"From the onset, DOMA has been on a fast-track, thanks to the maneuvering of ultra-conservative legislators," Ellis said. "Despite a \$10 billion budget deficit, a school finance crisis and an insurance crisis, the new leadership at the Texas Legislature has found time to push its social agenda."

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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around houston

Houston City Council member Parker to address gay caucus

Third-term Houston City Council member Annise Parker will be the guest speaker at the next general meeting of the Houston Gay & Lesbian Political Caucus. A powerful figure in Harris County business and politics for many years, Parker has announced her candidacy for City of Houston controller. She graduated from Rice University in 1978, spent 20 years working in the petroleum industry, and is co-owner of an accounting firm. Wednesday night, Parker will talk about her upcoming race for city controller and the responsibilities of the person holding that office. She also will discuss other political issues and answer audience questions about city services and problems, according to HGLPC leaders.



Houston City Council member Annise Parker, the first and currently the only lesbian on the council, will speak to Houston Gay & Lesbian Political Caucus members this week. Parker's next move in politics is to run for city controller.

i MORE INFO

Houston Gay & Lesbian Political Caucus meeting
Guest speaker: Annise Parker • 7 p.m.
Wednesday, May 7
Houston GLBT Community Center
3400 Montrose, Suite 207 • www.hglpc.org

Gay and lesbian group plans Cinco De Mayo celebration

GLOBO, Gays & Lesbians Organized By Orgullo, a newly formed non-profit group serving the Latino community in Houston, plans a number of events for this year's Cinco De Mayo celebration. On Friday, May 2, the organization will hold a membership drive and fund-raiser at Mango Lounge, a Latino video bar. The night features Miss Lupita singing her billboard hit "Mi Ritmo Latino." Festivities continue on Saturday, May 3, with another membership drive/fund-raiser, this time at Club Kilipso in Houston. On Sunday, May 4, GLOBO members will host a third event for the weekend at Guava Lamp. The organization holds regular meetings the first Tuesday of each month at Resurrection Metropolitan Church, 2025 W. 11th St. For more information, those interested may call Abel Rodriguez at 281-458-2387 or e-mail: Anubis19582000@yahoo.com.

i MORE INFO

GLOBO celebrates Cinco de Mayo
9 p.m. Friday, May 2 • \$5 cover
Mango Lounge • Chimney Rock at Glenmont
10 p.m. Saturday, May 3 • \$5 cover
Club Kilipso • 6806 Long Point, Suite #F
713-688-6562
6 p.m. Sunday, May 4 • No cover charge
Guava Lamp • 2159 Portsmouth
713-524-3359

Krewe of Olympus seeks beneficiaries

Krewe of Olympus-Texas Inc., a not-for-profit organization, is now seeking letters of intent pertaining to the award of financial grants. Requests for grants will be accepted through May 12. All area organizations that provide assistance to gay and lesbian Houstonians are eligible, particularly those that offer HIV/AIDS-related services. Organizations can include those supplying support services, treatment, education, housing and public policy. Requests should be directed to: Krewe of Olympus-Texas Inc.; Clint Harwell, Vice President; P.O. Box 920794;

i MORE INFO

Krewe of Olympus-Texas, Inc.
P.O. Box 920794 • Houston, TX 77292
www.mardigrastexas.com
E-mail: kreweofolympus@mindspring.com

Houston, TX 77292. Letters should include Determination of 501c3 status, most recent financial statement, 2003 operating budget, plans for the use of the grant if selected, ability to offer five volunteers to help during the Krewe season as needed, and major funding the organization expects to receive this coming year.

Bunnies on the Bayou ready to distribute funds

Bunnies on the Bayou, Inc. has announced attendance and contribution figures for its 24th annual Easter event, held on April 20, 2003, in downtown Houston. Despite the inclement weather, Bunnies leaders said, the event was attended by approximately 1,500 people and raised \$35,000 for various Houston GLBT and related charitable organizations. Bunnies on the Bayou, Inc. is a non-profit group dedicated to raising and distributing funds for various charitable, educational, and cultural programs. The non-profit organizations and programs that benefit from the annual Bunnies event seek to improve the quality of life for individuals in the Houston GLBT community, and to promote education and awareness of individual human rights.

Chamber dinner to feature sodomy case attorney, client

The next monthly dinner meeting of the Greater Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce will be held on Tuesday, and guest speakers will include attorney Mitchell Katine and his client, John Lawrence. Katine is local counsel in the case of Lawrence v. Texas, which challenges the Texas sodomy or "homosexual conduct" law. The U.S. Supreme Court has heard arguments in the case and is expected to hand down a decision this summer. The matter has garnered national attention and has been said by many gay activists to have the potential to be one of the most important gay rights cases in decades.

PENNY WEAVER

i MORE INFO

GLBT Chamber monthly dinner
6 p.m. social, 7 p.m. meal • Tuesday, May 6
\$25 for members, reservations made by May 2
\$30 for non-members, late reservations
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national news

Health officials issue 'manifesto' for dealing with AIDS

AIDS CRISIS, continued from Page 1

populations of 500,000 or more.

Still, the South receives less federal funding for HIV care and prevention than the rest of the country, according to the report.

In 2001, the federal appropriation per estimated AIDS case for care was \$5,625 in the United States as a whole, yet only an average of \$5,184 for states in the South. Federal funding for HIV prevention was an average of \$1,766 per AIDS case around the country, but only \$1,579 in southern states.

"HIV disease has moved south," said Kathie Hiers, CEO for AIDS Alabama and a member of the Southern AIDS Coalition steering committee. "If 46 percent of new HIV cases are reported in the South, should the South not receive equitable funding to provide care, housing, education and research?"

The South also leads the nation in case rates for chlamydia, gonorrhea and primary and secondary syphilis, according to the manifesto, and these other sexually transmitted diseases can signal unsafe sexual behavior and put persons at increased risk for becoming infected with HIV.

People of color have been especially hard hit, in the South even more than the rest of the country, the report says. While

African Americans made up 19 percent of all Southerners in 1999, they accounted for 53 percent of Southerners living with AIDS.

Hiers called the statistics, along with the South's high rates of poverty and lack of transportation and medical care outside of urban areas, "a southern recipe for disaster."

Making HIV testing available in more "discreet" locations would help, she said. "In the South, too many people know your business at the health department. If your mama doesn't work there, then your cousin's best friend does. Confidentiality is difficult."

Fighting homophobia

Winning the fight against HIV in the South will require not only increased funding, but prevention and outreach programs that take into account "the cultural norms of the South which prohibit southern citizens from speaking openly about sexual issues, even age appropriate prevention messages," the manifesto says.

"There is a culture in the South to not talk in public about sensitive issues, and certainly one of those is HIV, because of its relationship to sexual behavior and drug use," Copello said. "That culture of secrecy helps spread the disease."

Homophobia plays "a huge role" in contributing to the spread of HIV in the South, "along with racism and sexism," he said. "If we can't talk about sex, it means we are not going to be giving each other the tools we need to protect ourselves."

Men who have sex with men — whether or not they identify as gay — may avoid HIV testing in part to avoid opening themselves up for "double discrimination," Copello said.

Stigma based on HIV status, bred from stigma over homosexuality or drug use, can also cause people who do not fit those groups to not seek prevention or treatment services, the manifesto says.

Bias based on sexual behavior also affects the way HIV services are offered in the South, Hiers said.

"We live in the Bible Belt," she said. "The majority of Southerners are conservative and proud of it. Here in Alabama, any agency providing HIV information with state funding must sign an agreement that the efforts will be abstinence-based."

"We all want to provide that option, especially to our young people, but to withhold life-saving information is wrong and is putting our children at risk," she said.

While Hiers said she isn't optimistic for quick changes in her state — "I have to

laugh at the thought of an Alabama health worker finding political support and funding for frank, science-based outreach to same-sex partners," she said — HIV officials in other states reported better results.

The manifesto, especially coming from state health officials and not just advocacy groups, can be an "incredibly helpful" tool in winning support for other such programs, activists said.

"We need to focus the attention of policy makers and the public on science-based prevention strategies that meet the acute needs of the populations at risk," said Michael Cover, associate executive director for public affairs for the Washington, D.C.-based Whitman Walker Clinic.

"It adds the credibility of scholars and public health officials to the voices of community advocates from across the South," Cover said.

i MORE INFO

Southern AIDS Coalition
c/o Florida AIDS Action
P.O. Box 16705
Tampa, FL 33687-6705
813-232-5886
www.southernaidscoalition.org

Bush picks two more controversial judges for U.S. courts

One called gays 'queers,' other lobbied to uphold Ga. sodomy law

By LOU CHIBBARO JR.

WASHINGTON — President Bush on April 28 nominated Claude A. Allen, a supporter of conservative former Sen. Jesse Helms, to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit, which has jurisdiction over Maryland and Virginia.

Allen, 42, becomes the eighth federal judicial nominee named by Bush to hold views considered hostile to gay civil rights, according to the Alliance for Justice, a judicial watchdog group.

Allen is one of the Bush administration's leading advocates for abstinence-only programs aimed at curtailing the spread of AIDS in his current job as deputy secretary for the

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

In 1984, he served as press secretary for the re-election campaign of U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), considered one of the strongest opponents of gay civil rights in Congress at the time. During the campaign, Allen attacked then-Gov. James Hunt — Helms' Democratic opponent — by saying he had links "with the queers."

Helms retired from the Senate in January of this year.

"Fair-minded senators should be very concerned about ... [Allen's views on] equal rights for gays and lesbians, and his unfounded and dangerous belief that denying students access to proper sex education will keep them safe," said Nan Aron, president of the Alliance for Justice.

Earlier this year, Allen told a meeting of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS that he understood the special AIDS prevention needs for high-risk groups including gay men.

He said he would not oppose programs advocating condom use under certain circumstances.

But administration critics note that Allen pushes for HIV prevention programs in public schools that advocate abstinence from sex until marriage. Gay and AIDS activists have said such a position is harmful to gay youth who need to protect themselves from HIV.

In addition to Maryland and Virginia, the 4th Circuit includes West Virginia and North and South Carolina. The area is home to one of the largest minority populations among the appeals court circuits, but it historically has the fewest number of minority judges.

Political observers say a number of Democratic senators who oppose Allen's political stances are likely to vote for his confirmation on grounds that he is black, because more minorities are needed on the 4th Circuit bench.

"While I congratulate President Bush for recognizing ... the need for racial diversity on this court, which has the highest percentage of African-American citizens of any circuit, his nomination of Claude Allen only proves further the White House's determination to make judicial nominations a dividing, rather than uniting, issue," said Aron of the Alliance.

In a related development, Bush nominated U.S. Attorney Michael Mosman to serve as a U.S. District Court judge in Oregon. Mosman is credited with successfully lobbying then-Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell to uphold Georgia's anti-gay sodomy law in 1986.

Mosman was a law clerk to the late Powell in the 1980s. Two recently published books report that he argued forcefully behind the scenes in support of the Georgia sodomy law, prompting Powell to cast the deciding vote in the landmark 1986 decision known as *Bowers vs. Hardwick*.



Claude Allen, nominated by President Bush to the 4th Circuit, was a supporter of conservative Sen. Jesse Helms and once referred to gays as 'the queers.' (Photo by Bob Brown/AP)

The nominee told the Oregonian last week that he does not harbor anti-gay views.

According to the Oregonian, Mosman met on April 25 with representatives of the Human Rights Campaign, a national gay political group, an Oregon gay rights group and U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), a gay rights supporter, to answer concerns.

The newspaper said Mosman told its editorial board that he personally opposes sodomy laws and that, as an Oregon resident, he voted against three anti-gay ballot initiatives in the state. He said he treats gays with "respect and civility and tolerance," the newspaper said.

Mosman did not respond to interview requests by press time.

In another development, the Senate voted 52 to 41 on April 29 to confirm Bush's nomination of Jeffrey Sutton to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit, which covers the states of Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee.

Sutton is among the Bush judicial nominees whom the Alliance for Justice claims has hostile views toward gay civil rights.

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national news

Powell pressed on benefits for gay workers at State Department

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Colin Powell met April 25 in his office with leaders of Gays & Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies, a group that represents gay employees at the State Department and other U.S. international agencies. The gathering in Powell's office marked his first meeting with members of a gay employees group since taking office in 2001. "He listened to our concerns but made no promises," said GLIFAA president Robert Gilchrist, who described the meeting as an informal briefing by the group on issues affecting gay foreign service employees. A State Department spokesperson said Powell met with GLIFAA members as part of his regularly scheduled, ongoing meetings with a variety of State Department employee groups such as the Foreign Service Officers Association. The department does not disclose details of the sessions, the spokesperson said. Gilchrist also declined to discuss specifics of the meeting. The group continues to lobby the State Department for equal benefits for domestic partners of foreign service employees. Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright issued a directive expanding the definition of family members of foreign service workers to enable same-sex and opposite sex domestic partners to become eligible for certain benefits, including housing and recreational facilities. But Albright's action did not provide the full range of benefits routinely provided married spouses of foreign service workers, according to GLIFAA.



Secretary of State Colin Powell last week held his first meeting with gay employees, who are advocating for domestic partner benefits. (Photo by AP)

Dean touts anniversary of civil unions law in fund-raisers

WASHINGTON (AP) — Supporters of Howard Dean's presidential campaign celebrated the April 26 anniversary of his signing of the nation's only law giving gay partners the same legal rights as married couples. Dean, a former Vermont governor, touts his signing of the civil unions law and his campaign helped organize more than 50 fund-raisers at the homes of supporters across the country to celebrate the anniversary, with Dean making conference calls to the guests. But many Republicans say strong support for gays will backfire in the general election and help President Bush win more conservative and southern states. "The people down here, they are not going to put up with that kind of stuff," said Richard White, a Republican state senator from Mississippi. But Dean said he will not back down from the issue in any region, and if elected president, he would recognize civil unions at the federal level.

Duke students use shirts to counter anti-gay image

DURHAM, N.C. (AP) — Hundreds of Duke University students want to let others know that it's OK to be gay. In the past two weeks, hundreds of students wore wearing T-shirts that say, "Gay? Fine by me." Duke President Nan Keohane has one. Duke basketball players Nick Horvath and Shavlik Randolph have been spotted in the shirts. "They're everywhere," said senior Amanda Poston, who got hers last week from the boxes of free shirts on a breezeway outside the student union. The trend was started by a group of friends, gay and straight, who decided something had to be done about the perception that Duke is homophobic. A few years ago, the Princeton Review rated Duke as the most gay-unfriendly campus in the U.S. Ten days after the shirts became available, 1,800 were snapped up.

Ethics complaint against Minn. lawmaker dies

ST. PAUL (AP) — An ethics complaint against Minnesota state Rep. Arlon Lindner died April 24 following a 2-2 tie vote in the House Ethics Committee that followed party lines. At issue was whether there was probable cause to discipline the Corcoran Republican for remarks he made on the House floor and in newspaper interviews questioning whether, or the extent to which, gays were persecuted during the Nazi Holocaust. Asked if he regretted any of the statements after the verdict, Lindner answered, "not in the least." A day later, Democrats pressed the full House to censure Lindner, but the measure failed after three hours of debate, the Minneapolis Star Tribune reported. A procedural motion to consider a resolution censuring Lindner and removing him as chair of the House Economic Development & Tourism Division failed on a party-line vote of 76-41.

Trans, partner protections advance in Calif. government

SACRAMENTO — The California Assembly voted April 21 to amend the state Fair Employment & Housing Act to ban discrimination based on gender, designed to protect transgendered people. The amendment to the act, which already bans sexual orientation bias, is expected to win approval in the state Senate and be signed into law by Gov. Gray Davis, the Los Angeles Times reported. "Unemployment rates are egregiously high among transgender people due to workplace discrimination," said Assembly member Paul Koretz (D-West Hollywood). Two days later, the State Board of Equalization, which governs property taxes in California, voted to treat domestic partners the same as married spouses when evaluating the worth of jointly owned property after one partner dies, the Times reported. The board will take a final vote on the issue later this year.

From staff and wire reports

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national news

Santorum sought funds for anti-gay marriage group

White House, GOP leaders stand by senator after controversial remarks

By KEVIN SPENCE

WASHINGTON — Republican leaders, including President Bush, continue to express their support for Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) in the wake of his comments equating homosexuality with incest, polygamy and adultery.

But Santorum is coming under renewed fire for a letter he sent to donors after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks asking for money for a nonprofit group lobbying against same-sex marriage, according to the Philadelphia Inquirer.

Since his comments from an April 7 interview with the Associated Press were published late last month, Santorum has said he was making a legal analysis on a Texas sodomy case before the U.S. Supreme Court and not a comment on lifestyles.

But critics, including representatives of national gay civil rights, Democratic lawmakers and the gay Log Cabin Republicans, have called on Santorum to either apologize or resign his position as a ranking Republican leader in the Senate.

Republican leaders, though, stepped up to support Santorum, issuing assurances that his leadership post was safe.

"It's solid, it's absolutely solid," Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist said April 29. "Absolutely he will remain in the leadership. He has the full 100 percent confidence" of Senate Republicans.

The White House also backed the Pennsylvania senator. White House Political Director Ken Mehlman has called Santorum "one of the original compassionate conservatives."



Republican leaders have said Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.), chair of the Senate Republican Conference, won't lose his leadership post after comments equating homosexuality with incest. (Photo by AP)

"The president believes the senator is an inclusive man," White House spokesperson Ari Fleischer said last week. "And that's what he believes."

Mark Mead, a spokesperson for Log Cabin, said President Bush should speak out against Santorum.

"We are disappointed that the president has not distanced himself from the hurtful remarks of Sen. Santorum," Mead told Houston Voice on Wednesday. "We call on the senator again to recall his remarks and apologize and to reach out to the American family, the gay and lesbian community."

Log Cabin Republicans of Houston joined other LCR chapters in condemning Santorum's comments.

In 2001, Santorum sent a letter endorsing the Alexandria, Va.-based Alliance for Marriage and its campaign for a constitu-

tional amendment banning same-sex marriages. The mailing sought money so the nonprofit could flood Congress with petitions to "protect marriage between a man and a woman against the attacks of the homosexual activists."

"I know it may sound like a huge exaggeration, particularly in light of the attack on America, but this may truly be the most important letter I ever write you," Santorum wrote, according to the Philadelphia Inquirer.

Mead said the letter raised doubt about Santorum's priorities.

"There are far more important issues for families in Pennsylvania than this — education, a fair tax code, safer streets, prescription-drug medicines for those who don't have coverage," Mead told the Associated Press. "He has an unhealthy obsession with this, overlooking more important issues."

Dave Marble, executive director of the National Stonewall Democrats, said Santorum should lose his GOP leadership post over his comments on gays.

"Sen. Santorum's comments are shameful but not surprising," Marble said. "They reflect his record of bigotry. It should disturb every fair-minded American that this is the man that Senate Republicans chose to lead their conference."

Counsel from Lott

Santorum, currently serving his second term as a senator from Pennsylvania after four years in the House of Representatives, has a reputation for focusing on so-called "family" issues like banning late-term abortions and tax exemptions for donations to religious charities.

But he has also reached out to gay Republicans, including meeting with Log Cabin officials earlier this year to discuss HIV initiatives. Santorum's staff has also reached out to Log Cabin for support on judicial nominations.

Conservative groups, including the Family Research Council and Focus on the Family, have supported Santorum since his remarks were published.

Ken Connor, president of the Family Research Council, joined James Dobson on a recent FRC-produced radio broadcast, "Focus on the Family," to ask listeners to call Congress and the White House and tell them to support the Pennsylvania Senator.

House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas) called Santorum's position "courageous and moral."

"Frankly, I'm very proud of Rick Santorum for standing on principle," DeLay said in a prepared statement.

Defending his own comments, Santorum told the press that his remarks accurately reflected the position taken by the U.S. Supreme Court in its 1986 decision upholding a Georgia sodomy law.

The U.S. Supreme Court is expected to rule this summer in Lawrence v. Texas, a challenge to the Texas sodomy law that originated in Houston and could have broad implications for gay rights. Santorum and his spokesperson have insisted that his comments were taken out of context and referred only to the actual court case, not homosexuality in general.

Santorum has refused repeated requests for comment from Houston Voice.

Critics have compared his comments to those of Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.), who lost his post as Senate majority leader after appearing to support racial segregation.

Lott counseled Santorum shortly after the controversy broke to keep his explanations brief.

"I advised him to say whatever you're going to say," Lott said, according to the Philadelphia Inquirer. "Say it once very clearly, and don't say it repeatedly. That was my mistake. I said it not once, not twice, but three times and kept the story alive."

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

Military continues discharging gay linguists

22 service members expelled, 2 more under investigation

By JOE CREA

The U.S. military is continuing to discharge gay linguists, despite an increased need for Arabic-speaking personnel brought about by the war in Iraq. Since August 2002, 22 gay linguists have been discharged from the Army's Defense Language Institute; two more remain under investigation and anticipate being expelled soon.

Cathleen Glover said she believes she would have been helpful to the U.S. war effort in Iraq. The 26-year-old from Dayton, Ohio trained for two years at the Defense Language Institute as an Arabic linguist only to be discharged in March 2003 for being gay.

"I'm very bitter, I'm still bitter," Glover said during a recent interview. "Right now I don't want to have anything to do with the

military even though I've been offered jobs by the military."

Glover said the Army's language program appealed to her after college because she wanted to travel and learn a new language. She started with DLI in November 2000.

Since the fall of 2002, the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, an advocacy group that represents gays and lesbians serving in the military, has assisted 24 gay linguists targeted under the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. Two of the 24 are still serving in the military and are awaiting discharge, according to SLDN. In addition to nine Arabic-speaking linguists, another eight spoke Korean; three were trained in Farsi and SLDN provided assistance to two Chinese and two Russian linguists, said Steve E. Ralls, SLDN's director of communications.

The ongoing discharges of gay linguists come amid a time of increased need for their expertise, according to news reports that suggest a lack of Arabic linguists in Iraq is

impacting military operations there. Recent news reports from Iraq have lamented the lack of properly trained linguists on the ground.

"Soldiers and Marines throughout Iraq are supposed to befriend civilians even as they battle the remnants of Saddam Hussein's army. One problem is that few Iraqis speak English and even fewer Americans speak Arabic," according to an April 13 story in the New York Times.

U.S. News & World Report described one Marine as wishing "there were a translator team on the ground, or some way to warn civilians approaching the Marines' positions."

In addition, a 2002 Government Accounting Office study suggested that the military is facing a critical shortage of linguists. The report concluded that these shortfalls "have adversely affected agency operations and compromised U.S. military, law enforcement, intelligence, counter terrorism and diplomatic efforts."

Congress has chimed in on the debate too. Gay Congressman Barney Frank (D-Mass.)

has criticized the policy as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Translate," and Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wis.) recently said on the Senate floor that the Army has met only "50 percent of its need for linguists who speak Arabic, 63 percent of its need for Korean speakers ... and has a 13 percent shortfall of Army Human Intelligence Collectors in five of the languages found to be of critical importance."

MORE INFO

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202-328-3244 • www.sldn.org

Center for Military Readiness
P.O. Box 51600 • Livonia, MI 48151
202-347-5333 • www.cmrlink.org

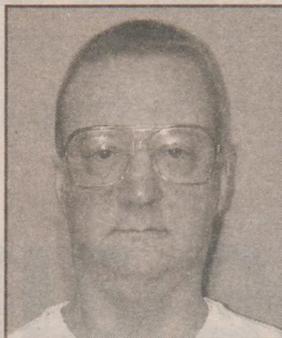
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Santa Barbara, CA 93106-9420
805-893-5664 • www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu



police beat

Ala. inmate executed in killing of gay man

ATMORE, Ala. (AP) — Gary Leon Brown, who was found guilty of stabbing a gay man to death during a robbery, was put to death by lethal injection April 24. Brown, 44, was sentenced to die for the 1986 murder of 60-year-old Jack David McGraw. Brown sang hymns and prayed with family visitors before the execution. His attorney, Rhonda Brownstein, petitioned Gov. Bob Riley for clemency because one of Brown's two cohorts in the killing was paroled, and the other — who cut the victim's throat with a butcher knife — is serving a term of life without parole. She called Brown the "least culpable" of the three. Riley denied clemency April 23, saying that after "carefully reviewing and considering the facts of this case, I have decided not to intervene in the court's original sentence." Trial prosecutors said Brown struck the first blows in the attack, stabbing McGraw in the face about 18 times with a pocketknife.



Convicted killer **Gary Leon Brown** was executed in Alabama last week in the 1986 stabbing death of a gay man. (Photo by AP)

Calif. trans woman cleared of charges in stabbing death

SAN FRANCISCO — The San Francisco District Attorney's office threw out homicide charges against Santianna "Cindy" Flagler, a transgendered woman who fatally stabbed her boyfriend on April 9 in an act of self defense, Bay Windows reported. "Just as important as it is for us to prosecute guilty people, it's equally important for us not to prosecute those who acted in self-defense," said Jim Hammer, a gay San Francisco assistant district attorney. The decision could change if new evidence surfaces that Flagler did not act in self-defense, Hammer said. Two witnesses said that Neal beat Flagler daily and that before the stabbing, he tried to push Flagler out of a window. Neal was stabbed five times, according to police. Hammer said he hoped the case would focus attention on the issue of domestic violence among gays, stressing the importance for victims not to fear reporting abuse.

Fla. priest sentenced for Internet solicitation of 14-year-old male

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — A Brazilian-born Catholic priest received a four-year, three-month prison sentence April 7 for using the Internet to try and lure a teenager to meet him for sex. Rev. Elias Francisco Guimaraes, 44, was arrested when he arrived for a Sept. 9 sexual rendezvous with a detective who posed as a 14-year-old boy. Assistant U.S. Attorney A. Lothrop Morris said Guimaraes boasted online of previous sexual encounters with underage boys, the South Florida Sun-Sentinel reported. Guimaraes pleaded guilty in January. Speaking through a Portuguese interpreter, Guimaraes told the court that there were plans "to touch each other or perhaps masturbate and perhaps also oral sex." Sam Barbaro, a spokesperson for the Diocese of Palm Beach, said Guimaraes would not be allowed to serve as a priest in the diocese again. The case has been another blow to the scandal-ridden Diocese of Palm Beach, where Bishop Anthony J. O'Connell resigned last year after admitting he inappropriately touched a seminary student in the late 1970s.

Gay Canadian deputy seeking domestic partner benefits

VICTORVILLE, Canada — County Sheriff's Cpl. Marie Spain and her registered domestic partner Tami Jo Aiken are seeking to add domestic partnership medical benefits to the roster of offerings in their county, according to the Victorville Daily Press. Benefits to registered domestic partners of county employees are allowed by state law, but not required. Brad Mitzelfelt, chief of staff to First District Supervisor Bill Postmus, said the county probably won't offer the benefits. Spain addressed the issue with her union after a county human resources official rejected her verbal request to claim Aiken under her insurance. Union president Jim Erwin said the county may be violating its non-discrimination policy, which stipulates equal access in benefits, without regard to marital status or sexual orientation. A decision on further action by the union is expected this month after an investigation. Spain and other county employees established the Gay & Lesbian Employee Organization in response to the issue. "This is discrimination, and unless we all stand up to be counted, we are not going to get anything done," Spain said.

Gay former British police chief to head up crime academy

LONDON — A gay former police chief who pioneered a soft approach to enforcement of marijuana laws will head the city's new crime academy, according to the BBC London. Commander Brian Paddick was removed from his £93,000-per-year chief post last year after a former boyfriend accused him of taking drugs, which he denied. He is now in charge of policy co-ordination in the department's Specialist Crime Directorate, which gives him direct policy supervision of the crime academy but no hands-on involvement. Paddick told BBC London that "this is an extremely exciting initiative. I have other responsibilities as well, involving communities and how they can help fight serious crime, such as murder and gun crime in particular." Paddick is Britain's highest-ranking gay officer.

From staff and wire reports

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editorial

Mosque and state in Iraq

The new government in Iraq will be democratic, but will it be secular? The president hasn't said and gay rights groups are too preoccupied to care.

By CHRIS CRAIN



FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue, the recently-freed Iraqis are talking about what their future government might look like, under the watchful eyes of U.S. diplomats and Marines.

As those talks progress, American officials have become increasingly alarmed at the apparent influence of revolutionary Shiite leaders, from the Iranian school of Islamic law, who have alternatively boycotted the proceedings and attempted to dominate them. These Shiite leaders are primarily clerics long oppressed by Saddam, a Sunni whose commitment to secular government was more practical than principled.

The Bush administration has said repeatedly that the U.S. occupation will be brief, and that the Iraqis will soon govern themselves. In fact, the president has placed very few restrictions on the type of government the Iraqis may form.

Missing from the basic principles enunciated by the White House is the concept of secular government and the separation of church and state. In fact, the Americans on the ground have hinted that a democratic Iraq might bear little resemblance to our own idea of the institution.

"We want you to establish your own democratic system based on Iraqi traditions and values," Zalmay Khalilzad, the president's envoy, told the Iraqis gathered recently near Nasiriya, in one of these exploratory sessions.

But the Shiite majority in Iraq might well choose through free and fair elections to adopt the ultra-restrictive Islamic code as the law of the land. An Iraqi government run by clerics, according to Islamic law, is very unlikely to share Western "values" and "traditions" when it comes to persecution and prosecution of gays.

Of course, insisting on separation of mosque and state may not be too easy for the same president who last week praised

Sen. Rick Santorum as "inclusive," even after the Republican from Pennsylvania insisted in jaw-dropping language that the orthodox Catholic doctrine about homosexuality that he espouses should trump the personal rights of American gays.

For some reason, conservatives in this country still haven't grasped the ugly similarity between their own efforts to impose fundamentalist Christianity on our government and the "enemy" Islamic radicals who employ terrorism to adopt their own version of theocracy, based on the Koran and not the Bible.

THE PROSPECT OF SHIITE IMAMS RULING in Iraq, as they do in Iran, is of course horrible for gay and lesbian Iraqis. Arab countries and Islamic governments have a generally atrocious record for their treatment of gays, even in supposedly more moderate Egypt, but only through a secular government is there hope for even incremental progress for gays living in the region.

Therein lies the rankest hypocrisy of them all. It's not the conservatives in the Bush administration who have chosen not to emphasize the separation of mosque and state in Iraq. At least there is some consistency there, however wrongheaded.

The worst hypocrites are those in the leftist gay rights organizations, who screamed bloody murder at the prospect of invading Iraq, an issue that bore no rational relationship to gay rights, and now have lost their voices when the situation in that country might actually implicate the principles of our movement.

The National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, which lost donors and credibility when its leaders caved to leftist staffers and came out against the war, would say nothing when asked recently whether the organization would lobby the Bush administration to ensure protection for gays in the "new Iraq."

The International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission, which focuses

its mission on the lives of gays around the world, also took the Pontius Pilate route, claiming ludicrously that the group would not presume to lobby on behalf of gays in Iraq without an explicit request to do so, as if there were an organized Iraqi gay lobby to issue such a call for assistance.

An IGLHRC representative went so far as to suggest the San Francisco-based group wouldn't impose Western notions of sexual orientation on the Middle East. Apparently if you follow the P.C. left and the ultraconservative right far enough, they do meet on the other side.

THEN THERE IS THE HUMAN RIGHTS Campaign, the world's largest and wealthiest gay rights group, whose officials routinely brag during black-tie dinners about their access and influence in Washington.

HRC rightly decided not to take a position on the non-gay issue of U.S. military action in Iraq. But now, when America is shaping the future of the Middle East through the new Iraq and elsewhere, HRC is maintaining its cramped worldview, limiting itself to the fight for gay rights here in the U.S. While it is understandable that HRC does not take upon itself the task of lobbying foreign governments directly, the organization ought to at least use its influence in Congress and the administration to lobby the U.S. government, which carries so much weight, in Iraq and elsewhere.

Some of the same liberal and moderate members of Congress who seek out our vote on Election Day are sitting on the committees that oversee and shape U.S. foreign policy. Gays around the world, but especially in the Middle East, need their influence now.

HRC, like its leftist brethren, is also blinded, but not by misguided progressive politics. Instead, HRC has been too long obsessed with ... HRC. The tenure of Elizabeth Birch has been marked not by the passage of federal gay rights legislation, or anything of the sort, but by the massive expansion of HRC. The new \$25 million HRC headquarters, to be occupied next month, is the perfect monument to an institution more effective in changing itself than the world around it.

The next generation of leadership at HRC, and the new leaders recently appointed to take over NGLTF and IGLHRC, should join farsighted activists like U.S. Rep. Barney Frank in lobbying our government to make a difference in places like Iraq, Egypt and the rest of the Middle East, where the plight of gays has so far been unspeakably bad.


Chris Crain is executive editor of Houston Voice and can be reached at ccrain@window-media.com

viewpoint ELLA TYLER



With gay marriage still a hot topic, will GLBT Texans support former Vermont governor?

Dean has potential

APRIL 26 WAS THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY of Vermont's civil union legislation. I hadn't noticed that it has caused many problems in Texas, but just to be sure, on April 30, the Texas House passed a bill that defines a marriage as a union between one man and one woman. It has already passed the Texas Senate.

The bill's sponsor, Sen. Jeff Wentworth, said the purpose of the bill is to "defend and shore up the institution of marriage, which is the fundamental basis on which this society is built and it's been under significant attack over the past couple of decades in particular." It is harder to get a divorce or dissolve a civil union in Vermont than it is to get a divorce in Texas, but I don't think that counts.

I expect that Gov. Rick Perry will sign the bill as soon as he can gather enough people to be appropriately self-congratulatory about protecting marriage.

Nine House members voted against the bill. As I write this, it's too early to find out who they are. It's hard to tell what effect this will have on their political careers, but probably not much, unless they are Republicans, which I doubt. In Vermont, five Republican legislators and one Democrat lost their primary elections bids over civil unions.

However, its then-Gov. Howard Dean, who signed the bill, was re-elected, and is now making a run for the Democratic presidential nomination. His support of the bill doesn't seem to have hurt him. He hasn't been embarrassed or shy about

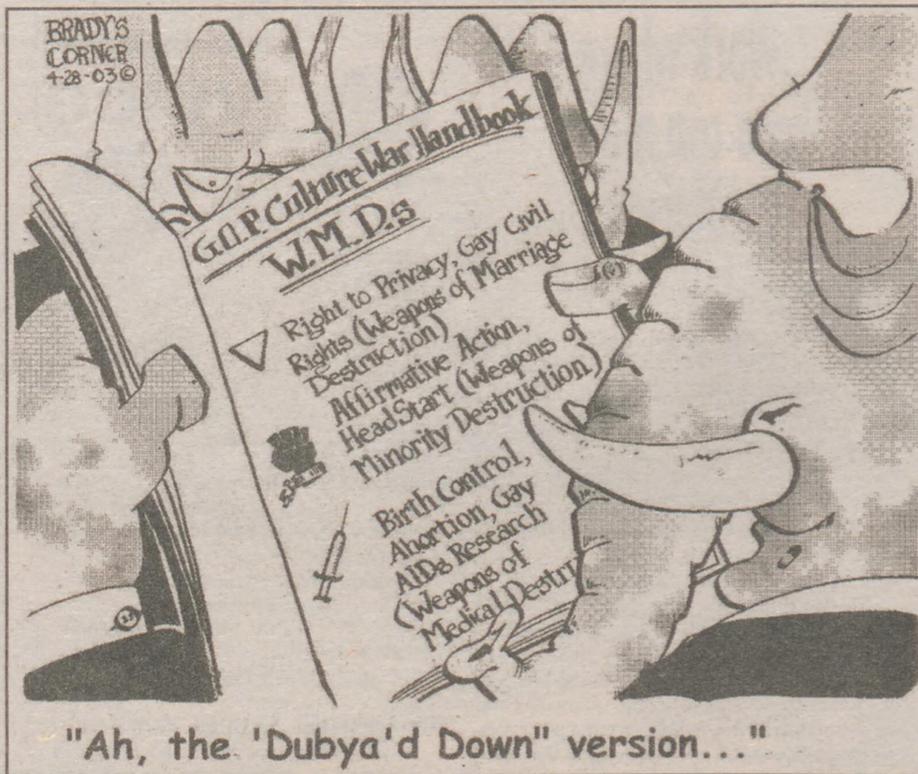
signing the civil union bill. He's proud of it and talks about it whenever given the opportunity. I predict that by the primary, everyone will be so bored with it that the measure will not be an issue.

In a crowded field, Dean is attracting notice. (Catch all the candidates on C-Span May 3 from 7:30 to 9.) His charm and personality should help him in the early primaries, which favor candidates who do well in small meetings. I drove him to the airport at 6 a.m. last Friday, and can vouch for his personality. In my opinion, he's only one notch below the late Mickey Leland on the charisma scale.

Dean also has a Texas and a Harris County campaign in place. Although other candidates have cruised through town to raise money, as far as I know, he's the only one with a local campaign. It is a fun group, energized by a lot of younger voters who are drawn to Dean's opposition to the war in Iraq. Glen Maxey, the state coordinator, says he has volunteers all across the state. If, as expected, the Texas primary will be moved one week earlier in March, which will match the California primary, Texas may be very important in determining the nominee.

However, I don't see much evidence that Dean's support of the civil union bill has helped him, either. Sue Lovell, a member of the Democratic National Committee, is a vocal Dean supporter, but I've heard two other local GLBT activists say that they were looking at other candidates as well.

I was shocked. What, I wondered, does a candidate have to do to get their sup-



port? How good, on how many issues, does he or she have to be? What about the notion that when a politician does the right thing on a core issue, he or she deserves unequivocal support?

This is what makes me worry about the future of the nine house members and whatever senators who voted against the Wentworth's defense of marriage bill and the Beaumont judge who granted a divorce to a couple who wanted to dissolve their civil union. He ordered a new trial after the Attorney General told him he couldn't approve a divorce, but I give him credit for trying.

Will members of the GLBT community decide that these people really didn't do enough, or that marriage isn't really important to them? Political loyalty should be a two-way street.

Gay Republicans appear an easy target

To the Editor:

Did recent anti-gay remarks by Sen. Rick Santorum offer an opportunity for gay groups across the fruited plain to work together in a common goal? For Kevin Naff of the Washington Blade, apparently the flap presented itself as an opportunity to tear down Log Cabin Republicans and LCR members ("Tough times for gay Republicans," editorial, page 10, April 25, 2003).

How original — go for the easy target; kick LCR at every opportunity, Mr. Naff.

No wonder the gay "movement" is in utter disarray. With friends like these, who needs enemies like Santorum?

Naff's editorial is self-defeating, depressing, typical, and a complete waste of ink.

Shari Goldsberry
Houston

Editor's note: The letter writer is the president of Log Cabin Republicans' Houston chapter.

@ Ella Tyler is a freelance writer for Houston Voice and a longtime political activist in Houston. She may be reached via editor@houstonvoice.com.

Dykes To Watch Out For by Alison Bechdel



on the record

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"God Hates Plaque"
A sign held by a student at Yale University participating in counter-protests that mocked the presence of rabidly anti-gay pickets set up on the campus by Rev. Fred Phelps of the Kansas-based Westboro Baptist Church, who held a sign that read "God Hates Fags" (New Haven Register, April 15)

"The world has become Mayberry to me. I didn't know how people would accept me, or even if. To have been so ostracized, to have been called 'freak show,' and 'alien' and 'weirdo,' and 'what-are-you?,' to go through all that. I took comfort in being a freak show. I was nervous about ['Today'], more comfortable in my own little corner being the Marilyn Manson of fashion. And now it's like, not only am I accepted, for the first time in my life, I'm being embraced."

"Today" show fashion guru **Steven Cojocar**, on his newfound success (Washington Post, April 19)

"The people down here, they are not going to put up with that kind of stuff. We're not prepared for all that in Mississippi or anywhere else in the southern states."

Mississippi state Sen. **Richard White (R)**, arguing that support for gay rights among Democratic presidential candidates will ultimately backfire (Associated Press, April 25)

"I was very surprised to hear a United States senator use language like that. I don't agree with it; I know most Vermonters don't agree with it. We are very tolerant in our state, and we don't use that kind of characterization about anyone. So I thought it was very, very unfortunate."

Vermont Gov. **James Douglas**, a Republican, responding to remarks by GOP Sen. **Rick Santorum** of Pennsylvania comparing gay sex to incest and polygamy (Associated Press, April 27)

"Let me think. (Quietly debates.) No. There's a couple of people who are strong contenders, but I think they're probably just very ugly."

Gay actor **Alan Cumming**, who plays *Nightcrawler* in the upcoming *X-Men* sequel "X-2," when asked if he had ever hooked up with someone he thought was a mutant (Eclipse magazine, May 2)

"I wouldn't want a gay guy being around me. It's got nothing to do with me being scared. That's the problem: All these people say he's got all these rights. Yeah, he's got rights or whatever, but he shouldn't walk around proud. It's like he's rubbing it in our face. 'See me, hear me roar.'"

Colorado Rockies pitcher **Todd Jones**, a 6-foot, 3-inch pitcher from Georgia (Denver Post, April 27)



"Before you fix up anyone, you are supposed to know something about both people. If mere availability were the only qualification necessary, matchmaking, such as you are kindly interested in offering, would be unnecessary because just about anyone would do."

Miss Manners **Judith Martin**, responding to a straight reader who wanted advice on whether to set up a gay friend with a co-worker she suspects is also gay (April 23)

"It was liberating to play a sexually ambiguous character. The character is not straight, gay or bisexual. He transcends all these terms."

Dustin Hoffman, on his role as a crime boss in "Confidence" (New York Post, April 21)

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KALETRA is indicated for the treatment of HIV infection in combination with other antiretroviral agents.

Safety Information

KALETRA should not be taken with Halcion®, Hismanal®, Orap®, Propulsid®, Rythmol®, Seldane®, Tambocor™, Versed®, Rimactane®, Rifadin®, Rifater®, Rifamate®, Mevacor®, Zocor®, ergot derivatives or products containing St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*). Discuss all medicines, including those without a prescription, and herbal preparations you are taking or plan to take with your doctor or pharmacist. KALETRA should not be taken if you have had an allergic reaction to KALETRA or any of its ingredients.

Pancreatitis and liver problems, which can be fatal, have been reported. Tell your doctor if you have or have had liver disease such as hepatitis. In patients

taking protease inhibitors, increased bleeding (in patients with hemophilia) and diabetes/high blood sugar have occurred. Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients receiving antiretroviral therapy. Some patients receiving KALETRA have had large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol.

In clinical trials, the most commonly reported side effects of moderate or severe intensity were: abdominal pain, abnormal bowel movements, diarrhea, feeling weak or tired, headache, and nausea. This is not a complete list of reported side effects.

KALETRA oral solution contains alcohol.

KALETRA does not cure HIV infection or AIDS and does not reduce the risk of passing of HIV to others.

Please see adjacent page for Patient Information.

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Printed in USA

KALETRA®(lopinavir/ritonavir) capsules
(lopinavir/ritonavir) oral solution**ALERT: Find out about medicines that should NOT be taken with KALETRA.** Please also read the section "MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA."**Patient Information****KALETRA®**

(kuh-LEE-tra)

Generic Name: lopinavir/ritonavir
(lop-IN-uh-veer/rit-ON-uh-veer)

Read this leaflet carefully before you start taking KALETRA. Also, read it each time you get your KALETRA prescription refilled, in case something has changed. This information does not take the place of talking with your doctor when you start this medicine and at checkups. Ask your doctor if you have any questions about KALETRA.

What is KALETRA and how does it work?

KALETRA is a combination of two medicines. They are lopinavir and ritonavir. KALETRA is a type of medicine called an HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) protease (PRO-tee-ase) inhibitor. KALETRA is always used in combination with other anti-HIV medicines to treat people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. KALETRA is for adults and for children age 6 months and older.

HIV infection destroys CD₄ (T) cells, which are important to the immune system. After a large number of T cells are destroyed, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) develops.

KALETRA blocks HIV protease, a chemical which is needed for HIV to multiply. KALETRA reduces the amount of HIV in your blood and increases the number of T cells. Reducing the amount of HIV in the blood reduces the chance of death or infections that happen when your immune system is weak (opportunistic infections).

Does KALETRA cure HIV or AIDS?

KALETRA does not cure HIV infection or AIDS. The long-term effects of KALETRA are not known at this time. People taking KALETRA may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV infection. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, and *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infections.

Does KALETRA reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

KALETRA does not reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination. Continue to practice safe sex and do not use or share dirty needles.

How should I take KALETRA?

- You should stay under a doctor's care when taking KALETRA. Do not change your treatment or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.
- You must take KALETRA every day exactly as your doctor prescribed it. The dose of KALETRA may be different for you than for other patients. Follow the directions from your doctor, exactly as written on the label.
- Dosing in adults (including children 12 years of age and older): The usual dose for adults is 3 capsules (400/100 mg) or 5.0 mL of the oral solution twice a day (morning and night), in combination with other anti-HIV medicines.
- Dosing in children from 6 months to 12 years of age: Children from 6 months to 12 years of age can also take KALETRA. The child's doctor will decide the right dose based on the child's weight.
- Take KALETRA with food to help it work better.
- Do not change your dose or stop taking KALETRA without first talking with your doctor.
- When your KALETRA supply starts to run low, get more from your doctor or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to KALETRA and become harder to treat.
- Be sure to set up a schedule and follow it carefully.
- Only take medicine that has been prescribed specifically for you. Do not give KALETRA to others or take medicine prescribed for someone else.

What should I do if I miss a dose of KALETRA?

It is important that you do not miss any doses. If you miss a dose of KALETRA, take it as soon as possible and then take your next scheduled dose at its regular time. If it is almost time for your next dose, do not take the missed dose. Wait and take the next dose at the regular time. Do not double the next dose.

What happens if I take too much KALETRA?

If you suspect that you took more than the prescribed dose of this medicine, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately. As with all prescription medicines, KALETRA should be kept out of the reach of young children. KALETRA liquid contains a large amount of alcohol. If a toddler or young child accidentally drinks more than the recommended dose of KALETRA, it could make him/her sick from too much alcohol. Contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately if this happens.

Who should not take KALETRA?

Together with your doctor, you need to decide whether KALETRA is right for you.

- Do not take KALETRA if you are taking certain medicines. These could cause serious side effects that could cause death. Before you take KALETRA, you must tell your doctor about all the medicines you are taking or are planning to take. These include other prescription and non-prescription medicines and herbal supplements.

For more information about medicines you should not take with KALETRA, please read the section titled "MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA."

- Do not take KALETRA if you have an allergy to KALETRA or any of its ingredients, including ritonavir or lopinavir.

Can I take KALETRA with other medications?

KALETRA may interact with other medicines, including those you take without a prescription. You must tell your doctor about all the medicines you are taking or planning to take before you take KALETRA.

MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA:

- Do not take the following medicines with KALETRA because they can cause serious problems or death if taken with KALETRA.
 - Dihydroergotamine, ergonovine, ergotamine and methylethergonovine such as Cafergot®, Migranal®, D.H.E. 45®, Ergotrate Maleate, Methergine, and others
 - Halcion® (triazolam)
 - Hismanal® (astemizole)
 - Orap® (pimozide)
 - Propulsid® (cisapride)
 - Rythmol® (propafenone)
 - Seldane® (terfenadine)
 - Tambocor™ (flecainide)
 - Versed® (midazolam)
- Do not take KALETRA with rifampin, also known as Rimactane®, Rifadin®, Rifater®, or Rifamate®. Rifampin may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood and make it less effective.
- Do not take KALETRA with St. John's wort (hypericum perforatum), an herbal product sold as a dietary supplement, or products containing St. John's wort. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or planning to take St. John's wort. Taking St. John's wort may decrease KALETRA levels and lead to increased viral load and possible resistance to KALETRA or cross-resistance to other anti-HIV medicines.
- Do not take KALETRA with the cholesterol-lowering medicines Mevacor® (lovastatin) or Zocor® (simvastatin) because of possible serious reactions. There is also an increased risk of drug interactions between KALETRA and Lipitor® (atorvastatin); talk to your doctor before you take any of these cholesterol-reducing medicines with KALETRA.

Medicines that require dosage adjustments:

It is possible that your doctor may need to increase or decrease the dose of other medicines when you are also taking KALETRA. Remember to tell your doctor all medicines you are taking or plan to take.

Before you take Viagra® (sildenafil) with KALETRA, talk to your doctor about problems these two medicines can cause when taken together. You may get increased side effects of VIAGRA, such as low blood pressure, vision changes, and penis erection lasting more than 4 hours. If an erection lasts longer than 4 hours, get medical help right away to avoid permanent damage to your penis. Your doctor can explain these symptoms to you.

- If you are taking oral contraceptives ("the pill") to prevent pregnancy, you should use an additional or different type of contraception since KALETRA may reduce the effectiveness of oral contraceptives.
- Efavirenz (Sustiva™) or nevirapine (Viramune®) may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood. Your doctor may increase your dose of KALETRA if you are also taking efavirenz or nevirapine.
- If you are taking Mycobutin® (rifabutin), your doctor will lower the dose of Mycobutin.

A change in therapy should be considered if you are taking KALETRA with:

Phenobarbital
Phenytoin (Dilantin® and others)
Carbamazepine (Tegretol® and others)

These medicines may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood and make it less effective.

Other Special Considerations:

KALETRA oral solution contains alcohol. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or planning to take metronidazole or disulfiram. Severe nausea and vomiting can occur.

- If you are taking both didanosine (Videx®) and KALETRA: Didanosine (Videx®) should be taken one hour before or two hours after KALETRA.

What are the possible side effects of KALETRA?

- This list of side effects is not complete. If you have questions about side effects, ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. You should report any new or continuing symptoms to your doctor right away. Your doctor may be able to help you manage these side effects.

The most commonly reported side effects of moderate severity that are thought to be drug related are: abdominal pain, abnormal stools (bowel movements), diarrhea, feeling weak/tired, headache, and nausea. Children taking KALETRA may sometimes get a skin rash.

Blood tests in patients taking KALETRA may show possible liver problems. People with liver disease such as Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C who take KALETRA may have worsening liver disease. Liver problems including death have occurred in patients taking KALETRA. In studies, it is unclear if KALETRA caused these liver problems because some patients had other illnesses or were taking other medicines.

Some patients taking KALETRA can develop serious problems with their pancreas (pancreatitis), which may cause death. You have a higher chance of having pancreatitis if you have had it before. Tell your doctor if you have nausea, vomiting, or abdominal pain. These may be signs of pancreatitis.

Some patients have large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol. The long-term chance of getting complications such as heart attacks or stroke due to increases in triglycerides and cholesterol caused by protease inhibitors is not known at this time.

Diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) occur in patients taking protease inhibitors such as KALETRA. Some patients had diabetes before starting protease inhibitors, others did not. Some patients need changes in their diabetes medicine. Others needed new diabetes medicine.

Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients taking antiretroviral therapy. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The cause and long term health effects of these conditions are not known at this time.

Some patients with hemophilia have increased bleeding with protease inhibitors.

There have been other side effects in patients taking KALETRA. However, these side effects may have been due to other medicines that patients were taking or to the illness itself. Some of these side effects can be serious.

What should I tell my doctor before taking KALETRA?

- If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant: The effects of KALETRA on pregnant women or their unborn babies are not known.
- If you are breast-feeding: Do not breast-feed if you are taking KALETRA. You should not breast-feed if you have HIV. If you are a woman who has or will have a baby, talk with your doctor about the best way to feed your baby. You should be aware that if your baby does not already have HIV, there is a chance that HIV can be transmitted through breast-feeding.
- If you have liver problems: If you have liver problems or are infected with Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C, you should tell your doctor before taking KALETRA.

If you have diabetes: Some people taking protease inhibitors develop new or more serious diabetes or high blood sugar. Tell your doctor if you have diabetes or an increase in thirst or frequent urination.

If you have hemophilia: Patients taking KALETRA may have increased bleeding.

How do I store KALETRA?

- Keep KALETRA and all other medicines out of the reach of children.
- Refrigerated KALETRA capsules and oral solution remain stable until the expiration date printed on the label. If stored at room temperature up to 77°F (25°C), KALETRA capsules and oral solution should be used within 2 months.
- Avoid exposure to excessive heat.

Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. Be sure that if you throw any medicine away, it is out of the reach of children.

General advice about prescription medicines:

Talk to your doctor or other health care provider if you have any questions about this medicine or your condition. Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Patient Information Leaflet. If you have any concerns about this medicine, ask your doctor. Your doctor or pharmacist can give you information about this medicine that was written for health care professionals. Do not use this medicine for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not share this medicine with other people.

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THEATER: Theatre New West's 'The Altruists' is brimming with laughs and talent. **Page 17.**

HOMES: One Houston couple makes their home a nature-lover's dream with 'lazy gardening.' **Page 19.**



HOUSTON VOICE
MAY 2, 2003
PAGE 15

Out on the Bayou

Internet explorer

The 'Net offers hundreds of non-pornographic gay videos, yours for the downloading

By ETORE TOPPI

WHETHER YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A quick escape from workaday boredom or a way to catch up on notable short films, the Internet offers easy access to thousands of hours of streaming video. The pleasant surprise is how many gay offerings there are.

Enter the term "gay streaming video" on popular search engines like Yahoo! or Google and you are likely to receive hundreds of results for pornographic Web sites. But hidden among the "Boys Gone Wild" and "Real Fraternity Hazing" links are hidden some legitimate cinematic gems.

To watch streaming video, users need a multimedia personal computer, that is, one capable of showing video and playing audio. Although all of the sources discussed here offer streaming video for dial-up service (commonly referred to as "56K"), the frustrating download times, jumpy images, and postage stamp-size video windows make for an experience that is less than pleasant.

Enjoying this type of entertainment is best left to those with high-speed connections such as DSL, cable modem or a T-1 line.

Would-be Web watchers generally need to have three different viewing programs installed to access the full range of online movies. Clicking on movie links will launch one of these software packages — usually QuickTime, RealPlayer, or, for PC users, Windows Media



'Tom's Flesh,' 1995 Sundance short film winner (planet out.com)

Player. Often, sites will allow users to decide which file format they want to view.

All of the popular programs offer users the option to blow up the image to full-screen size; users with faster connections will definitely want to take advantage of that option. Though the pictures provided by online video cannot compare with that of conventional

video, they are reasonably viewable and provide adequate quality for enjoying most program material.

Independent directors produce hundreds of worthwhile short films each year. It would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to visit the myriad film festivals and screen every new short film. Additionally, fresh content is always being created specifically for the Web. Streaming video is representative of the Internet at its best: a reliable method for users to transcend time and space to access information.

HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE many places to look for queer-oriented video on the Internet.

When it comes to showcasing GLBT cinema



online, Planet Out's PopcornQ movie site (www.popcornq.com) is the Net's premier resource for serious fans of short film. Click on the "Online Cinema" link to view their list of a few hundred short films grouped into animation, comedy, documentary, drama and experimental.

There's more than enough material here to keep any Web-savvy cinephile busy for weeks. This is a great way to catch up on shorts that slipped through the cracks at festival time, or to review past favorites.

The site features more than 100 trailers for full-length movies, and those in the mood for a short shot of kitsch will appreciate the "Archive Classics." These are videos of everything from Jodie Foster's appearance in a 1960s McDonalds commercial to clips from TV's campy "Batman." (Eartha Kitt as Catwoman drops in uninvited at a Gotham City fashion show. Purrr-fect.)

But the highlight of the Archives may very well be the newsreel footage of famed homophobe Anita Bryant taking a pie in the face. ("Anita, let's pray for him," says one of her cohorts about the pie thrower as she wipes the cream from her face.)

All the more remarkable is the fact that this vast resource is completely free.

While PopcornQ represents the "everything but the kitchen sink" approach to online cinema, Way Out



'Pimp & Ho' (wayoutwest.tv)

West TV (www.wayoutwest.tv) offers a perspective that is perhaps narrower, although charming in its home-grown way. Way Out

West TV features original series produced by members of the Vancouver independent filmmaking community. Among the continuing serials online here are the action/police drama "Pimp & Ho" (a drag queen and a Starsky wannabe who fight crime), the suspense thriller "The Legend of the Westend Werewolf," and "West of Denman," a soap

centered on the lives of a group of urban 20somethings.

Episodes of these series are designed specifically for viewing on the Web, so they range from one to seven minutes in length. Like PopcornQ, it's free for the downloading. (The site is funded by the artists who show their work there.)

IF WAY OUT WEST TOUTS THE VIRTUES OF BEING local, VillageTV.com (www.villagetv.com) takes a global approach. Billing itself as "The Gay TV Channel on the Internet," VillageTV is a compilation of original programming — their members-only, 24-hour stream — plus links to a variety of streaming video sites, movie trailers and some pay-per-view content. This site is inclusive, with links as diverse as the Cathedral of Hope's weekly church service, an abdominal workout video, and Naked News (daily news briefs delivered by men who aren't wearing any). As testament to their desire to leave nothing out, they also showcase personal Web cams and Internet radio.

There are many other gay-oriented sites worth checking out. Among them are:

The Commercial Closet (www.commercialcloset.org). This fascinating collection of advertisements shows how lesbians and gays have been portrayed over the years. It's the history of the community as communicated through the language of advertising.

Queer Duck (www.sho.com/queerduck). Booted from his former home on Icebox.com, QD has hit the big time with weekly airings on Showtime and is viewable on demand at Showtime's Web site.

Out of the Closet TV (www.outofthecloset.tv) promises GLBT-focused programming in a pornography-free environment.

Atom Films (www.atomfilms.com), although not specifically gay, does have a fair amount of gay-oriented content. Use their on-site search engine for hits on the keyword "gay" to find shorts of interest.

Pride Nation Network (www.pridenation.com) is slightly different from any of the above. PNN sells a proprietary device called Gbox, which transmits their streaming video content from a PC to a conventional television set. Users have to plunk down \$150 for the hardware and \$10 monthly for a subscription to Pride Nation's gay-oriented programming.

Watching video on TV? Now that's a concept.

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Author with vivid imagination for
the worst visits Houston to remind
readers that 'All We Have is Now'

Fretting what's to come

GAY AUTHOR ROBERT TAYLOR IS A worrier. As the latest in a long line of family members with that affliction, I recognized it right away while reading Taylor's novel "All We Have is Now" and his collection of short stories "Revelations."

Worriers think we can avoid life's pitfalls by imagining the worst-case scenario and analyzing it ad nauseum. Such are the premises in Taylor's fiction, though the scenarios make for compelling — if emotionally troubling — reading. Lobo Bookshop & Café hosts Taylor at a book signing next week.

In "Revelations," the gay victim of a brutal hate crime plots a demented revenge. A lesbian whose partner dies loses the house they share. A gay man's parents commit him to a mental institution against his will to attempt to change his sexual orientation through horrifying means.

Ian McBride, the narrator in "All We Have is Now," is equally depressed and depressing. Through vivid depictions, readers learn that Ian's lover died of AIDS years ago, and that Ian settled almost comfortably into a permanent funk.

Other than his work as a repertory actor in Washington, D.C., Ian has no passion for life and vows to never love again — that is, until he meets Jimmy Davidson, a beautiful young actor half his age who changes his life for the better.

It takes some convincing, but Jimmy's free spirit finally overcomes Ian's curmudgeonly trepidation and they fall in love. Despite marked differences in personality, the couple makes a home together.

BUT IN THE GRAND TRADITION OF worriers, the couple's world takes a sudden tragic turn for the worse when Jimmy is murdered in an anti-gay hate crime during a visit to his boyhood home in central Texas.

Despite an overlying sadness throughout the novel, Taylor's writing is beautiful. All of the characters are fully realized, with Taylor providing emotional details that bring them to life. The author deftly describes city life in Washington as well as the sometimes ignorant culture of a small Texas town.

The remainder of the novel centers on the trial of Jimmy's accused killers and Ian's struggle to break the tough barrier of the townspeople and Jimmy's family, who do not approve of homosexuality. Readers meet Livie, Jimmy's colorful grandmother, who is the only family member to accept Jimmy as he is.

We find out Livie's life experience makes her uniquely capable of understanding a love that dare not speak its name. Ian develops a close bond with her, the only



Gay author Robert Taylor is scheduled to sign copies of 'All We Have is Now' at Lobo Bookshop & Café on Wednesday.

person besides Jimmy to break through his self-protecting emotional façade.

TAYLOR IS AT HIS BEST WHEN HE explores the May-December romance between Ian and Jimmy. He perfectly assesses the issues that inherently lie in relationships between men with such a vast age difference. Ian thinks that Jimmy has a lot to learn, but Taylor makes it clear that the younger man has just as much to offer in life lessons.

The writer is also adept at describing the intricacies of the trial and the media circus surrounding it. He likens the situation to the Matthew Shepard murder trial effectively without robbing that real-life event to further his comparison.

My only complaint comes at the novel's end, when Taylor succumbs to the gay myth that homophobes are motivated by their own feelings of homosexuality, which forces Ian to become conflicted over the killer's fate.

That may happen sometimes in real life, but usually prejudice is the more likely cause of hate, not homosexual denial. But imagining the saddest possible truth for his characters does keep in line with Taylor's worried disposition.

MORE INFO

Robert Taylor book signing
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Theatre New West serves up satisfying comic twists with new production

Satisfaction guaranteed

"THE ALTRUISTS" IS A PLAY ABOUT satisfaction – guilt-free, self-absorbed, mindless satisfaction.

Perhaps that's why it's so much fun.

Or perhaps it's because the talented men and women at Theatre New West have staged an all-out, in-your-face farce that starts with a bang and rarely slows down.

From beginning to end, "The Altruists" is a comedy brimming with ironic twists and unexpected surprises. The primary twist starts with its title: not a single altruist can be found in "The Altruists." With this twist as its springboard, Theatre New West's latest production is off and running with five talented actors in riotously funny performances.

After a night of bar-hopping, Ronald (Dennis Draper) believes he has found Mr. Right, a handsome yet dim young hustler named Lance (Aaron Thacker). Ronald eagerly begins planning their future together, including who to invite to their wedding, what kind of dog they'll own and what type of houseplant requires minimal maintenance.

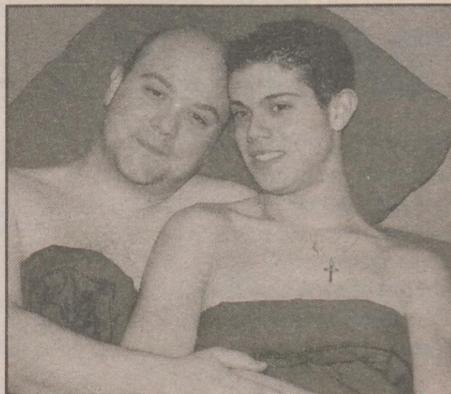
Meanwhile, Ronald's sister, soap opera star Sydney (Rebecca Tindel-Bivens), is planning revenge against her live-in lover Ethan (Foster Davis). Ethan's philandering ways, it seems, have led him to the bed of Cybil (Nora Stein), a lesbian "because I say I am." Cybil, however, seems more interested in getting to a protest rally – the purpose of which she can't recall – and finding a way to safely leave her violently over-protective (and unseen) partner Audrey.

Ultimately, these various plot lines and their characters are woven together into one main story, culminating in a terrific second act. Playwright Nicky Silver has given his characters a wealth of blistering and hilarious lines; likewise, the cast delivers outstanding performances all around.

Tindel-Bivens makes Sydney a dynamic firecracker. Sydney has a "profound dignity" as daytime diva Montana Beach (from the similarly titled soap opera), but hell hath no fury like a diva scorned. Sydney has an explosive introductory monologue in which she unleashes a Pandora's box of pent-up emotions and Tindel-Bivens delivers each line with a dazzling comic ferocity. Sydney's emotions are a boisterous roller coaster throughout "The Altruists," and Tindel-Bivens expertly carries the audience along for the ride. She also gives her character several funny tweaks that draw on Sydney's soap acting background, including the infamous "I'm turning-my-back-to-you-as-I-speak" stance.

Davis brings a wonderful presence to his role of Ethan. His delivery has a natural ease and sense of well-paced timing. Actors in some productions have a tendency to unintentionally belt out even their most innocuous lines like carnival barkers, making their performances seem both grating and amateurish. Not so with Davis. Perhaps drawing on the proximity of his audience and the manner of his devil-may-care character, Davis gives a smooth delivery that leaves quite an impression.

Many audience members may identify quite well with Ronald (or at least swear they



Dennis Draper and Aaron Thacker are part of a talented cast in Theatre New West's latest work, 'The Altruists.' (Photo by Joe Watts)

know someone like him). Draper creates an adorably earnest character. His Ronald may ultimately come across as perhaps the most human of the bunch. Ronald's foibles and neuroses are wonderfully played. In addition, Draper has an extremely powerful moment in the play that left the audience in awe.

As the "Lesbian Against Bush," Cybil is another comic gem. Stein plays her beautifully, whether raging against people who wear fur, cut down the rainforest or keep Nelson Mandela imprisoned (think about it). Her confusion over which rally is scheduled for today and how she can best round up more minority protestors is inspired. Stein's timing, especially as she reads aloud from a letter she's writing to Audrey, is perfect.

Finally, Lance could come across as a rather one-note creation, but Thacker fleshes out the character, especially in the second act. When he's sent out on an errand, Lance disappears for much of the first act. When he's gone, you genuinely miss him and welcome his return. The exchanges between Lance and Sydney are hilarious (or, as Lance would appropriately say, "da bomb").

Obviously, director Joe Angel Babb knows his actors' strengths and uses them to maximum effect. His minimalist yet striking staging in the intimate setting of Theatre New West significantly adds to the production.

If there are any distractions, they seem to be minor technical ones. Cybil's monologues as she contemplates leaving Audrey are so funny and well done, you just wish her stage setting was as well lit as the others. Despite this technical glitch, Stein managed to shine brightly.

Ultimately, just when you think "The Altruists" has unveiled its final twist, you are left to consider one more: In a play about characters who are only concerned with satisfying themselves, it is the audience who instead leaves extremely satisfied.

i MORE INFO

'The Altruists' • Through May 24
8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays
2 p.m. matinees on May 10 & 24
Tickets: \$20 or \$15 for matinees
Theatre New West • 1415 California St.
713-522-2204

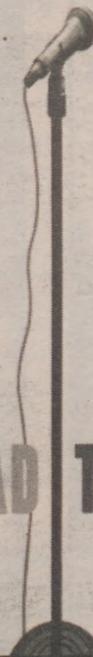
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opera RICH ARENSCHIEDT



A funny thing happened on
the way to the convent

'Manon' is imperfect

HOUSTON GRAND OPERA HAD TO DO some fancy dancing as the cast in its current "Manon" underwent some last-minute personnel changes. In a season of divas debuting new roles, this show had a doublet of success with soprano Elizabeth Futral and last-minute tenor stand-in Scott Piper, replacing the ailing Marcello Giordani.

"Manon," by quintessentially French composer Jules Massenet, is one of the most popular operatic works of the "Opera Comique" genre. What's really comical about this opera is the way in which it begins. In its first few moments we see the naïve Manon chaperoned on a journey to begin a cloistered convent life. Her trusted escort and cousin, Lescaut (Marc Barrard), decides at mid-point in her travels to take a break and go gamble with bunch of his drunken buddies. This leaves the impressionable Manon alone in the middle of the street having to rely on the kindness of strangers.

Suddenly she sees a hot looking guy (Chevalier des Grieux). He says, (loosely translated) "I love you, let's get out of this hick town and go to Paris." Manon agrees and with virtuous alacrity takes a hard left turn down Debauchery Drive. One minute she's sitting demurely on her valise, the next she's forcing her boyfriend to gamble his life savings so she can continue to go to the hairdresser twice a week. Accompanying all this "reality opera" action is Massenet's tuneful score, full of sappy, lyric romanticism.

THE ROLE OF MANON HAS BEEN CLOSELY associated with several tour-de-force sopranos throughout operatic history. In the 1950s it belonged to Victoria de los Angeles. In the '60s it was Beverly Sills, who, in her prime, could be bested by none. Through the years, singers have vacillated between portraying Manon as tittering teenager or tawdry tart. In her first "Manon," Futral seems to have struck a balance between the two. Her voice fits this role like a glove and meets Massenet's broad vocal demands with ease. This score sparkles with melody and ornament; Futral glitters note for note.

American Tenor Piper, subbing on very short notice, has a pointed vocal quality that's absolutely necessary for performing this repertoire. Subtlety need not enter here; this love can only be described as "ardent" and the tenor must rise to the occasion. Piper delivers the vocal heft required in this challenging role, with minimal rehearsal. This appearance marks a nice opportunity for a singer who was a finalist in the 1999 HGO "Concert of Arias."

Other standouts in this cast include the trio of trollops, Pousette (Kristin Reiersen), Javotte (Laquita Mitchell), and Rosette (Angela Niederloh), performed by members of the Houston Grand Opera Studio. Massenet offers them wonderfully flirty music and they take full vocal and dramatic advantage. The HGO chorus provided their signature unified ensemble accompanied by inarticulate diction.

In spite of its very solid musical elements, this



Des Grieux (Scott Piper) and Manon (Elizabeth Futral) indulge their love in Houston Grand Opera's latest production. (Photo by George Hixson)

"Manon" stumbles all over its own production aspects. Scottish director David McVicker's production is trying to make too many points and winds up lost in its own confusion. The set, a simple three-tiered amphitheater, looks like something HGO dredged up after Tropical Storm Allison. It's probably supposed to represent the levels of society that a nunnery bound nympho can aspire to, but it ends up being simply unattractive.

Additionally, necessary scene changes are forgotten. When lover boy decides to forsake Manon and become a priest, their sudden meeting takes place on a bare stage covered with fruit strewn by actors from the previous scene. Lighting by Paule Constable does not help. From center orchestra, audience members have a prime view of dozens of light bulbs at extreme stage left. Furthermore, it's too dark to see the expressions of those on stage. The one redeeming visual element of this production, the exquisite and detailed costumes designed by Tanya McCallin, is shortchanged by too few watts overhead.

These elements combine to offer a dreary aesthetic. Granted, "Manon" is tragic in that she dies (of course) in the last act, but most of the musical and dramatic elements prior to that are filled with romance, lust and greed — emotions that are scenically reflected only in Act IV.

The stage action for "Manon" also lacks clarity. During the opera there are all these "people" lolling about. Once again, there's some hidden meaning here but it doesn't make sense and, more importantly, doesn't amplify the dramatic sequence of events. In one instance, Manon and De Grieux sing about how happy they are to finally be alone while 12 people are sitting around staring at them. However, choreographer Michael Keegan-Dolan does provide a wonderful respite with his quirky and amusing Act III ballet, poking fun at the archaic French tradition of "must have" operatic dance.

Even with some confusing production elements, the musical wings of this "Manon" keep it afloat. Futral's deft touch and Piper's earnestness carry the show.

MORE INFO

'Manon' • Through Sunday, May 11
Wortham Theater • Downtown Houston
Houston Grand Opera • 713-228-OPERA
www.houstongrandopera.org

homes ELLA TYLER



Houston couple maintains extensive garden with a minimalist approach



Gay Houstonian Steve Kirkland says he likes the 'Lazy Gardener' approach for his luscious garden at the home he shares with partner Mark Parthie. (Photo by Penny Weaver)

Yard is done easily

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE, SITTING ON the deck of Steve Kirkland and Mark Parthie's Victorian cottage in the Sixth Ward, that downtown is only 10 minutes away - by foot! In the twilight, with a train whistle in the distance and a church bell noting the hour, the sound of rushing water and a slight sweetness to the air evokes memories of summer camp.

Steve identifies the scent as an American persimmon. "But there might be some nandina in there, too," he says. He has jasmine planted as well, but it isn't in bloom yet.

The couple's house sits on two lots, so Steve has a lot of room to garden. The back yard is filled with the deck and two ponds, built with rocks that he and Mark have brought back from excursions to Llano, where they collected granite, and Lake Ray Hubbard, where the red sandstone came from.

"We bring back rocks from wherever we are, though," Mark reveals. There are rocks from Mexico, New Mexico and Arizona in the garden too. A gravel path became too difficult to maintain, so flagstone has replaced it, Steve says.

The side garden is filled with islands of various plants, separated with brick paths. From the outside, it looks like an impenetrable thicket, but the paths, strategically placed benches, and artfully placed statuary transform it into a place you want to explore. Right now, a Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow's purple, lavender and white blooms, are the reward for following one path to its end. "Isn't it spectacular?" Steve asks.

IN THIS GARDEN, THERE IS NO difference between weed and cherished plant. When I asked Steve to identify a waist-high plant with small white flowers, he doesn't know what its name is.

"It's a weed I got along the bayou, and there is a little blue butterfly that loves it.

I haven't seen any of them this year, but we do have monarchs."

The garden is very shady, and plants like gingers thrive. Steve says he has planted one "Early Girl" tomato and has volunteers of a tomato that produces little bullet-sized fruits.

"I think they come from the compost pile, and if they don't produce, they get pulled up and go back there," he explains. There is a bit of sun for the Golden Showers climbing rose. "This is the second one," Steve says. "The first one died after a few years."

STEVE AND MARK BEGAN WORKING on the garden 14 years ago, beginning with the ponds. There is one at ground level and an elevated one, the source of the soothing rushing water sound. The side yard has become shadier and shadier over the years, and the grass has gradually been eliminated entirely.

It is not yet too shady for four fruit trees: two peach trees, an apple and a tangerine. All are now old enough to bear fruit, Steve says. When asked to name his favorite plant, Steve barely hesitates. "It's my peach trees. And you know why that is - it's because there is nothing better tasting than a peach from your own tree."

Steve and Mark's garden is also the source of many give-away plants for one of their favorite projects. Both are active volunteers with the Avenue Community Development Association. One of its several projects includes moving houses that have been scheduled for demolition onto vacant lots, renovating them, and selling them to low-income families. Many of these houses get the beginning of a garden, too.

Steve explains his gardening success: "I strive for diversity, and I don't do much. People find that hard to believe, but I really do believe in the Lazy Gardener approach."

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Taco Nation excels

"THESE ARE THE BEST REFRIED BEANS I've ever had!" I announced, to no one in particular.

I was sitting in front of a plate of tacos al carbon at Taco Nation. Normally I don't think much of refried beans, that ubiquitous brownish-gray Tex-Mex side dish that often seems like filler. I far prefer earthy charro or black beans. So my expectations weren't very high when I did my restaurant critic duty and dug into these beans.

Instead of the pasty mush I was expecting, these refried beans actually tasted like beans. Light and flavorsome, with chunks of bean still remaining, they harkened back to what I imagined was the original intent for refried beans. It was just one of a number of pleasant surprises at Taco Nation, a modest take-out joint in downtown.

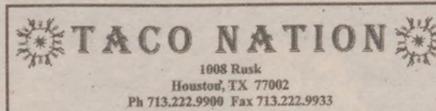
YOU HAVE TO BE A BIT INTREPID TO get to Taco Nation. Located on Rusk, between Main and Fannin, it's in the heart of all the downtown construction. In fact, the section of Rusk in front of it is blocked off at the moment. The street is dusty and a bit annoying, but don't be discouraged. Taco Nation is worth the trek.

If it weren't for the blue sign on the sidewalk announcing, "Taco Nation Open," I might have missed it. The small storefront opens to a long narrow space, brightly decorated in primary colors. A couple of tables fill the front, and a long red tile counter heads toward the back. It's the kind of place where everyone seems to know each other. A bicycle policeman was sitting at one of the tables chatting with the folks in the Taco Nation t-shirts. Someone handed me a menu and pretty soon I was joining in the conversation.

THEY GAVE ME A COMPLIMENTARY basket of chips and salsa, and I ordered a small guacamole (\$3.50). The salsa is outstanding. A lively mix of tomatoes, onions, garlic and cilantro, it is thick enough to stay on the chips, with a bite that sneaks up on you. This is a very good start.

The guacamole arrived and I was mesmerized. I have to admit, I have certain standards by which I judge Tex-Mex places, and guacamole is one of them. So often it disappoints, but not at Taco Nation. Chunky avocado mixed with fresh tomatoes, onions and a liberal squeeze of lemon made for some of the best guacamole I've had in a long time.

While I was digging into my guacamole, several bike messengers came in for lunch. One of them sat down with the bike cop and we all ended up in a conversation about bicycling in Houston. The two of them said they're regulars here, and assured me the food is great — not that I needed a lot of convincing.



My lunch special, Tacos al Carbon (\$4.95), came with one generous taco filled with strips of delicious, tender pepper spiced beef, and those excellent refried beans and rice. The taco is slathered with spicy chile con queso. It's a great meal and a bargain too. I know I'll be back.

On my next visit, I wanted to try the Camaron Nacional — shrimp stuffed with jalapeno, cheese and then battered and fried, but I was out of luck. Apparently, it's a secret family recipe, and the only person who knows it was out of town. I guess this is what happens sometimes with a small family-owned place. They offered me bacon-wrapped shrimp instead (two for \$5.95), which are excellent. Tender shrimp with a small slice of jalapeno are wrapped in bacon and fried. Served with a tangy sour cream-based dipping sauce and lemon, it's a treat.

The shrimp are only an appetizer, so I ordered a fajita chicken burrito (\$6.95). A large tortilla is spread with refried beans and stuffed with chicken and cheese and then served with melted cheese on top. Garnished with lettuce, pico de gallo, sour cream and guacamole, it was so huge I couldn't finish it. It was good and very filling.

ALL THE FOOD AT TACO NATION IS made from scratch, and it shows. From those unparalleled refried beans to the fresh guacamole and spicy shrimp, it's good quality at reasonable prices. They also serve breakfast, beginning at 7:30 a.m., with breakfast tacos (\$1.50) and platters like Huevos Rancheros and Migas (both \$4.25).

If you live or work downtown and are looking for something new, give Taco Nation a call (they deliver) or brave the construction and stop on by. The food is good, the prices are low, and the service is friendly. It's only a matter of time before the word gets out.



Taco Nation

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Food: ●●●●●●

Service: ●●●●●●

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community calendar

SATURDAY, MAY 3

Houston Buyers Club. Free BIA (Bioelectrical Impedance Analysis) the first two Saturdays of the month. Hours: 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Houston Buyers Club, 3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 604. 713-520-5288. http://www.houstonbuyersclub.com/bia_testing.html

Houston Outdoor group. Breakfast at Tecate. Call Jon and John at 713-290-0220. HOG: 713-KAMP-OUT.

EVERY SATURDAY

All-Spanish Worship Service/Noche Espiritual. 7 p.m. Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, 2026 W. 11th. 713-303-3409 or 713-861-9149.

After Hours. KPFT 90.1 FM. 1-4 a.m.

Dignity mass. 7:30 p.m. for gay Catholics. 713-880-2872.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 11 p.m.-2 a.m. at Viviana's. 713-830-3000.

Gay & Lesbian Breakfast Club. 9:30 a.m. 281-437-0636.

Houston Wrestling Club. Practice. 1:30 p.m. 713-453-7406.

Lambda Center. Alcoholics Anonymous. 11:30 a.m. Eye Opener Group, 8 p.m. Saturday Night Live, 9:30 p.m. Willing Ones Group. 1201 W. Clay. 713-521-1243 or 713-528-9772. www.lambdahouston.org.

Q-Patrol. Volunteers walk the streets to help prevent hate crimes. 9:30 p.m. Convene at community center. 713-528-SAFE. E-mail: qpatriol@aol.com

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Rosary 8 a.m. 1805 W. Alabama. 713-528-6665.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in, noon-5 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

SUNDAY, MAY 4

PFLAG-Houston. Monthly meeting, 2 p.m. Special guest Ernie Manouse and officials with the Houston Gay & Lesbian Film Festival. St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 5501 S. Main St. 713-46P-FLAG. www.pflaghouston.org.

EVERY SUNDAY

Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. Services at 8:30 & 10:50 a.m. Sunday school 9:45 a.m. 713-526-1017.

Center for Spiritual Living. Services at 11 a.m., for children at 10:50 a.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808. The center also has commitment ceremonies, metaphysical bookstore and classes.

Community Gospel. Service at 11 a.m. & 7 p.m. Sunday School for children 10 a.m. 713-880-9235 or www.communitygospel.org.

Community of Kindred Spirits in Beaumont. Worship at 6 p.m. 1575 Spindletop Ave., Beaumont, Texas. 409-813-2055. E-mail: cksrev3@netzero.net

Covenant Church, Ecumenical, Liberal Baptist. Service 9:30 a.m. & education hour 11 a.m. 713-668-8830.

Emerson Unitarian Church. Adult education, 10 a.m. Service, 11 a.m. Lunch at noon. www.emersonhou.org.

First Congregational Church (Memorial). Service at 10 a.m. Christian Education, 11:30 a.m. 713-468-9543 or fcc-houston.org.

First Unitarian Universalist Church. Services at 9:30 & 11:30 a.m. Brunch at 10:30 a.m. 713-526-5200. church@firstuu.org.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 9 p.m.-midnight at Club Inergy. 713-830-3000.

Gay Bowling Leagues. 7 p.m. Palace Lanes, 4191 Bellaire Blvd. 713-861-1187.

Gay Catholics of St. Anne's-Houston. 5 p.m. worship service. Dinner and social. alexcam@wt.net. 713-623-0930.

GLOBAL. Gay Lesbian Or Bisexual Alliance. University of Houston GLBT student group meeting, 2 p.m. at the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.uh.edu/~global. E-mail: global@bayou.uh.edu.

Grace Assembly Church. Gay/gay-affirming congregation. 11 a.m. service. 567 Cedar Grove, Livingston, Texas, 77351. 936-646-7214. E-mail: leo1@easttexas.net.

Grace Lutheran Church. Sunday school for all ages 9 a.m. Service 10:30 a.m. 713-528-3269.

H.A.T.C.H. Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals meets 6-9 p.m. For meeting information, call 713-529-3590. www.hatchyouth.org.

Houston Roughnecks Rugby Club. Practice from 4-6 p.m. For more information, log on to www.roughnecksrugby.org.

Houston Tennis Club. 9 a.m.-noon. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. houstontennisclub@aol.com

Lambda Center. Alcoholics Anonymous. 9:30 a.m. Came to Believe Group. 1201 W. Clay. 713-521-1243 or 713-528-9772. www.lambdahouston.org.

Maranatha Fellowship Metropolitan Church. 10 a.m. service. 3333 Fannin, Suite 106. 713-528-6756.

Northwoods Unitarian Universalist Church. Services at 9:45 & 11:15 a.m. Sunday school 9:45 a.m. 281-298-2780.

Resurrection MCC. Services, 9 and 11 a.m. Children and Youth Sunday School, 10 a.m. Children's service, 11 a.m. 713-861-9149.

St. Patrick's Reformed Catholic Mission. Sunday Mass at noon. Holy Unions available. Group meets at the Hair Express, 3310 Delaware, Beaumont, Texas 77703. 409-781-8152. E-mail: bwatson1@gt.rr.com.

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Holy Eucharist, Rite I, 7:45 a.m.; Holy Eucharist, Rite II, 8:55 a.m.; Education hour, 10 a.m.; Choral Eucharist, 11 a.m. 713-528-6665.

Sunday Brunch. For HIV-positive men. 11 a.m. Riva's, 1117 Missouri St. Paul, 713-880-0690. e-mail: PoznBuff@aol.com.

The Women's Group. Meeting and discussion. 10:45 a.m. 713-529-8571.

Thoreau Unitarian Universalist Congregation. Adult discussion, 9 a.m. Service, 11:15 a.m. 281-277-8882. www.tuuc.org.

Unitarian Fellowship of Galveston County. 502 Church St. Service, 10:30 a.m. 409-765-8330.

Unitarian Fellowship of Houston. Adult forum, 10 a.m. Service, 11 a.m. 713-686-5876.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in, 2-6 p.m. • GLBT Community Church with Rev. Melissa Wood: Bible study, 10-10:45 a.m., worship 11 a.m. www.geocities.com/glbtc • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

MONDAY, MAY 5

EVERY MONDAY

Center for Spiritual Living. Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

Free HIV Testing. Houston Area Community Services. 9 a.m.-noon at Joseph-Hines Clinic, 1710 West 25th St. 713-526-0555, ext. 231, 227 or 226.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 8 p.m.-midnight. Keys West. 713-830-3000.

Frost Eye Clinic. Free eye exams for people with HIV. 713-830-3000.

Gay Bowling Leagues. 9 p.m. Palace Lanes, Bellaire Blvd. 713-861-1187.

Gay Fathers/Fathers First. Support group. 8-9:30 p.m. Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. Tom, 713-726-8736. www.geocities.com/gaydadshouston/

Grace Assembly Church. Gay/gay-affirming congregation. 7 p.m. aerobics class. 567 Cedar Grove, Livingston, Texas, 77351. 936-646-7214. E-mail: leo1@easttexas.net.

Grief & Divorce Support Groups. 7 p.m. Bering. 713-526-1017, ext. 208.

Houston Roughnecks Rugby Club. Practice from 6:30-8:30 p.m. For more information, log on to www.roughnecksrugby.org.

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

Lambda Center. Alcoholics Anonymous. 8 p.m. Beginners' Group. 1201 W. Clay. 713-521-1243 or 713-528-9772. www.lambdahouston.org.

Montrose Clinic. Offers weekly peer support groups for gay and bisexual men with HIV. Spanish speaking group meets, 6:30 p.m. 215 Westheimer. 713-830-3050. Grupo de Apoyo para Latinos gay y bisexuales VIH positivos. Lunes 6:30. Para mas informacion llama al 713-830-3025.

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

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER), 7 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

TUESDAY, MAY 6

Lesbian Health Initiative. Meeting, 7 p.m. 713-603-0023. www.lhihouston.org.

EVERY TUESDAY

Bering Support Network. Lunch Bunch Gang, 11 a.m. 713-526-1017.

Center for Spiritual Living. Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

Free HIV Testing. Houston Area Community Services. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Joseph-Hines Clinic, 1710 West 25th St. 713-526-0555, ext. 231, 227 or 226.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 8 p.m.-midnight at Club Houston. Also 4-8 p.m. at 611 Club, 611 Hyde Park. 713-830-3000.

Gay youth. New program for young gay males, ages 18-29. 7 p.m. 614 Avondale. 713-533-9786.

GLBT Pentecostals. Bible study, prayer, 7 p.m. in the Heights. For info: 936-931-3761; e-mail: www.Wgb1947@cs.com.

Houston Women's Rugby Team. No experience necessary. Practice, 6:30-8:30. Westland YMCA, Kay, 713-208-1529.

Introduction to Buddhism. All welcome at 634 W. Temple in the Heights. 7 p.m. Carlton, 713-862-8129.

Rainbow Ranglers. Free C&W dance lessons. Brazos River Bottom. No partner needed. Beginner 2 Step, Waltz, Shuffle & Swing. 8:30 p.m. 713-528-9192.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • Lesbian Coming Out Group, 7 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7

Classic Chassis Car Club. Monthly meeting and board meeting, 7 p.m. Café Express, 1422 W. Gray. 713-797-8615. www.classicchassisclub.org.

EVERY WEDNESDAY

Center for Spiritual Living. Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.; SOM Discussion & Exploration, 7 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

Crystal Meth Anonymous (CMA). 8:15 p.m. meeting. Montrose Counseling Center, 701 Richmond Ave., Room 15.

Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. Support Network Pot Luck Dinner, 6:30 p.m. Various support groups, 7 p.m. 713-526-1017.

Bible Study. Noon & 6:30 p.m. St. Stephen's Episcopal. 713-526-6665.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 4-8 p.m. at Mary's; 9 p.m.-midnight at Ripcord; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at EJs; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at Midtowne Spa. 713-830-3000.

Free HIV Testing. Thomas Street Clinic. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 2015 Thomas St. OraSure method. Call for appointment. Sharon, 713-873-4157.

Gay Bowling Leagues. 6:30 p.m. Palace Lanes, Bellaire Blvd. 713-861-1187.

Grace Assembly Church. Gay/gay-affirming congregation. 7 p.m. aerobics class. 567 Cedar Grove, Livingston, Texas, 77351. 936-646-7214. E-mail: leo1@easttexas.net.

Houston Pride Band. Open rehearsal, 7-9 p.m. 1307 Yale. 713-528-4379.

Houston Roughnecks Rugby Club. Practice from 6:30-8:30 p.m. For more information, log on to www.roughnecksrugby.org.

Houston Tennis Club. 7:00-9 p.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. houstontennisclub@aol.com

Spiritual Uplift service. 7 p.m. Resurrection MCC. 713-861-9149.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in, 2-9 p.m. • Free HIV testing, counseling, 6-9 p.m. • Houston Gay & Lesbian Political Caucus general meeting, 7 p.m. • Houston Pride Band rehearsal, 7:30 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

THURSDAY, MAY 8

EVERY THURSDAY

BiNet Houston. Group for bisexuals; everyone welcome. 7:30 p.m. Hobbit Café, 2240 Portsmouth. www.flashnet/~bihouse. 713-467-4380.

Center for Spiritual Living. Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

Community Gospel. Service. 7:30 p.m. 713-880-9235. www.communitygospel.org.

Free HIV Testing. Houston Area Community Services. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Joseph-Hines Clinic, 1710 West 25th St. Also 11 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at Gallery Medical Clinic, 5900 North Freeway, and Club Toyz from 9 p.m.-midnight. 713-526-0555, ext. 231, 227 or 226.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 4-8 p.m. at The Outpost; 8 p.m.-midnight at Brazos River Bottom and Cousins; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at Toyz Disco. 713-830-3000.

Free HIV Testing. 7-9 p.m. at All Star News, 3415 Katy Freeway. Health clinic with free testing for HIV and syphilis. 713-869-7878.

FrontRunners. Running club. 6:30 p.m. 713-522-8021. Web site: <http://homeswbell.net/lorathon/houfr.htm>. E-mail: lorathon@swbell.net.

Gay Bowling Leagues. 9 p.m. Palace Lanes, Bellaire Blvd. 713-861-1187.

GLOBAL. Lesbian or Bisexual Alliance at the University of Houston-Central Campus. Weekly meeting, 6 p.m. e-mail: nguyen0023@hotmail.com.

Hep C Recovery. Support group. 6:30 p.m. Bering. 713-526-1017, Ext. 211.

Grief & Divorce Support Groups. No experience necessary. Practice, 6:30-8:30. Westland YMCA, Kay, 713-208-1529.

Lake Livingston GLBT Support Group. 7 p.m. dinner and discussion. Grace Assembly Church, 567 Cedar Grove, Livingston, Texas, 77351. 936-646-7214. E-mail: leo1@easttexas.net.

Lambda Skating Club. 8 p.m. Tradewinds Skating Rink. www.neosoft.com/~lrsc. 713-523-9620.

Montrose Clinic. Offers weekly peer support groups for gay and bisexual men with HIV. English speaking group meets, 6:30 p.m. 215 Westheimer 713-830-3050.

Rainbow Ranglers. Free C&W dance lessons. No partner required. Brazos River Bottom. 8:30 p.m. 713-528-9192.

Recovery From Food Addiction (RFA). Meeting for 12-step program open to all. Noon-1 p.m. St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 1805 W. Alabama St. RFA: 713-673-2848. www.geocities.com/rfa77235/. E-mail: rfaworldservice@aol.com.

Spanish Charla Conversation Group. Café Agora, 7 p.m. E-mail: charlahouston@msn.com. 713-416-7203.

Women's Clinic. Montrose Clinic. 713-830-3000.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • Montrose Writers' Project, 7 p.m. • PFLAG-Houston board meeting, 7 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

FRIDAY, MAY 9

EVERY FRIDAY

Center for Spiritual Living. Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 10 p.m.-2 a.m. at The Meatrack; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at EJs and at Midtowne Spa. 713-830-3000.

Free HIV Testing. Thomas Street Clinic. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 2015 Thomas St. OraSure method. Call for appointment. Sharon, 713-873-4157.

Frost Eye Clinic. Free eye exams for people with HIV. 713-830-3000.

Grace Assembly Church. Gay/gay-affirming congregation. 7 p.m. aerobics class. 567 Cedar Grove, Livingston, Texas, 77351. 936-646-7214. E-mail: leo1@easttexas.net.

H.A.T.C.H. Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals meets 7-10 p.m. For meeting information, call 713-529-3590. www.hatchyouth.org.

Houston Tennis Club. 7:00-9 p.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. houstontennisclub.org

Kolbe Project. Morning prayer, 10 a.m. 713-861-1800.

Mishpach Alizim. GLBT Jewish congregation. Sabbath services at 8 p.m. on the second Friday of each month at Baby Barnabys, 602 Fairview. Monthly study groups with Congregation Beth Israel, 5600 North Braeswood. Mishpach Alizim, P.O. Box 980136, Houston, TX 77098. 866-841-9139, ext. 1834.

Q-Patrol. Volunteers walk the streets to help prevent hate crimes. 9:30 p.m. Convene at community center. 713-528-SAFE. E-mail: qpatriol@aol.com

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • Women's Game Night, 7:30 p.m. • In Our Own Write poetry night, 8 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

VOLUNTEER/SELF-HELP

ECHOS. This non-profit ministry of the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany is dedicated to helping people access health and social service systems. Free medical services include HIV, STD and hepatitis testing. Call for dates and times of services. 9610 S. Gessner. 713-270-0369. E-mail: echos-houston@swbell.net.

Gay & Lesbian Switchboard Houston. Volunteers offer a friendly ear to callers in need of information, nonjudgmental support and anonymous counseling to the GLBT community. 713-529-3211. www.gayswitchboardhouston.org.

HoP-ON. Anyone can join this non-profit moderated e-mail announcement list that helps facilitate advocacy work and organizing efforts for gay Houstonians. Quantity of postings is strictly limited. Postings include press releases and action alerts from national, state and local gay and allied organizations. For info or to join, access www.groups.yahoo.com/group/HoP-ON/.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Volunteers perform a variety of critical tasks which include staffing the information desk during drop-in hours; helping with center programming and events; working on community outreach efforts, fund-raising and publicity. Card players, writers and artists in particular are needed. 713-524-3818.

Peer Listening Line. Youth only. Staffed by GLBT youth for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. 5-10 p.m. Monday-Friday. 800-399-PEER.

Pride Committee of Houston. Volunteers sought for Pride 2003 preparations. This is the 25th Pride celebration. www.pridehouston.org. E-mail: volunteers@pridehouston.org. 713-529-6979.

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Answers to this week's Q puzzle on Page 23

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ADMIN ASSISTANT, PT The Houston Voice, the region's GLBT media leader, is seeking a PT admin assistant. If you are a self-starter who is organized, accustomed to multi-tasking & proficient in Microsoft Word & Excel, we would like to hear more about you. We offer a dynamic environment, excellent compensation, flexible part-time hours (20 hrs/week) & the opportunity for advancement. Send cover letter & resume to: General Manager, The Houston Voice, 500 Lovett, Suite 200, Houston, TX 77006. Fax: (713) 529-9531. E-mail: demerich@houstonvoice.com

ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE The Houston Voice, the region's GLBT media leader, is seeking an advertising account executive. You'll be responsible for all phases of the sales process: qualifying; cold-calling; prospect development; conceptualizing, planning & delivering sales presentations; writing proposals, negotiating contracts & closing new business. At least 1 year of print or on-line advertising sales experience preferred, but not necessary. We offer a challenging & exciting opportunity in a fast-paced, goal-oriented (yet fun) environment. We offer competitive compensation; specific training & a comprehensive benefits package including health/dental/life insurance, generous paid holidays, vacation & more. If you have a proven track record in sales, are results-driven & want to help build a newspaper that has a positive impact on your community, we want to hear from you. Send cover letter and resume to: General Manager, The Houston Voice, 500 Lovett, Suite 200, Houston, TX 77006. Fax: (713) 529-9531. E-mail: demerich@houstonvoice.com

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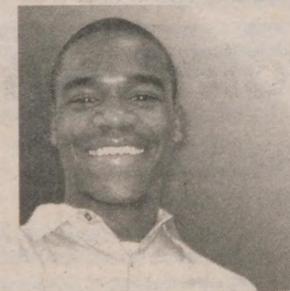
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"Sweet Home Alabama"

Across

1. www.stopaids.org, e.g.
5. City Porter loved in song
10. Gas brand in the land of k.d. lang
14. Gays can legally tie it in Amsterdam
15. Gertrude's partner
16. Illegal block by Esera Tuola
17. "Diana" singer
18. Kellie Martin in "Life Goes On"
19. Use wrecking balls on
20. With 62-Across, Bama-born "Lifeboat" actress
22. With 60-Across, Bama-raised "Breakfast at Tiffany's" author
24. Announcement from the cockpit
25. Places to post your package (abbr.)
26. Homo-hetero school org.
27. Air rifles shoot them off
28. International Gay Bowling Organization button
30. It gets laid on some streets
32. "Gods and Monsters" subject
34. Elton's john
36. Article of Marlene Dietrich
38. Top draft level
39. Bama-born "Fried Green Tomatoes" novelist
42. "I ___ Andy Warhol"
44. Soho pub drink
45. Chicken-king bridge
46. Sweaters at a sauna
48. Would-be master's test
50. Caligula's year
54. Washington, D.C. to Rehoboth dir.
55. You might say it when you get it
57. ___ cit.
59. Bill written by Alice Paul
60. See 22-Across
62. See 20-Across
64. On Santa Monica Blvd., perhaps
65. Day of many Hudson flicks
67. Harvey's "Hairspray" role
68. Sci. for studying bones
69. One that mates with a queen bee
70. David Hyde Pierce, to Yale
71. One-night-stand partners
72. Nice buns, for example
73. Add-on for Congo

Down

1. Rudy Galindo, for one
2. Like homosexuality, some say
3. Stein's partner
4. It comes at the bottom of a list
5. Paul, to Puig
6. Div. of Fenway's team
7. Log Cabinite Tafel
8. Trade watchdog
9. Frank and Mikulski hold them

10. Drag queen's stocking shade
11. Like a quickie
12. 9 inches, e.g.
13. Where to go with your first mate
21. Author Sinclair
23. Hard-core
26. She beat Navratilova in 1989
29. Tickle pink
31. Maria's "do" equivalent
33. Navajo erection
35. "Cat ___ Hot Tin Roof"
37. Patty Hearst's former org.
39. Sexual prelude for Sheehan?
40. Equal rights org.
41. "Uh-oh!" of the Bard's day
42. Hamburger Mary's offering
43. Song in "Jesus Christ Superstar"
47. Posed for Herb Ritts
49. Noble or Valby
51. The Indigo Girls' "Pushing the ___ Too Far"
52. Planet that's the butt of some jokes?
53. Title for Colette
56. Drag queen ___ Lettuce
58. Where to start out
61. Mouthful for a stallion
62. The Brewer twins, for short
63. Respond to an anti-retroviral cocktail, hopefully
66. Surgery sites, for short

Answers on Page 22

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My Stars!

May 2 - 8



ARIES (March 21 to April 20)

This is a fine time for you to break a bad habit in order to make room for a more exhilarating one (that's both bad and good and involves a Pisces!). You don't have to keep repeating the same mistakes. Break out of your own misery.



TAURUS (April 21 to May 20)

Mars close to Neptune at the top of your chart indicates that you may need to do something different in your career. A creative risk is called for. You'll no longer be paid to crank out the "same old same old." A Pisces wants to pay you overtime for your torrid Taurean love.



GEMINI (May 21 to June 21)

Uranus is transiting your house of adventure, which means that you must force yourself to try something radically new. Your mind is atrophying. It's time to do something 10 times more challenging than what you're already considering. A Virgo is considering teasing you into a sexual frenzy.



CANCER (June 22 to July 22)

The Sun and Mercury meet in your friendship sector during most of May and give you a deeper insight into your platonic relationships. Work on making yourself understood, Cancer. A Scorpio may be able to read your mind but would prefer to hear your words.



LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22)

Saturn is winding down its long transit through your house of friends, groups, and large organizations. Try to see yourself through the eyes of others, before the doors of this cycle shut for good. An Aquarius wants to teach you a thrilling lesson.



VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22)

This is a sexy time for you, Virgo. Inhibitions are leaving your body and your psyche, and new kinds of bravery and optimism are coming to town. A Scorpio has a major influence on your soul. Open up to every opportunity to learn and to make yourself yearn.



LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22)

You can forgive anything but human cruelty, Libra. In May, it's up to you to differentiate between what's mean and what's constructive. A Taurus loves you unconditionally and will protect you from any troublesome types.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21)

Old loves pop up for another bite of the apple this week and may ask you to tempt fate. Don't worry about propriety. Say what you have to say and be done with it. A Leo knows the answers but needs the closure.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21)

Memories of the past are particularly poignant right now. Feel the melancholy and then move headlong into the future. What's done is done, but what's coming is incredibly validating and powerful. Open up to another Sag.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19)

Put some energy into a tricky work problem early in the week, and you'll be able to relax by the weekend. This is actually a good time for you to plan a late-summer getaway. Make it to someplace unusual. The same old queer haunts have grown tedious. A fellow Capricorn is ready to go on a road trip with you.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18)

Venus in your busy and fun third house makes this a week of social surprises. The pop-in is back in style at your house. Expect everyone to come over at one point or another for a literal or metaphorical cup of sugar. A Sag wants some of your sweet stuff.



PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20)

Venus in your money sector makes this a time of concrete success for you, Pisces. You can achieve much in the material world, especially if you cut out unnecessary partners and middlemen. A Capricorn offers all the support you need.

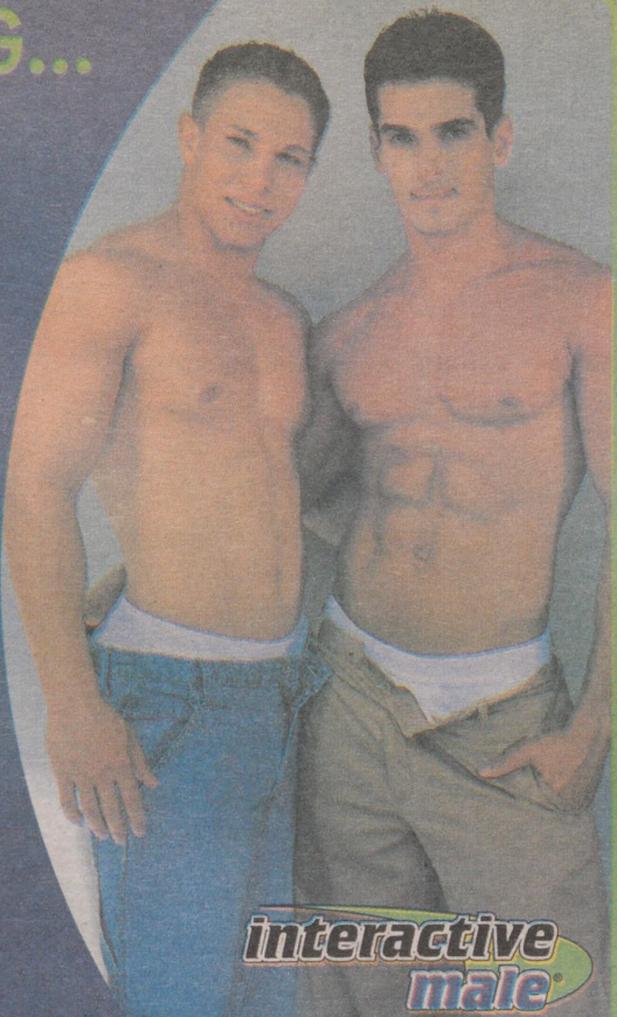
Jill Dearman is the author of the best-selling "Queer Astrology for Men" and "Queer Astrology for Women" (both from St. Martin's Griffin). For information on charts and consultations, call 212-841-0177 or e-mail QScopes@aol.com.

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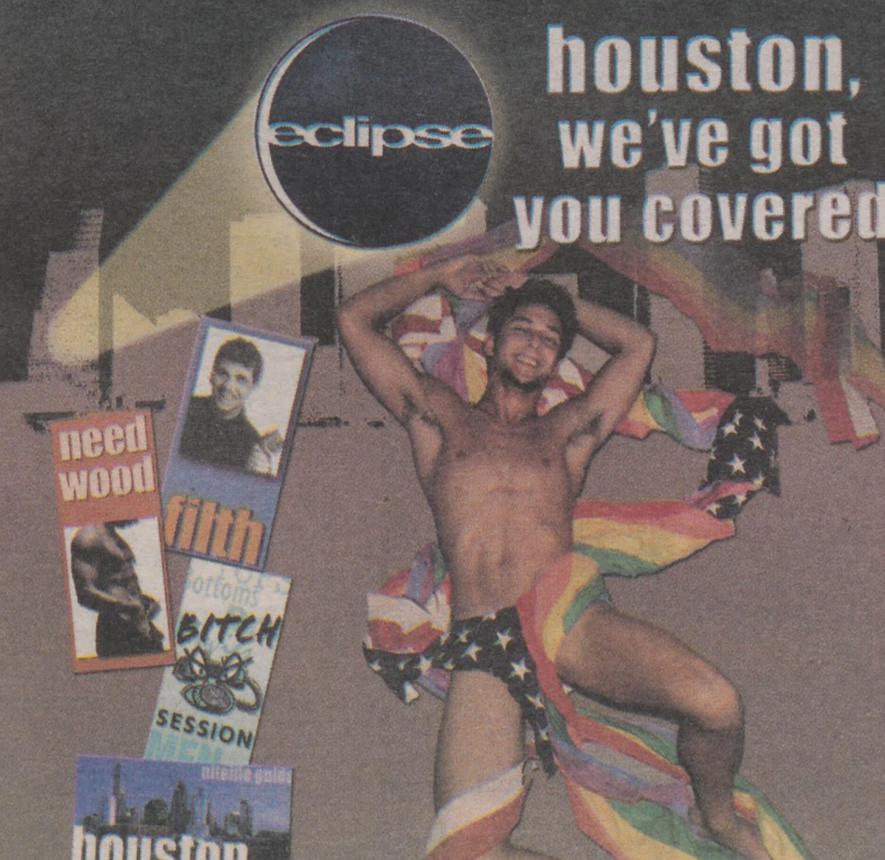


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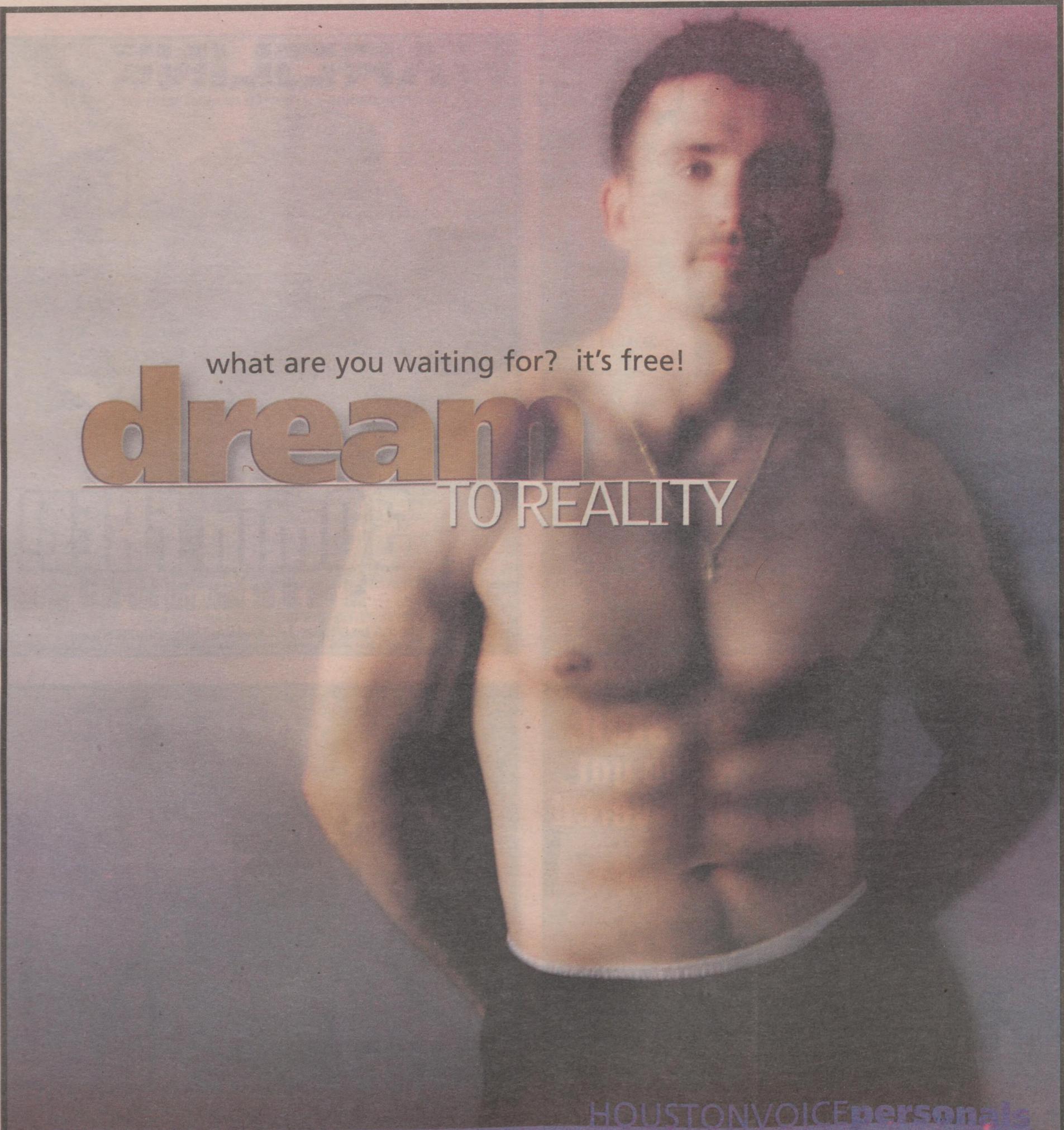
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