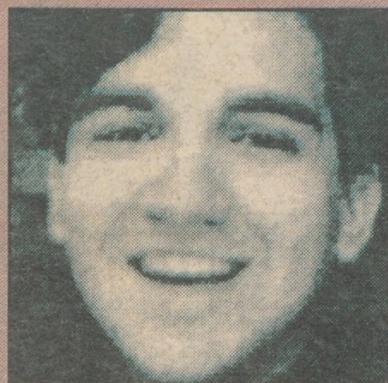


Gay actor Ian McKellen talks about his trade, his orientation, and his role in 'Lord of the Rings.'
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INSIDE



Nearly four years after the murder of Marc Kajs, an appeals court gives his mother a partial victory in a lawsuit against the City of Houston.

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Gay Houstonian Jonathan Cooper, missing for nearly 14 days, returned home this week, unharmed.

Page 5



Theatre New West's production of 'The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told' is, well, fabulous.

Page 18

Funeral home turns away gays

Gay man asks state officials to step in after business allegedly would not cremate his partner

by PENNY WEAVER

State officials may soon investigate allegations by a gay man who says a Houston funeral home refused to cremate his partner, who died last week.

David Diehl, 46, said a male employee at Garden Oaks Funeral Home in southwest Houston initially told him, before his partner, Bobbie Blanton, died last week, that the business would handle Blanton's cremation.

But when Diehl called back after Blanton died, he said that same employee told him the funeral home would not take care of the service.

"I was shocked. I was hurting. I wasn't expecting this type of an insult to be thrown my way, especially at this time, my hour of need," Diehl said.

According to Diehl, his partner of 10 years died of heart failure, primary pulmonary hypertension and liver disease. In his second call to the funeral home, requesting that they transport and cremate Blanton's body, the same male Garden Oaks employee was "apologetic," Diehl said.

"He did not agree with his employer," he added. "They said

> Continued on Page 7



Gay Houston resident David Diehl (left) is mourning the loss of his partner of 10 years, Bobbie Blanton, this week in addition to preparing to ask state officials to investigate a funeral home that refused to cremate Blanton.

Gays protest Salvation Army

Flip-flop on domestic partner benefits, ties to White House help spur action, activists say

by LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN

Salvation Army bell-ringers may find something extra dropped in their red buckets this year, and it isn't more funds to provide food and holiday gifts for needy families.

A "kettle protest" spearheaded by a group for parents of gays is attempting to send the Salvation Army "a message, not money" this Christmas, but leaders at the charity and conservative church say their position on gay issues has been "misrepresented."

Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays launched the protest after several recent actions by the Salvation Army, including the group's decision to rescind domestic partner benefits for employees.

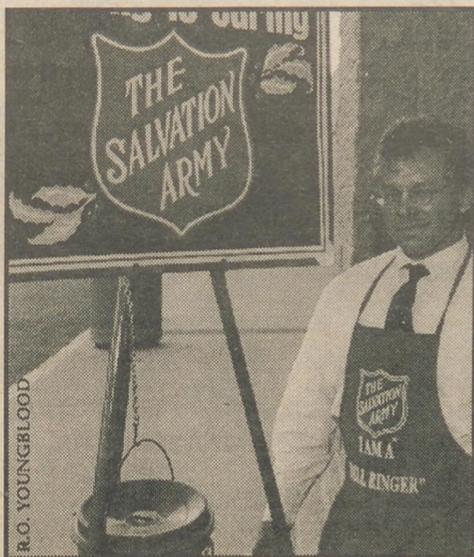
Through its Web site and local chapters, PFLAG encourages gays and their supporters to stuff dollar-bill sized notes into Salvation Army buckets, while making real donations to other charities that offer gay employees equal benefits.

Several versions of the bills have circulated on the Internet; one of the most popular — created by the Genesee County PFLAG in Michigan, which originated the protest — calls on the Salvation Army to "change your discriminatory policy."

"I would have donated — dollar(s)," the bill says, giving users space to fill in the amount of their possible gift. "But the Salvation Army decision to discriminate against gay and lesbian employees prevents my donation now and in the future."

"The red kettles are around a lot this time of year, and the idea is to quietly slip a message to the Salvation Army letting them know we have noticed the stances they have taken, and we don't agree with them," said

> Continued on Page 7



PFLAG chapters across the South are taking part in a protest against what they call the anti-gay policies of the Salvation Army by dropping notes, rather than money, into the Army's well-known red kettles.

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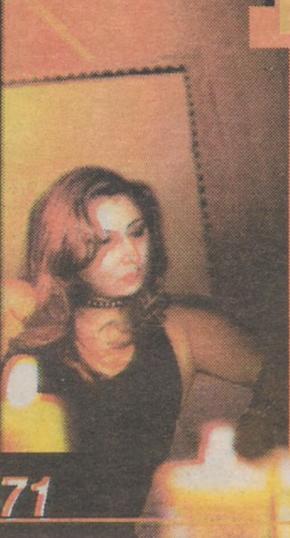
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Gay victim's mother wins partial victory

Appeals court remands part of murder-suicide lawsuit to Harris County after dismissing a portion of the case

by PENNY WEAVER

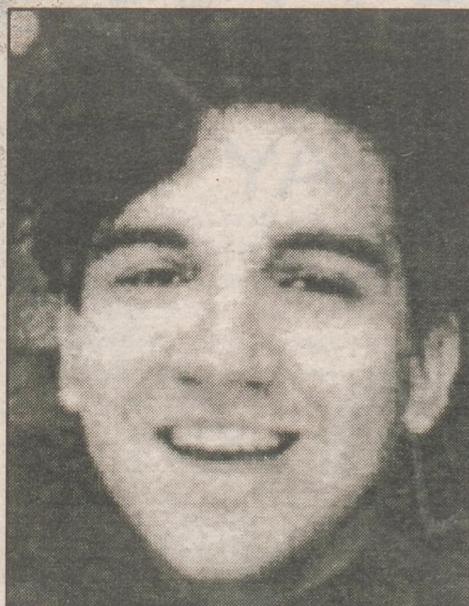
An appeals court has handed down a mixed decision in response to a lawsuit filed by the mother of a gay man who was gunned down by his ex-boyfriend in broad daylight near a Montrose restaurant nearly four years ago.

A three-judge panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the City of Houston wasn't at fault when police failed to intervene in the abusive relationship between the two men before one shot the other and then killed himself.

But the judges did state that the victim's mother can sue the city again for equal protection violations.

The decision upheld a ruling by a Harris County district judge to dismiss Gloria Swidriski's claim that the city's police department contributed to her son's death by failing to intervene when his gay partner abused him.

But the panel ruled that her son, Marc



An appeals court has ruled that Gloria Swidriski, mother of Marc Kajs, who was shot and killed by his ex-boyfriend in 1998, can sue the City of Houston for alleged equal protection violations related to her son's murder.

Kajs, was entitled to equal protection under the 14th Amendment and should not have been ignored because he was gay.

Swidriski sued the city on behalf of her son after he was shot and killed by his former partner, Ilhan Yilmaz, on March 29, 1998, outside the Urbana restaurant in

Rosenberg said the city's case as presented on appeal was full of "shortsighted arguments" in looking at the rights — or lack thereof — for gay men and lesbians.

heavily gay Montrose. Kajs was shot once in the chest, then several times again as he attempted to flee, by Yilmaz, who then shot himself in the temple.

The two had lived together about six months before Kajs moved out in the summer of 1997, according to friends and family members, fearing Yilmaz' alleged violent tendencies.

Thereafter, Yilmaz, a Turkish military veteran, allegedly began stalking Kajs, who filed at least three reports with police against his former lover.

Court records show that Kajs first reported Yilmaz' abuse to Houston police in 1997 shortly after he moved out of the apartment they shared. Swidriski's lawsuit said Kajs called police for help again when Yilmaz threatened him in March 1998 shortly before the shootings.

The appeals panel ruled in the decision released Dec. 13 that Swidriski had to show that the city created a dangerous environment for her son for the city to be held liable.

Robert M. Rosenberg, attorney for Swidriski, said he argued that by not pre-

venting Yilmaz from being on the streets and having access to Kajs, the city police did contribute to that danger.

"It seems pretty dangerous to me," Rosenberg said. "The court found that they didn't create the situation."

He said the city argued that Kajs had his own means to protect himself. Attorneys who handled the city's case could not be reached for comment by press time.

But the panel of judges said the state district judge erred by dismissing Swidriski's complaint that her son wasn't given equal protection as guaranteed by the 14th Amendment.

Rosenberg said the city's case as presented on appeal was full of "shortsighted arguments" in looking at the rights — or lack thereof — for gay men and lesbians.

"I would have liked to prevail on both issues," Rosenberg said, noting his next step on behalf of Swidriski is to pursue the lawsuit based on equal protection.

—The Associated Press contributed to this story.

Missing gay man returns to Houston

Police, friends, family give no information about where Cooper was in the last two weeks

by PENNY WEAVER

A gay Houston man missing since Dec. 5 reappeared unharmed this week, with no public statement about his whereabouts during that time.

Jonathan Gregory "Grey" Cooper returned to Houston in the early morning hours Tuesday, according to his partner, Frank Bonner. He had last been heard from on Dec. 5, when he called a co-worker to say that he was in the Galleria area.

No one heard from Cooper again until this week.

"It's been learned that he was not abducted and, in fact, returned back to Houston uninjured," said John Cannon, Houston Police Department spokesman.

Bonner would not give details about where his partner had been.

"I cannot comment because there's a



Cooper was driving his Mercedes—much like this one—when he disappeared.

continuing investigation at this time," Bonner said. "He's OK and he's home but that's pretty much all I'm going to be able to tell you right now."

Cooper's family issued a formal statement but would not comment further, also citing a continuing police investigation.

"Jonathan Gregory Cooper regrets that

he has not been able to thank the media personally and speak with them about this story," the family statement reads.

"However, the Houston Police Department has specifically asked Jonathan not to discuss any aspect of this ongoing investigation."

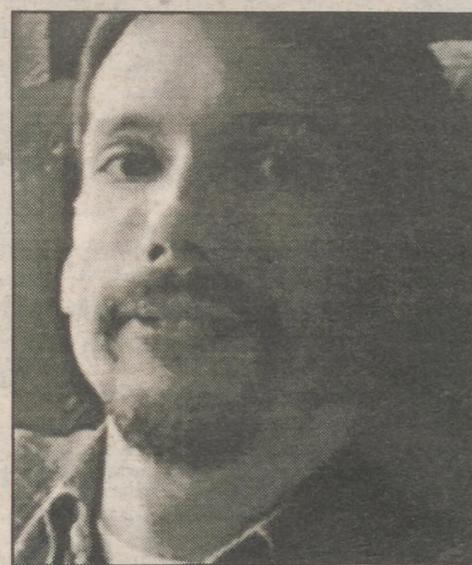
Friend Rhonda Rubin, the co-worker who was last to speak to Cooper on Dec. 5 before he disappeared, also said little.

"The Houston Police Department has specifically asked Greg or any of us not to discuss any aspect of this case," Rubin said.

Cannon said he could not determine the status of the case, as he could not discuss the matter with the lead investigator before press time Thursday.

"I don't know if [the case is] open or closed," Cannon said. "My understanding was ... that he was found unharmed and had run on his own volition."

On Dec. 6, someone attempted to withdraw money from Cooper's account through a teller machine outside a New Orleans-area bank. The videotape from that facility did not clearly show the person who attempted the transaction, Cannon said.



Gay Houston resident Jonathan Cooper, missing since Dec. 5, resurfaced this week, with no public explanation of his whereabouts for nearly two weeks as police, friends and family members led a search for him.

Both Cooper and Bonner are members of the Classic Chassis Car Club of Houston, a group for gay men and lesbians.

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Case against funeral home to be filed next week

➤ Continued from Page 1

said they did not recognize my relationship. They did not ask me if I had paperwork in place."

A gay partnership is not recognized through Texas law as a legal relationship, which is required to establish a partner as next of kin. According to state law, funeral homes must deal with next of kin or a designated representative of the deceased.

But Houston attorney Mitchell Katine, who is representing Diehl, said his client had legal proof that he was to take care of Blanton's services.

"They had the documents, but the funeral home never asked them," Katine said.

"They basically said, 'We can't help you because you're in a gay relationship and Texas law doesn't recognize that.'"

Officials at Garden Oaks Funeral Home could not be reached for comment by press time this week.

"We're going to be filing a claim with the funeral commission regarding [this] refusal to provide services for him due to his homosexual relationship," said Katine, who also represents two Harris County men challenging the state law that bans homosexual sodomy. "We intend to get that filed next week."

Katine said he already has talked to officials at the funeral home commission in

"They basically said, 'We can't help you because you're in a gay relationship and Texas law doesn't recognize that.'"

Austin.

"They intend to investigate this and find out if there's anything they can do about it, including possibly turning this over to the attorney general's office," Katine added.

Diehl said he is dismayed at the alleged policy at Garden Oaks. After that establishment's refusal to cremate Blanton, Diehl contacted Claire Brothers Funeral Home, which handled the services.

"How long can someone wait for a funer-

al home to respond? We don't want this to happen to other people," Katine said. "You're going through emotional trauma from the loss of a loved one and you have to deal with a funeral home that ... insults you for not being in a heterosexual relationship. I don't think that's right."

"People who aren't gay and lesbian don't realize the day-to-day discrimination that gay and lesbian people have to go through," he added.

Gays target Salvation Army with 'kettle protest'

➤ Continued from Page 1

Cynthia Newcomer, PFLAG's national field program and policy director.

Yet Salvation Army officials, or "officers" as they are called, contend that they aren't biased against gays, in services or employment. The church's mission statement says its goal is to "preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination."

"No one likes to be misrepresented, and I feel the Army has been misrepresented in the press," said Lt. Col. Tom Jones, national community relations and development secretary for the Salvation Army. "The Salvation Army helps all people and it doesn't discriminate. We are accepting of all people who need help."

As Salvation Army supporters and detractors debate the meaning of the church's policies, the scope and impact of the PFLAG protest remains impossible to chart.

Meanwhile, Newcomer said some PFLAG chapters are considering expanding their efforts to also include businesses that let the Salvation Army raise funds on their property.

Target Stores, for example, allow bell-ringers to stand at their doors, although the discount chain offers domestic partner benefits to its own employees.

"Some local PFLAG chapters are already looking at who is hosting the Salvation Army outside their doors," Newcomer said.

Target spokesperson Douglas Kline said the Salvation Army is the only group allowed to raise funds at the chain's 1,055 stores. Target allows the efforts "because we have a longstanding relationship with the Salvation Army," but limits what bell-ringers can say to "basically 'hello,' 'goodbye,' 'thank you,' and 'Merry Christmas,'" with no proselytizing, he said.

Kline declined comment on PFLAG's protest, but said Target's position on allowing the Salvation Army is based on an understanding that funds raised support social services, not preaching.

"If the Salvation Army indicates at some time that their ideology is somehow related to

the fund-raising they are doing to give to the needy, that may be a different story, but that doesn't seem to be the case right now," he said.

Defining discrimination

According to PFLAG and gay rights groups that agree with its efforts, the Salvation Army discriminates against gays.

But Jones said that isn't the case.

"The Army is not discriminatory, first of all its services. We helped 36 million Americans last year of all races, all creeds and all kinds of sexual orientations," he said.

Jones said he was not able to cite specific gay individuals or gay groups that the Salvation Army has served, but he listed the Salvation Army Bethesda House in Los Angeles, a home for people with HIV where he says gays are welcome.

The Salvation Army has about 45,000 employees.

"There are gays and straights among those, and we don't know how many, because we don't ask that question, not on any of our employment forms," Jones said.

Another 5,000 "Salvationists," ordained ministers in the Salvation Army church, also work for the church. People who are gay have applied to be cadets and been accepted into training, Jones said.

But the Salvation Army appears to make a distinction between sexual orientation and sexual activity, one that is similar to many mainstream religious denominations which require ministers to be either married or celibate.

Gennie Maze, a 12-year member of the Salvation Army, came forward earlier this month to say she was kicked out of the church six years ago after revealing a relationship with a female Salvationist to her commanding officer.

The officer "flew into a rage and told me I needed mental help and that my partner was Satan," Maze told *Between the Lines*, a gay newspaper in Michigan.

Maze and her partner were discussed by



Lt. Col. Tom Jones said the Salvation Army won't offer domestic partner benefits 'because we believe in the traditional family and strongly believe in family values.'

name during a church service, Maze was ordered to leave the Salvation Army compound, and church members held a candlelight vigil in her yard, she said.

Maze's former commander didn't deny the allegations.

"How it ended up was regrettable. ... We don't single out those in our church who live differently than we do. However, if they want to retain membership in our church they must abide by our standards," Maj. Ralph Bukiewicz told *Between the Lines*.

Still, Jones, the national Salvation Army spokesperson, argued that church policies against sex outside of marriage don't unfairly burden gays.

"It is one thing to be sexually oriented, but the Army would frown on a physical expression of that, from either side," Jones said. "A cadet who engaged in illegitimate sexual practices outside of marriage, either heterosexual or homosexual, would have a difficult time in the Army."

While a heterosexual cadet could marry, the Salvation Army does not have a religious ritual for blessing same-sex unions.

"My guess is that most Salvation Army officers would not want to officiate at a gay wedding," Jones said.

And although the Salvation Army doesn't have an official policy against blessing gay unions, last month it adopted a written policy against offering benefits to domestic partners of employees, gay or straight.

"Because we believe in the traditional family and strongly believe in family values, we have decided not to do that," Jones said. "It's not directed at gays. Many people living together have significant others in their households, male and female, and the Army doesn't provide benefits to them."

PFLAG leaders said their members are also working to address policies against ordaining non-celibate gays in other religious faiths, but the Salvation Army's visibility and social service programs merit the higher-profile kettle protest.

"The Salvation Army bell-ringers are such a ubiquitous presence in our community, I think PFLAG people walked by one too many red kettles, thought about what they are doing to our community, and just couldn't take it anymore," Newcomer said.

Protest's impact unknown

Newcomer called the kettle protests "a great success." But neither PFLAG leaders nor Salvation Army officials could quantify the extent of response.

"Dozens" of PFLAG's 470 chapters around the country are joining in the kettle protest, "but it's grassroots activism, so there is really no way to track it, although we have heard from hundreds of people who say they are participating," Newcomer said.

Although some conservative groups, including the Mississippi-based American Family Association, have pledged to donate money to match the deferred contributions, national Salvation Army leaders aren't keeping a tally of the protest slips dropped into their buckets, Jones said.

A spot survey of major PFLAG chapters around the South showed a range of participation. PFLAG chapters in Washington, D.C.; Houston and Dallas in Texas; Chattanooga, Tenn.; and New Orleans, La., all said they were actively participating in the drive.

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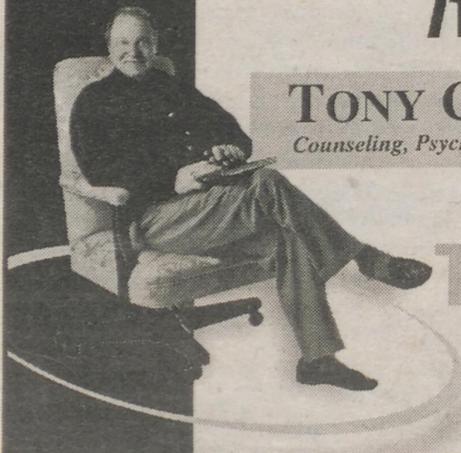
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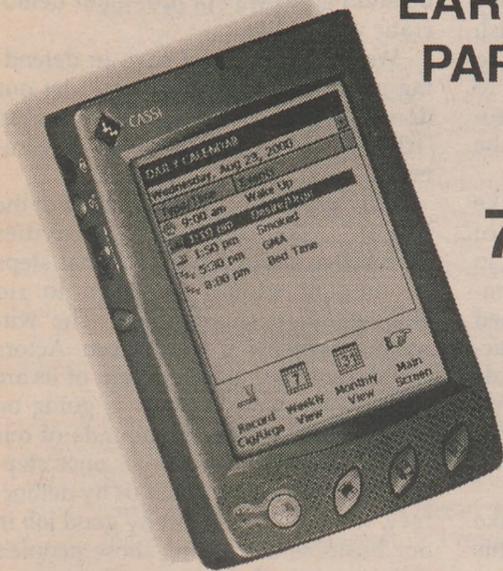
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Issue 1104

VIEWPOINT

Days of infamy, then and now, test our democratic ideal

by LISA KEEN

America's dramatic entry into World War II was triggered by the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, a catastrophe memorialized in 60th anniversary events this month. The retrospection seemed all the more poignant this year given the similarities with this year's surprise terrorist attack on Sept. 11.

There is another striking parallel developing between then and now. It was then, following World War II, that the federal government began an overzealous hunt for Communists and "subversive" groups that lasted for years and eventually led to the routing of gay people from their jobs.

One of the most devastating effects of this unchecked witchhunt was an atmosphere in which questioning what the government was doing became grounds for suspecting that the questioner was un-American.

Naturally, then, some people bridled Dec. 6 at U.S. Attorney John Ashcroft's remarks before the Senate Judiciary Committee. His comments starkly recalled those days when Sen. Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee sought to smoke out Communists. Only now, our government is hunting terrorists.

"Terrorist operatives infiltrate our communities — plotting, planning and waiting to kill again," said Ashcroft testified before the committee.

To those who would criticize his heavier-handed tactics — like searching e-mails, interrogating thousands of male students from Islamic countries, detaining hundreds of Muslims without making public any charges — Ashcroft employed a tactic from McCarthy's playbook. Those who criticize such tactics, he said, are not with "us," the American people, but with

The Bush administration should trust democracy to root out subversives, and not the same tactics as McCarthy used to hound suspected Communists and gays.

"them," the terrorists.

"To those ... who scare peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty, my message is this," said Ashcroft. "Your tactics only aid terrorists, for they erode our national unity and diminish our resolve. They give ammunition to America's enemies and pause to America's friends. They encourage people of goodwill to remain silent in the face of evil."

In fact, it is statements like Ashcroft's that encourage people of goodwill to remain silent. According to news accounts of the hearing, the members of the Judiciary Committee seemed unwilling to scrutinize Ashcroft's tactics, including secret military tribunals for non-citizen terrorists. A Gallup Poll taken the weekend after his appearance found 76 percent of Americans think he's doing a good job.

But it is Ashcroft's bully-like rhetoric threatens America and that his tactics for routing out terrorists are an overreaction.

Yes, extraordinary measures are sometimes needed to mitigate extraordinary threats to our national security. I'm just not sure the measures Ashcroft is engaging will have the intended effect of locating more of those responsible for the Sept. 11 attack and of protecting us against future attacks.

Assuming the threat of future terrorist attacks is real — and I think we can assume it is — it will take more than secret tribunals, warrantless interrogations, and wide-net detentions to fend them off.

It will take the informed alertness of

almost every American. But we need to stay alert to more than just who's getting on the plane with us. We're defending more than just our lives. We're defending our way of life — our democratic way of life.

We must be careful that, in defending against terrorists, we don't let our democratic principles fall victim to "friendly fire" from our own government.

Fifty years ago, a staff member of the House Un-American Activities Committee asked a witness what steps he thought should be taken to rid Hollywood of Communists. The witness, representing the Screen Actors Guild, replied that "99 percent of us are pretty well aware of what is going on and, I think, within the bounds of our democratic rights and never once stepping over the rights given us by democracy, we have done a pretty good job in our business of keeping those people's activities curtailed.

"I never, as a citizen, want to see our country become urged, by either fear or resentment of this group, that we ever compromise with any of our democratic principles through that fear or resentment," said the witness. "I still think that democracy can do it."

The witness was Ronald Reagan, a hero of John Ashcroft's.

The ACLU and a dozen other civil rights groups filed a lawsuit Dec. 5, seeking to force Ashcroft to disclose basic information about a thousand people arrested and detained following the Sept. 11 attacks. The Justice Department's secrecy around these detainees is "unprecedented," says the lawsuit, "and deprives the public of information it is lawfully entitled to receive."

"In opposing those people," said Reagan in 1947, referring to Communists, "the best thing to do is make democracy work. ... [We] make it work by insuring everyone a vote and by keeping everyone informed. I believe that, as Thomas Jefferson put it, if all the American people know all of the facts they will never make a mistake."

Of course, Reagan, as president, did not keep everyone informed — not about Iran-Contra or AIDS, to name two important subjects. We had to demand the facts then, and we must demand them now.

Lisa Keen is senior political correspondent for the *Houston Voice* and can be reached at lkeen@washblade.com

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VIEWPOINT

Behold, I bring you boring tidings: the dreaded holiday form letter

by RICH ARENSCHIELDT

"Uncle Fred and Aunt Mary Ann Send Snowy Greetings from Wappingers Falls" is the headline on the twinkling stars/Santa panda bear letterhead. Fabulous! The annual holiday epistle from my two dullest (and thankfully distant relations) has arrived. This is an annual reminder that, even if I get stuck in a coma for 12 months, someone else's life is less eventful than my own.

I'm trembling with anticipation — what will the news be? A new drainpipe in the chicken coop for poop? New curtains in the "rec" room (yes, they still have one of those) made from lil' Stacy's old "Brownie" uniform? Millions of thoughts zing through my head like sugarplum fairies. I think, "I wonder what life must be like near the Arctic Circle?" I'm about to find out.

As expected, the first 300 words are about the weather. This is often the case with people who willingly move to a place where life ceases for nine months out of the year. I start to read the letter. Stylistically, it's no Pulitzer Prize winner, but I know Aunt Mary Ann began drafting it right after Halloween, so I read on.

The authoress has done an amazing job of weaving fact and fiction. An astute family member will be able to discern from the subtext a series of actual events. Reading between the lines is mandatory while reading any Noel Novella.

Case in point: "There were some gorgeous icicles this year — one of them was shaped just like our beloved Itzachk (their annoying squashed-faced Lhasa Apso)." What this really means is, "Stupid Fred let the dog out to pee during 'Baywatch,' forgot to let him back in, and Itzachk became a canine popsicle." All is not lost, though; perhaps he'll make a nice winter patio piece.

Brevity regarding a family member is a sure sign that something is definitely not right in Bethlehem. Auntie speaks of my oafish uncle as though he will never read what she's written. "Fred is quite busy with projects around the house." What she is really trying to say is: "Since his license was suspended for DWI, he can't drive — he's almost finished with his probation from the incident involving that girl at the Elks Lodge party — Fred swears he didn't know she was underage."

Progeny are similarly handled. Even my 40-plus peers, cousins who still fall in

and out of favor with great regularity. Those siblings who opt for continuous parental contact and news of garden paraisites are highly praised: "Ginny and Garrot have three lovely little ones, Star, Skyler and Brooke (with an "e"). They are all wonderful and Skyler continues to delight us with his carefree attitude."

Interpreting this phrase presents more of a challenge. Two bits of news are contained herein. Fact one: Their daughter Ginny (who, to quote Gilbert and Sullivan, looks best "in the dark with the light behind her.") watches entirely too many daytime soaps (see children's names above). Fact two: Little Skyler spends Christmas (and every other day for that matter) drooling on himself. This the result of his older sister attempting to slice him in half with the electric garage door after watching "Siegfried and Roy" on TV.

Siblings who found reports of the local hoof fungus from the home front too stimulating and opted to flee to quieter places (like L.A. or New York City) are treated tersely. Towards the end of the missive I read a brief sentence concerning their eldest daughter: "Stacy and her friend are fine."

Wow! Here we have hit the "holiday

euphemism mother lode."

At last, the event the whole family has waited for: outright admission of a lesbian in our midst! Not just any lesbian, but, I happen to know from another loose-lipped relation who's a good source of information (especially when called after cocktail hour), a "handsome" young lady who speaks Spanish as her first language! Way to go Stacy!

With one sentence, Aunt Mary Ann has plopped a caramel into our Christmas milk punch. Stacy, after being conspicuous by her absence in the last four years of dreadful missives, has finally made a "We're here, we're queer, get used to it" reappearance.

Aunt Mary Ann's final line is the most telling of all: "The year has been filled with challenges but we would sure like to see all of you!" This means: "Hurry up and visit us before the doctor has to increase our dosages of anti-depressants!"

Happy holidays to families, crazed and otherwise!

Rich Arenschioldt is a freelance writer and may be reached through Houston Voice via e-mail at editor@houstonvoice.com.



Let us know what you think!

Send the editor your letters (400 words maximum) or op-ed submissions (800 words maximum). Include a name and phone number for verification.

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The Mostly Unfabulous Social Life of Ethan Green

by eric orner



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"I'm not gay. [I blurted it out and thought I should] just run with it. Free publicity. It should be wonderful for my career."

Ellen DeGeneres, during her host monologue for the Dec. 15 episode of "Saturday Night Live." She thanked her husband "Jerry" for minding the fort while, "Here I am, gaying it up, fruiting around."



Ellen DeGeneres

"People expect it of me. I suppose I'm going to have to stick with it — as opposed to other people."

Ellen DeGeneres, hosting the Dec. 15 "Saturday Night Live," in an obvious dig at ex-lover Anne Heche, who recently married a man



Miss Manners

"That you want your sister to be your bridesmaid and that she wants to do this should settle the matter. How she got to be your sister is irrelevant, as is any speculation about how people will react. Miss Manners trusts you to explain kindly to your fiancé and mother that you have already made the decision and you are confident that they will support you in it, even if they do not agree."

Syndicated advice columnist Miss Manners (Judith Martin), responding to a reader concerned that her relatives are strongly opposed to her decision to ask her 21-year-old brother, who is a pre-op male-to-female transsexual, to be a bridesmaid in her wedding

"[Gays are] trying to take over the world. ... The gays and lesbians harass you, try to intimidate you. That's why we can't do this, because they'll sue you the first chance they get. ... None of them really feel OK, so they're trying to get the rest of us to put a big stamp of approval on their back."

Michael Mungo, member since 1969 on the University of South Carolina Board of Trustees, objecting to a vote by the faculty senate to add sexual orientation as a protected category in the school's equal opportunity policy

"These comments sound like the ones white racists made about black people decades ago. Mr. Mungo has outlived his usefulness on the board."

Kevin Lewis, a USC religious studies professor, on the statements by Michael Mungo

"In my view, an administrator should be allowed to refuse to hire someone because of their sexual orientation. We should be able to exclude open homosexuals from teaching our kids."

State Sen. John Hawkins (R-Spartanburg, S.C.), on a bill he plans to introduce that would block state institutions, including universities, from protecting gays from discrimination

"I never intended to question [Lennox Lewis's] sexuality."

Boxer Hasim Rahman, asked to explain an earlier interview in which he accused Lewis of a "gay move" when Lewis, who lost his world heavyweight title to Rahman, sued to force a rematch. Lewis won the Nov. 17 bout and regained the crown.

"[Rahman should] stop using that gay tag. If you think I am gay, bring your sister."

Boxer Lennox Lewis, responding to Hasim Rahman before their Nov. 17 rematch, won by Lewis

"How can they call me gay? I'm 120 percent a man's man."

British boxer Lennox Lewis, asked by Radio Times to respond to rumors about this sexual orientation



Hasim Rahman (left) and Lennox Lewis

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Out on the Bayou

houston voice • december 21, 2001

Gandalf the G(r)ay

Ian McKellen talks about his life in the closet, and being a gay wizard

by STEPHEN HOLT

Relaxing in his dressing room, between matinee and evening performances in the Broadway production of "Dance of Death," Sir Ian McKellen seems as comfortable as a hobbit in his den.

As well he should. Not only is the gay British knight critically acclaimed for his role as the play's tortured husband, but his role as the wizard Gandalf the Gray is at the heart of the new film "The Lord of the Rings," set to achieve blockbuster status.

"Gandalf is everywhere!" McKellen exults, referring to the omnipresent merchandising campaign, which has put McKellen's image on cups, book covers, games, posters and billboards all over the world. Sir Ian, 62, is positively delighted to show guests his "Lord of the Rings" glass from Burger King, featuring Gandalf's likeness.

"It's an accessory for the Christmas table," he says, demon-

strating how the goblet glows an (appropriately) bright pink. "So when you put your drink into the glass it all lights up. In a darkened room, on a table, see how handsome that looks."

McKellen is in an unprecedented position for an openly gay man — with a \$300 million-plus movie franchise riding, in part, on his trim shoulders. "The Fellowship of the Ring," which opened Dec. 19, is just the first part of the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, based on the books by JRR Tolkien, with the next two installments scheduled for release over the next two years. In the guise of Gandalf, McKellen's image will soon be part of the imagination of Tolkien fans all over the world.

"There was a lot of talk about that: 'Was it a gay Gandalf?'" McKellen says. "There were letters on those intense Web sites of fans saying that it was outrageous that a gay man had been cast. I don't think anyone is saying that now that they are seeing the film, because I'm an actor."

The discussion of sexual orientation is almost irrelevant to his portrayal of the wizard, says McKellen.

"Is Gandalf gay? Is he straight? He doesn't seem to have sexuality. He's just Gandalf. It's like saying 'Is the archangel Gabriel gay or straight?' It doesn't really come into it."

And he doesn't buy into speculation that the film's hero hobbits, Frodo and Sam, are a gay couple.

"Some gay people have said that," he notes, "but Tolkien thinks of them as the buddies who go off to war together. Sex doesn't come into it, but deep affection."

McKellen took a practical, physical approach to his role, he says.

"[Gandalf] is what we call a tramp in England. He's a wanderer, a vagabond. He lives in the countryside. He probably

sleeps under trees, or in caves. I sort of recognized that type.

"Once I got the look, once they put all that make-up on me [a wig, beard, and false nose], I saw him twinkling back at me in the mirror. It wasn't a big effort, really," he says modestly. "It's clear. The story is very clear. Sometimes he's angry. Sometimes he's impatient. Sometimes he's witty."

Despite his protestations, McKellen's portrayal of those different moods has been hailed by critics, and New Line Cinema is launching an Oscar campaign to give McKellen another shot at the Academy Award for "Best Actor." He was nominated in 1998 for his portrayal of gay 1930s film director James Whale in "Gods and Monsters."

It's been a long road for the gay knight, who was born in the small town of Burnley in northern England in 1939.

"I didn't really relate to being gay until I went to University, Cambridge, and there I met some gay people," he says. "But no one was out. No one was open. No one said they were gay. It was a secret society."

It was at Cambridge that he had his first love affair.

"It was a three- or four-month breakthrough for me," he says. "Then I just started accepting I was gay. I made no attempt to hide it, except from my family, who knew I occasionally lived with men."

McKellen skyrocketed to prominence in the British theater at the 1969 Edinburgh Festival, with the feat of portraying the title roles in Marlowe's "Edward II" and Shakespeare's "Richard II" on alternate nights. "Edward II" is a very gay play, and McKellen played the role to the hilt, kissing Edward's lover Gaveston on the mouth and tearing their doublets apart in a frenzy of queer eroticism.

But McKellen himself wasn't out. Even when he starred as a gay man in the 1979 stage play "Bent," about gay concentration camp victims, he declined to come out to the press or to his family.

"It did seem to be a shocking thing to be doing," he notes. "I wish I had taken advantage of 'Bent' to be out. But I was living such a closeted life, not just in the sense of the gay [community]. The only thing in my life was work. So I cut myself off from all sorts of things. Not just gay rights. I didn't even notice the gay rights



PHOTO: DAVID BARTOLOMNER

movement, but I cut myself off from friends, family, partly to do with being gay. I didn't go on holidays very much. I didn't really read the newspapers. I didn't read the latest books. I wasn't participating in life really."

All that changed after his public coming out in 1988, during a radio debate over Section 28, a UK law banning discussion of homosexuality in schools. Since that event, McKellen has become a gay activist, co-founding the group Stonewall UK and appearing at gay rights events like the 1993 March on Washington. His family took the news well, he says, noting: "Well, I was 49. At 49 it was like, 'Well, tell me another.'"

And his coming out and subsequent activism has not hindered his career in any way.

"On the contrary, my film career's taken off since I came out," he observes. "So without any effort on my part, I seem to be making a statement, and if some people take comfort in that, that's great. I wanted to make the point that being gay has nothing to do with the business of enjoying an actor's performance."

"What always seems extraordinary to me is that anyone should say that because you're gay you can't do things. You can't be on mugs and you shouldn't be given certain parts."

Now McKellen is enjoying the perks of being an internationally famous film star — including having his own action figures.

"I've already been an action figure as Magneto from the 'X-Men,'" he gleefully points out. "You can play with your Magneto figure and your Gandalf figure and they can fight each other. Or you can have them love each other."

INFO

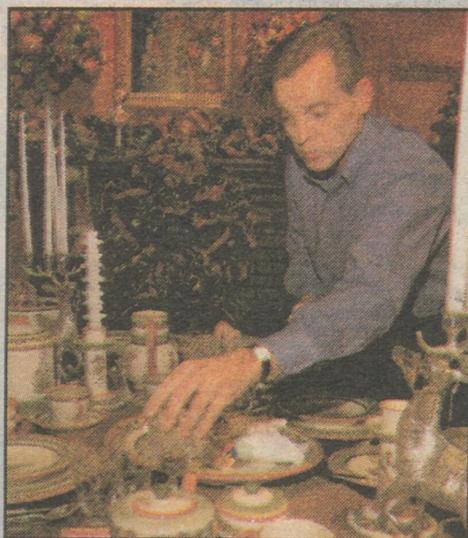
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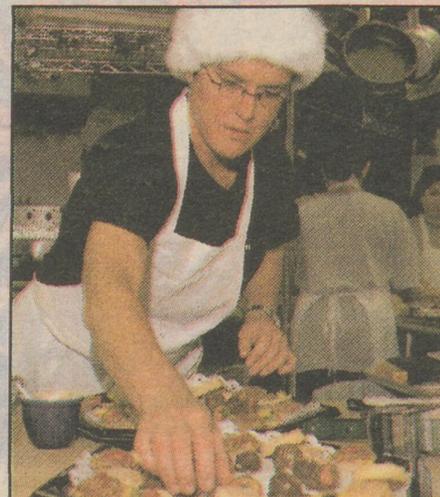
NEW LINE CINEMA

Ian McKellen dismisses speculation about his character's sexual orientation in "The Lord of the Rings." "It's like saying, 'Is the archangel Gabriel gay or straight?'" he says. "It doesn't really come into it."

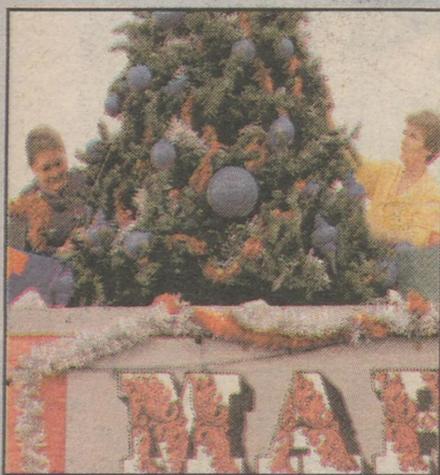
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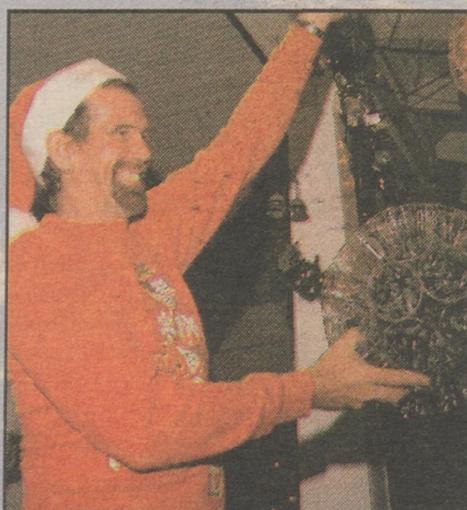
Charlie Corley prepares a table at Haus Edelweiss Ltd. with a holiday theme.



DaCapo's owner Lisa Biggerstaff, who operates the business with her twin sister, Tresa, puts together a tray of holiday desserts.



Manager Cindy Ewing (left) and owner Gaye Yancey (right) decorate the annual Christmas tree at Mary's on Westheimer in preparation for the holiday season.



Dan Jacobson wears appropriate garb while decorating his Montrose home for the holidays.

PHOTOS BY KIM THOMPSON

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Throughout Dean's career he has accomplished various roles such as, Art Director for a number of runway designers, special events stylist and was an integral part of the education and development team at Avalon Salon and Day Spa in New York.

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on stage

THEATER REVIEW

Fab version of 'Fabulous'

Theatre New West gives Rudnick's 'Most Fabulous Story Ever Told' a winning production

by GEORGE JONTE

Warning! If you are one who is offended by cutting remarks to your religious faith, you'd better not go see "The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told."

Playwright Paul Rudnick has a real knack at writing wit, while truly hilarious, that also cuts to the quick, if you're prone to convention. He did it in "I Hate Hamlet" and again in "Jeffrey," among others.

But Catholic, Protestant, Mormon and Jew alike are taken to task in this piece. No one is spared in what may be Rudnick's most biting script to date. What is there, as well, is a script that runs the gamut of emotions. And Theatre New West's production fulfills every request of the playwright in a production that is engaging, entertaining and thought-provoking.

Joe Watts, artistic director, says he has been in love with this script ever since he first encountered it several years ago — so much so that he scrapped earlier plans to produce the incredibly campy "Christmas With The Crawfords" when another area theater released its hold on the "Fabulous" script. While "CWTC" is a great script and should be produced in Houston, the choice of this script was incredibly timely.

The play, in two acts, begins in The Garden of Eden with a merry, albeit irreverent, romp with Adam and Steve. Very archetypal, Adam even proposes to rearrange the garden after looking at its vast beauty. You know what they say about two queens in the same space.

Just as they have their world "perfect," or so they think, enter Jane and Mabel, two lesbians who claim that they were the first ones around. The lesbians actually create the notion of God and the Bible, while the gay men set about creating conventions for entertaining and for creating "shampoo and conditioner in one bottle."

The second act moves to the current day in Adam and Steve's New York apartment on Christmas Eve. Jane and Mabel have decided to pursue parenthood and one of the gay men is the sperm donor. While preparing for their commitment ceremony, presided over by an irreverent Rabbi contacted through "1-900-SHEbrew," Jane's water breaks and the birth takes place instead.

The quartet of leads is perfectly cast. Adam Clarke as Adam and Steve Bullitt as Steve (purely accidental that their given names are the same as their stage names), combine looks, presence and excellent

comedic timing into performances that grow and mature like fine wine right through to the powerful ending.

Likewise, Natalie Maisel, as the "butch" Jane and Jenny Yau as the "femme" Mabel give thoroughly winning performances. Both couples evoke warmth and empathy from the audience.

Providing interesting food for thought as well as humorous interjection as the stage manager is the quintessentially talented Mary Hooper. Off to the side at a station much like you'd find a stage manager in any theater, she delivers light and sound cues with the authoritative aplomb you would expect. The character even acknowledges toward the end of the evening that stage managers are indeed "god" who

No stone has been left unturned and Watts and the cast have done total justice to Rudnick's script.

they are running a production.

Multiple cameo roles are ably handled by Taavi Mark, Belinda Babinec, Mick Petersen and Tanya Bryan. Especially noteworthy are Mark's portrayal of a campy pharaoh in Act I and Babinec's wheelchair-bound lesbian rabbi in Act 2.

Watts has directed this production with his usual careful attention to every detail, pulling every moment out of the script for the audience to savor — and savor we did. In 25 years of theater in Houston, this will be the jewel in his directorial crown. No stone has been left unturned and Watts and the cast have done total justice to Rudnick's script.

Through all the hilarity and irreverence, there is one strong message that makes this play a viewing must by gays and straights alike — "It is okay to be gay and God says 'YES!'"

It is said that successful theater is that which evokes both laughter and tears from the audience. If this is true, "The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told" is indeed a success.

INFO

'The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told'

Through Feb. 2 (no performances Dec. 21 and 22)

8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays

Tickets: \$20

Theatre New West

1415 California

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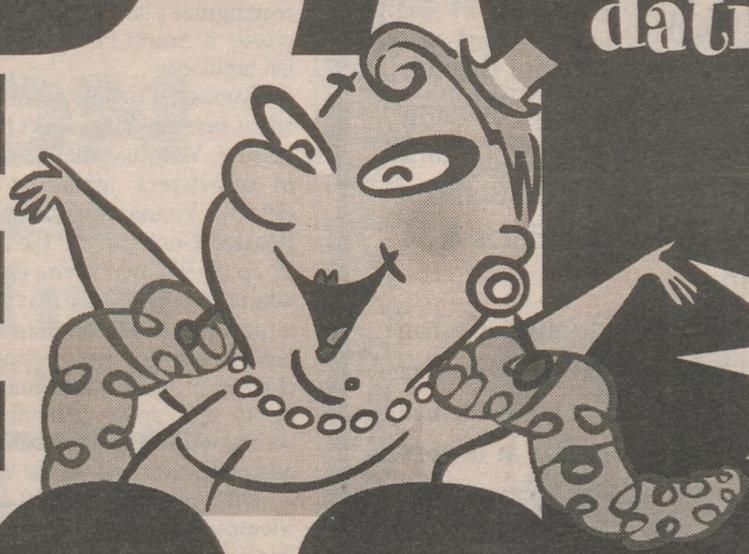
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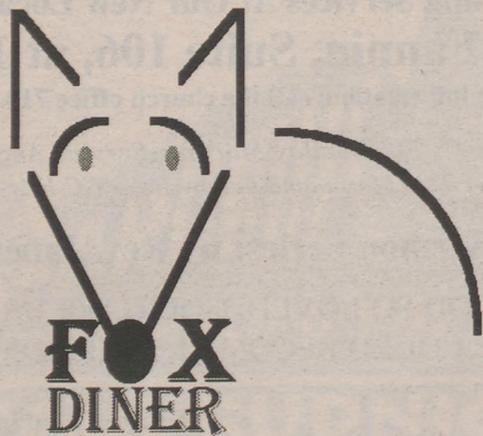
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RESTAURANT REVIEW

Vietopia worth the splurge

Eatery offers excellent cuisine, service and atmosphere to pamper all types of diners

by KATHREEN LEE

If you've arrived early to any movie at any one of Houston's multiscreened gigaplexes and subjected yourself to the indefatigably repeating slide show of advertisements from local hospitals, restaurants and real estate agents, then, no doubt, you've seen ads for Vietopia. Wedged in between Coca-Cola movie trivia about "Risky Business" and pictures of happy nuclear families in their happy cookie cutter homes, advertisements for Vietopia tout the eatery as one of Houston's few high-end Vietnamese restaurants.

Unlike many Vietnamese establishments which consider glamour shot pictures of their food, stark white walls, neon Tsingtao clocks, and undulating shimmering waterfall portraits sold at street corner gas stations as ample décor, Vietopia goes out of its way to create an elegant atmosphere.

Upon first entry, you are immediately greeted by the iridescent glow from the large marine tank suffused with vibrantly colored tropical fish, sea anemones and corals. The main dining hall on the ground floor of the double-tiered restaurant opens into a large atrium with high ceilings and subdued mossy green and light mustard colors line the vaulted walls. The roughly hewn bamboo thatches interspersed throughout the restaurant and the large heart-shaped fans substituting the typical rectangular planks on the ceiling rotor fans create a South-Pacific-Tropic-Casablancaish ambiance.

Pampered by this seemingly island paradise, one can only expect the same from its cuisine. Vietopia offers an elaborate array of appetizers including Crab Fingers (\$9.95), Vietnamese Crepes (\$8.95) and Roasted Duck (\$8.95). We tried the Lettuce Wrap (\$6.95), which you enfold yourself by taking iceberg lettuce leaves and wrapping it around diced chicken seasoned with onions, garlic, and peppers. While the chicken is already well marinated with the sweet and spicy seasoning, the dish is served with a ginger based sauce which adds a further kick to the wrap.

Offering more than 60 different entrees, Vietopia can do no wrong in meeting anyone's particular tastes and desires. At least a third of the menu is devoted to "Mrs. Ky's Traditional Family Recipes," which offer a variety of seafood dishes including lobster, crab, fish, scallops, and shrimp, as well as duck. Under Mrs. Ky's recipes is a special dish prepared in a style called Clay Pot. Tender chicken, beef or fish are immersed in a broth and served at your table with the broth still boiling in the pot.

We ordered the Fish Clay Pot (\$13.95),

which offers catfish steaks simmered in a sweet black pepper sauce. While the catfish meat was warm, sweet, with a melt-in-your-mouth tenderness, the broth in which it was smothered was overly sweet and the pungent odor from the dish was slightly nauseating.

Although that dish was not too appetizing, Vietopia more than made up for it with its Beef Marinated in Minced Lemon Grass and Coconut Shrimp (\$13.95). The thinly sliced lean beef was grilled to perfection, and the mingling of the beef with the sharp and vinegary sliced vegetables made for a delectable complement. The fresh shrimp were nicely butterflied, but seemed lackluster in taste on their own. Dipped in fish sauce, however, the shrimp provided the perfect vehicle for the more flavorful sauce.

One menu item that must not go without mention is Vietopia's Fried Bananas with Ice Cream (\$6.95). The four large banana pieces, battered and lightly fried, are served with whip cream and butter pecan ice cream draped with chocolate syrup. The soft and sweet banana has practically melted inside the fried shell and provides just the right texture to balance the supple banana goo. The fusion of the hot fried bananas with the cold and sweet butter pecan ice cream offers the taste buds an experience that can only be summed up as "divine."

Through décor, food and service, Vietopia offers exactly what its namesake implies - a utopia for Vietnamese cuisine lovers. While a bit more pricey than the average Vietnamese establishments, Vietopia is the right place for anyone willing to splurge a bit and pamper themselves.

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Vietnamese Cuisine

Vietopia
5176 Buffalo Speedway
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713-664-7303

FOOD FILE

Food: |●| |●| |●| |●|

Service: |●| |●| |●| |●|

Value: |●| |●| |●| |●|

Scene: |●| |●| |●| |●|

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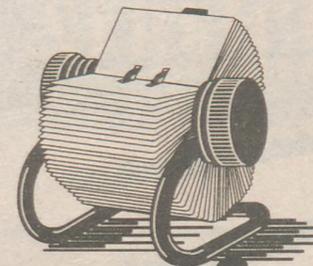
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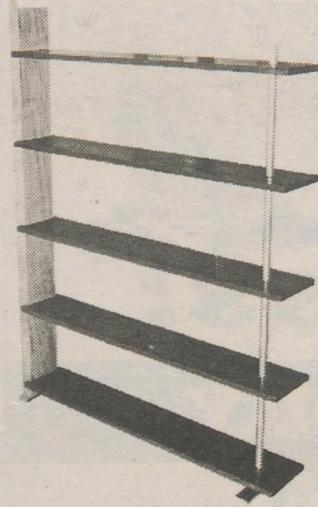
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community calendar

saturday, dec 22

every saturday

After Hours. KPFT 90.1 FM. 12 a.m. to 3 a.m.
713-526-5738.

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

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

Houston Chain Gang Bicycle Club. Call for
ride locations. 713-863-1860.

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

Q-Patrol walks the streets 9:30 p.m.
Convenes at community center. 713-528-SAFE.
E-mail: qpatrolinc@aol.com

Rainbow Fishing Club. Meeting. 713-526-7070
or 713-880-9235.

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

Houston Gay & Lesbian Community Center.
Drop-in noon-4 p.m. • Center cleanup, 10 a.m. •
Texas Association for Transsexual Support, 3 p.m. •
STAG (Some Transgenders Are Guys), 7 p.m. •
803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

sunday, dec 23

every sunday

**Anarchist Black Cross Federation/Anarchist
Reading Group.** 1 p.m. www.houstonabc.org.
713-595-2103

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

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

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

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

First Unitarian Universalist Church. Services at
9:30 & 11:30 a.m. Brunch available, 10:30 a.m.
Panel discussion, 1:30 p.m. 713-526-5200.
church@firstuu.org.

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

Grace Lutheran Church. Sunday school for all
ages 9 a.m. Service 10:30 a.m. 713-528-3269.
Houston Mission Church. Service 10:30 a.m.
713-529-8225.

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

Maranatha Fellowship Metropolitan Church.
Service, 6:30 p.m. 713-528-6756.

Rainbow Riders. A bicycle club for women.
713-869-1686.

Resurrection MCC. Services. 9 and 11 a.m.
Adult Sunday School, 10 a.m. Youth Sunday

School, 11:15 a.m. Handbell Choir rehearsal,
1:30 p.m. 713-861-9149.

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

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

Thoreau Unitarian Universalist Congregation.
Adult discussion, 9:45 a.m. Service, 11 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 Gay & Lesbian Community Center.
Drop-in 2- 5 p.m. • LOAF (Lesbians Over Age
Fifty), 2 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. • 713-524-3818.

monday, dec 24

every monday

AIDS Mastery. 7 p.m. Montrose Counseling
Center. 713-529-0037.

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

gayDAR. Wellness Community. Support Group.
7 p.m. 713-526-1017, Ext. 211.

Gay Fathers/Fathers First. Support group.
8-9:30 p.m. Grace Lutheran Church. Tom,
713-726-8736.

www.geocities.com/gaydadshouston/
Gay Men's Chorus of Houston. Open
rehearsals, 7 p.m. 713-521-7464.

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

HIV testing. STD exams and treatment. Free.
AVES. 1-6:15 p.m. 713-626-2837.

Houston Tennis Club. 9 a.m. Memorial Park at
the Tennis Center. 713-692-2703.

Kolbe Project. Eucharist 7:30 p.m. 713-861-1800.
Lesbian & Gay Voices Radio Show. 8-10 p.m. KPFT
90.1. 713-529-1223.

Northwoods AIDS Coalition Food Pantry.
Open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. 936-441-1614.

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center.
Drop-in 6-9 p.m. 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

tuesday, dec 25

every tuesday

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

CPR Classes. 3 p.m. 713-607-7700.

For Mature Audiences Only. Support group.
7 p.m. Bering Memorial UMC. 713-526-1017.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 8 p.m. to mid-
night. Club Houston. 713-830-3000.

Gay Men's Process Group. 7 p.m. 3316 Mt. Vernon.
713-526-8390.

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

Helping Cross Dressers Anonymous. Support
group. 7 p.m. 713-524-0439.

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

community calendar

Kay, 713-208-1529.

HTGA. Support group. 7 p.m. 713-520-0439.

Men's Network. Discussion group for social, educational development of gay and bisexual men. 7 p.m. Montrose Counseling Center. 713-529-0037.

Northwoods AIDS Coalition Food Pantry.

Open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. 281-633-2555.

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

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Drop-in 6-9 p.m. • Lesbian Coming-Out Group, 7 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

wednesday, dec 26

Center for AIDS. Women's Mixer. 1407 Hawthorne. 713-527-8210.

every wednesday

Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. 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. Thomas Street Clinic. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 2015 Thomas St. 713-793-4026.

Freelance Art Classes. By Kermit Eisenhut for HIV+ individuals. 1-4 p.m. Lunch provided. 713-523-9530.

Houston Pride Band. Open rehearsal. 1307 Yale. 713-527-0931. www.houstonprideband.org.

Houston Tennis Club. 7:30-9 p.m. Memorial Park Tennis Center. houstontennisclub@aol.com
Lesbian Literature Discussion Group. 7 p.m. Meets every other Wednesday. 713-383-6738.

Northwoods AIDS Coalition Food Pantry. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. 936-441-1614.

Spiritual Uplift service. 7 p.m. Bible Study 7:30 p.m. Resurrection MCC. 713-861-9149.

Women's Network. Montrose Counseling Center discussion group for social, educational development of gay and bisexual women. 7 p.m. Montrose Counseling Center. 713-529-0037.

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Drop-in 6-9 p.m. • Free HIV testing, counseling, 6-9 p.m. • Houston Committee for People's Radio, 6:30 p.m. • Bi-Net Houston. 7:30 p.m. 713-524-3818.

thursday, dec 27

every thursday

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

Free HIV Testing. By the Montrose Clinic. 8 p.m. to midnight. Toyz Disco. 713-830-3000.

FrontRunners. Running club. 6:30 p.m. 713-522-8021.

Gay Houston. New social group for all ages. 7 p.m. 713-526-9318.

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

HIV Art Therapy Program. 1-4 p.m. Kermit Eisenhut. 713-523-9530.

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

Lambda Skating Club. 8 p.m. Tradewinds. Skating Rink. www.lambdaroll.org. 713-410-7215. Northwoods AIDS Coalition Food Pantry. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. 281-633-2555.

Rainbow Ranglers. Free C&W dance lessons. Two hours free line dance instruction. No partner required. Drop in anytime. Brazos River Bottom. 8:30 p.m. 713-528-9192.

STD exams & treatment. Free. AVES. 713-626-2837.

Spanish Charla Conversation Group. Empire Cafe, 7 p.m. Email charlahouston@msn.com. 713-416-7203.

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

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Drop in 6-9 p.m. • Monthly board meeting, 7 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

friday, dec 28

Integrity/Houston Annual Holy Innocents Eucharist & Christmas Party, 7 p.m. Home of Rob Rynearson, 3507 Audubon Place, Apt.7. 713-528-6771.

Kolbe Project Movie night. "Pearl Harbor" 1030 Heights Blvd. www.kolbeproject.org

every friday

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

Govinda Yoga Club. Free yoga classes at 3115 West Loop South, No. 21. 713-439-0455.

Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals (H.A.T.C.H.) Meeting. 713-942-7002.

Houston Tennis Club. 7:30-9 p.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. houstontennisclub@aol.com

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

Lesbian & Gay Voices. KPFT 90.1 FM. 7 p.m. 713-526-5738.

Q-Patrol. Walks the streets. 9 p.m. 713-528-SAFE.

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Drop-in 6-9 p.m. • Hawthorne Men's Club, 7:30 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818

volunteer/self-help

Gay & Lesbian Help line. For gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. Staffed by volunteers of all ages. 6-11 p.m. Monday-Friday, 5-10 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. 888-340-GLBT.

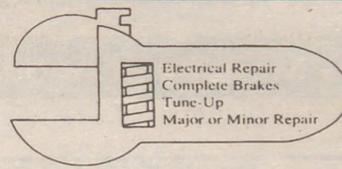
Peer Listening Line. Youth only. Staffed by GLBT youth for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. 5-10 p.m. Monday-Friday. 800-399-PEER.

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Q Puzzle

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	
13					14				15		16			
17					18						19			
20				21			22			23				
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51	52	53					54		55			56	57	58
59						60			61			62		
63						64						65		
66							67					68		

"FAMILY MAGAZINE"

ACROSS

- Margaret Cho's "Can't ___ Dancing"
- Come and go
- Makes tattoos
- Fey of SNL's Weekend Update
- Former Syrian president
- Water-to-wine town
- They have foamy heads
- "___ Is Nothing Like a Dame"
- "Midnight in the Garden of Good and ___"
- Blues singer Smith
- "Family" news magazine
- Snow pea holders
- Hebrides isle
- Rita Mae Brown's "Riding ___"
- One who yells, "Yer out!"
- Poet Frank
- Gay men's lifestyle magazine
- Caesar's way
- Come quickly
- Homophone for hairy ones
- Pricks
- Barely get, with "out"
- Lesbian general interest magazine
- Prolonged campaign
- Pink triangle, for example
- Albee and Wood
- Scopes Trial org.
- Window ledge
- "Family" travel magazine
- Next step for Elton after knighthood?
- Sea bordering Kazakhstan
- Come together
- 1847 Melville novel
- Straight ___ (deadpan)
- Obsession of a mauve hanky carrier
- Ancient Irishman
- Vehicle for a snow queen?
- Alluring
- Locale for a spanking

DOWN

- Stick (something into someone)
- Q to a Scrabble player
- Virginia Woolf's "A Room of ___ Own"
- "Family" travel magazine
- Like "Beauty and the Beast"
- City in Kyrgyzstan
- Cruising
- Tuesday to 50 million Frenchmen
- Where to find polar bears
- "The Death of Friends" author Michael
- Work with needles
- Pansy Division's "Sidewalk ___"
- Swallows
- "I" of Socrates
- Bottom's offer to pay?
- Type of daddy
- Trembling
- Setting for _The Abduction from the Seraglio_
- Cheek
- Like some college walls
- Filmmaker Marlon
- "___ On Down the Road" (tune from "The Wiz")
- Poems of Sappho
- Cries out for
- Where Stonewall Jackson got his name
- Lesbian athletic magazine
- James of _Only When I Laugh_
- Patricia Highsmith's "The Price of ___"
- Yelled at the top of ones lungs
- With prudence
- Forearm bones
- Blockheads
- Of a chain from Nureyev's homeland
- Event for George Frenn
- Emulate Greg Louganis
- Foreboding sign
- "Good Sister, Bad Sister" band
- Do or so, to Benjamin Britten
- St. of the Cathedral of Hope

Answers on Page 27

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OCCASIONS

Thomas M. of the CCCC celebrates his birthday on 12/25.

Maranatha member Michelle P. sings Happy Birthday on 12/23.

HAB members Eddie M. (12/17), Dick V. (12/24), and Stan L. (12/25)

Greg Gordon of Texas Renegades sneaks in a birthday on 12/24

Mary's own Jerry Jones lifts his birthday glass on 12/24

The Houston Voice's own Rich Arenscheidt scribes his birthday on 12/25

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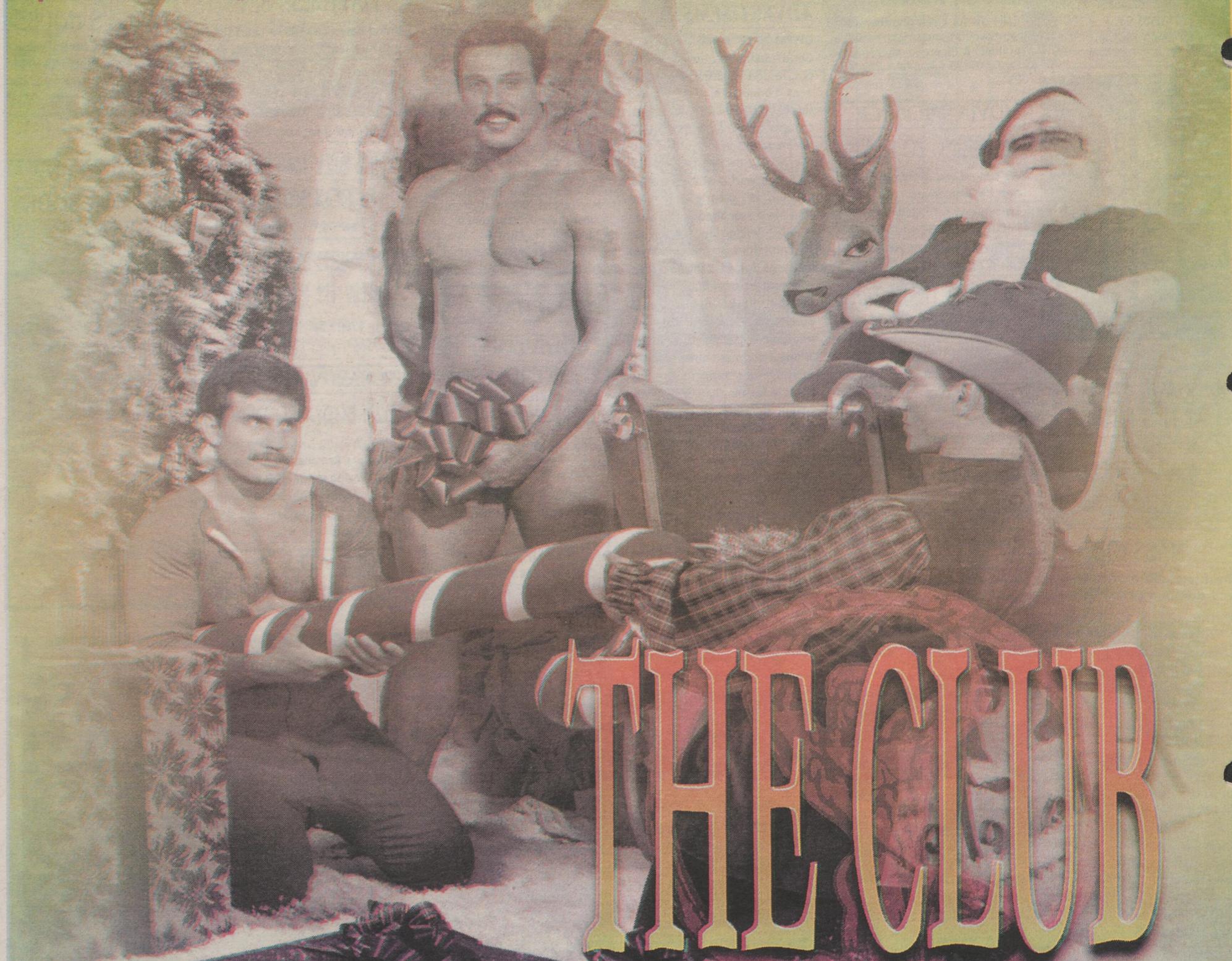
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My Stars!

by JILL DEARMAN

YOUR WEEKLY HOROSCOPE



Dec. 21-27

ARIES (March 21 to April 20)

Venus joins Mercury at the top of your chart on Dec. 26. You could get a career boost while vacationing. But don't take advantage of your loved ones' graciousness by focusing too much on work. This is a time to be thankful for the love in your life. A Libra wants to give you more love, still.

TAURUS (April 21 to May 20)

Watch impulse spending after Christmas, darling. Saturn in your money house is looming heavy and harsh. Give of yourself, as the saying goes. And watch those extra purchases. A Scorpio can do things to you - and for you - that cost nothing. Well, that don't cost any money, anyway, honey.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 21)

Put money aside for the proverbial rainy day, while lucky Jupiter is retrograde in your house of finances. Cash flow is good right now. Log off e-Bay and think of your future, dear one! A Virgo likes it when you delay gratification and show impulse control, you Christmas Whore.

CANCER (June 22 to July 22)

The full moon in your sign on Dec. 30 should bring your love life to the fore. No sense pretending that you don't care. You do. And a Pisces does, too. You give what you get, babe, so give as much as you can. Up the ante even more.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22)

The Sun and Venus are currently transiting your health sector, so use this last week of the year to start your resolutions early. Your body is crying out for some attention. An Aries wants to get under your skin just as soon as you give the green light

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22)

People want you to go over the top now, as the full moon approaches. You don't have to be so damn buttoned-up and respectable. An Aries wants you to strip down and get wild, sexually, spiritually - on every level.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22)

Your ruler Venus moves into your home sector on Dec. 26. It's okay to miss your mama. Take a sentimental journey - even if it's just by phone. A Leo wants to journey to the center of your heart.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21)

The moon in your house of love on Christmas Day could spread some kinda white light all over you, kid. Your surly side may disappear - at least till the New Year. Be an inspiration to yourself and to those you love. Keep your dark side under wraps and control your temper. A Virgo likes you soft and cuddly, honey bear.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21)

Mars in your home sector could inspire a few fights with family members. But you and your kin folk need to hash it out - as long as you remember to keep your sense of humor. Don't righteously preach, sister! Another Sag will preach right back at you if you do.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19)

The full moon in your house of love on Dec. 30 could bring a new love around. Just when you thought you were going to be misunderstood again. Finally someone gets you, dearest. A Cancer is in utter awe of you.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18)

Saturn is making a kind aspect to you, so please act in a Saturnian way. That means, show some maturity! Learn from past mistakes, especially where relationships are concerned. Make an offering to the universe. Welcome a Leo into your life.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20)

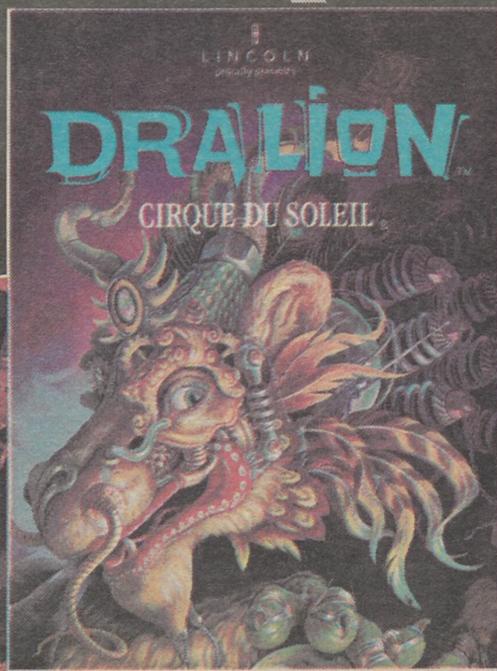
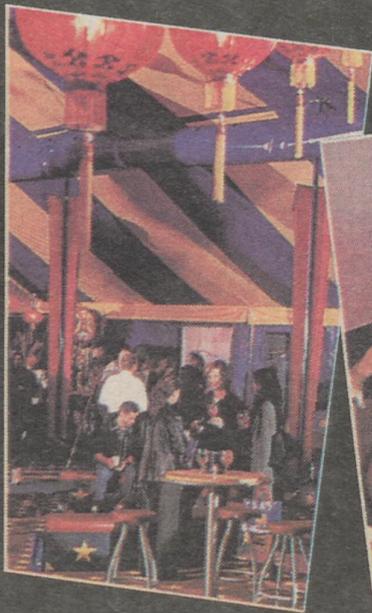
You can bring disparate groups of people together during this intense holiday season. Play the role of diplomat and dictator and do all the legwork too while you're at it. A Libra has designs on you.

Answer to Puzzle on Page 24

E	E	N	K		Y	X	S		D	E	S
T	E	C			L	V	N		E	C	F
O	O	O			E	T	N		A	R	A
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			L	L	S		U	L	A		
	S	D	R	V	W	D	E		L	O	S
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E	R	P	I		U	M	P		N	G	S
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E	T	A	C	O	V	A		E	S	S	B
L	V	E			R	E	T	H		S	A
A	N	C	A		D	S	A			A	T
S	K	I	N			A	M			P	S

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