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PRIDE: Sophie Hawkins performs. Page 3



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Connecticut House approves civil unions

Ore. governor also calls for civil union legislation

By **EARTHA MELZER**

The Connecticut House of Representatives approved a bill to provide same-sex couples with the same rights, benefits and obligations of married couples on Wednesday, but added a last minute amendment that defines marriage as between a man and a woman.

Connecticut was one of three states that have seen steps taken in the past 10 days toward granting marriage-like rights for gay couples, joining California and Oregon.

An Act Concerning Civil Unions passed on an 85-63 vote, easily surpassing the 75 votes needed for passage. It now heads back to the Senate, which passed it by a 3-to-1 margin last week, so that it can consider the amendment. A similar amendment was offered during the Senate debate and was voted down.

Connecticut could become the first state to recognize same-sex relationships without a court order. Vermont has civil unions and Massachusetts has same-sex marriage but in both of those cases the recognition followed lawsuits filed by same-sex couples.

However, a civil unions law may not be enough. Connecticut is being sued by same-sex couples who want the right to marry.

Kerrigan & Mock vs. Connecticut Department of Public Health involves seven gay and lesbian couples from across Connecticut who were denied marriage licenses in Madison. On Aug. 25, 2004 the couples filed suit in New Haven Superior Court challenging what they say is the state's "discriminatory denial of marriage rights to same-sex couples."

The case is brought by Gay & Lesbian Advocates &



Connecticut Gov. **M. Jodi Rell**, a Republican, will likely sign a civil unions bill if it includes the amendment that states marriage is only between a man and a woman. (Photo by Bob Child/AP)

Defenders, which also brought the lawsuits that established same-sex marriage rights in Massachusetts and civil unions in Vermont.

Carisa Cunningham, spokesperson for GLAD, said that the lawsuit is happening parallel to actions in the legislature. She said that the legislature was working

Please see **CONNECTICUT** on Page 7



State Rep. **Jessica Farrar** (D-Houston) is the only member of the House Committee on State Affairs to vote against a proposed constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage.

Amendment advances to the Texas House

Though opposition to HJR 6 was 650 to 5 in a State Affairs hearing, the measure was still approved 6-1

By **BINNIE FISHER**

After siding with the majority on the House Committee on State Affairs that last Monday voted 6-1 to approve a proposed constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, State Rep. Martha Wong (R-Houston) said this week she favors civil unions.

The committee vote cut a last-minute addition by the proposal's author that would also ban civil unions and advanced House Joint Resolution 6 to the full House.

HJR 6, introduced by State Rep. Warren Chisum (R-Pampa), was approved in its original form early Monday with two members (both Democrats) still enroute to Austin from their home districts.

The only dissenting committee vote was cast by State Rep. Jessica Farrar (D-Houston). Farrar, who represents the Heights

Please see **HOUSE** on Page 4



local life
Astrologer **Lilly Roddy** gained self-acceptance after sexual reassignment.
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dish
Spies saw **Tatum O'Neal** at a NY bar playing tonsil hockey with a pretty blond woman.
PAGE 18



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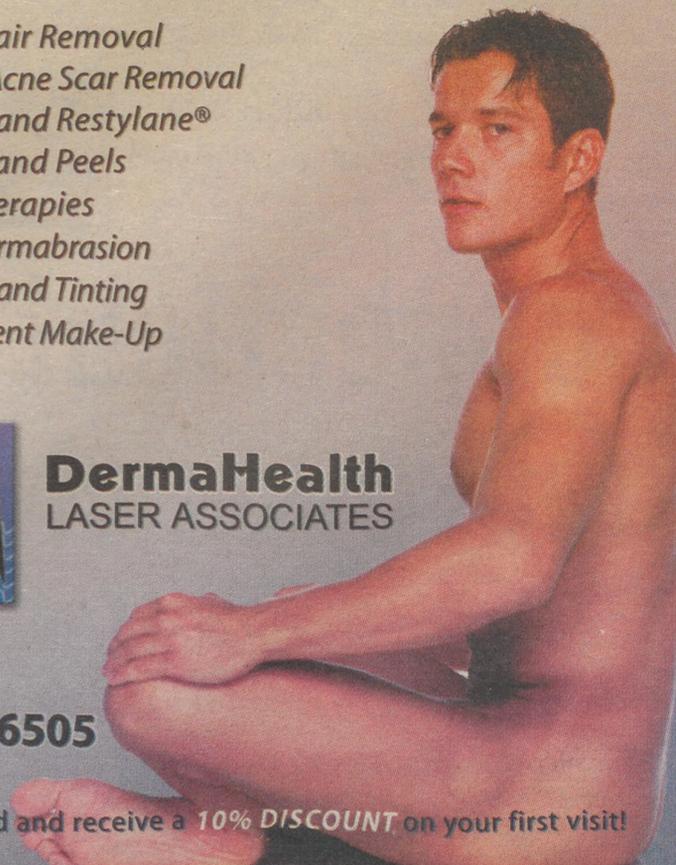
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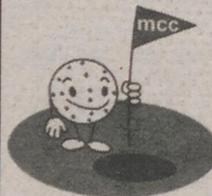
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local news briefs

Sophie B. Hawkins, others to perform at Pride Festival

Officers with Pride Houston indicated last year that they hoped to revive the Pride Festival that precedes the parade, and on Thursday, they announced an entertainment roster that indicates they meant business. Headlining the festival that begins at 2 p.m. on June 25 is Grammy winner Sophie B. Hawkins. Other entertainers include Pansy Division, Jade Esteban Estrada, Rachel Sage and Sarah Pinsker and the Stalking Horses. Pride Houston Executive Director Jack Valinski noted, "Pride Houston is making a real effort to upgrade and expand the Pride Festival 2005, and festival co-chairs Matthew Stone and Todd Amdor are bringing in major musical talent." Stone added, "We searched the gay music universe for artists who are known for their energetic, live performances. The Pride Festival entertainers range from pop to folk to Latin to rock and will not disappoint." The festival, which previously consisted of booths lined up along Yokum, behind the Westheimer Street bleachers, had been free. This year, cost for the festival is \$10. At that, Stone said, it's still a bargain. "This event is a huge entertainment value and is Houston's only chance to see so many talented GLBT artists," he said. More information on the festival is available at www.pridehouston.org.



Sophie B. Hawkins is among a roster of stars who will appear at the 2005 Pride Festival June 25.

Galveston may get its own Metropolitan Community Church

A feasibility team from the Metropolitan Community Church has been meeting for the last year to consider the possibility of establishing a new MCC congregation in Galveston. MCC Regional Elder Darlene Garner recently appointed an administrative committee, and has authorized the continuation of the study. MCC was founded in Los Angeles in 1968 and now includes more than 300 churches worldwide. If a church is established in Galveston, it will be called Harbor MCC of Galveston.

Volunteers are needed by Houston Gay & Lesbian Switchboard

Since April is Volunteer Appreciation Month, staff at the Montrose Counseling Center decided it was a good time to honor those who are currently offering their time to the organization and to launch a recruitment drive for the Houston Gay & Lesbian Switchboard. The center has planned an informal Volunteer Happy Hour from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Montrose Diner, 1111 Westheimer. Montrose Diner is donating hors d'oeuvres for the event. "MCC's volunteers - both the volunteers who staff Gay & Lesbian Switchboard and the H.A.T.C.H. facilitators - provide an invaluable service to Houston, and we want to make sure they know how much they're appreciated, not just in April but year round," said Ann Robison, executive director of the center. Anyone interested in learning about

volunteering with the switchboard is invited to attend the happy hour. The next volunteer training session is scheduled to begin the last week in April and continue through May. Sally Huffer, community projects specialist with MCC, said training is time-intensive, but make-up sessions can be completed by viewing videotapes. "We especially need people who are available to spend a Friday or Saturday evening on the switchboard, when callers are looking for referral information to GLBT social spots or for those who are particularly lonely," Huffer said. Volunteer applications are available at www.gayswitchboardhouston.org.

Houston's Drum Corps Perform on Saturday

The Houston Youth Drum Line, Percussion One, and local drum corps, Gulf Coast Sound, will provide part of the entertainment for the 11th Annual Drum Corps BBQ Bash from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Doss Community Center in Northwest Houston. The Bash, hosted by the Drum Corps Tigers of Texas, includes a barbecue lunch and prizes including DVDs and movie passes. Advance tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 12 and under. Proceeds benefit Drum Corps Tigers is not exclusively gay, but many gays make up the corps. www.DrumCorpsTigers.org.

From staff and wire reports

local news

Lesbian adoptive parent wins joint custody in Galveston case

Kathleen Van Stavern has been granted regular visits with her former partner's child every other weekend

By BINNIE FISHER

A jury in Galveston earlier this week awarded standard visitation rights to a lesbian who had adopted the biological daughter of her former partner and was seeking joint custody.

The five-day jury trial brought an end to the case that already had been heard in numerous courtrooms as the biological mother attempted to get the case dismissed on the grounds that the adoption would have been void under the Texas Family Code as it existed at the time the adoption was granted.

The jury's verdict gave the adoptive parent, Kathleen Van Stavern, visitation rights every other weekend as well as some holiday visits. Van Stavern was also granted some week-day visits.

When the verdict was read, Van Stavern's attorney, Shannon T. Warren, said many of her client's supporters sobbed.

"I almost started crying myself," she said. "I was so grateful to God that the right thing happened. It was a really good day."

Attorneys for the biological mother of the child, Julie Ann Hobbs, said she is likely to appeal the decision. One of the attorneys, Marie Trefethern, said Hobbs still maintains that the adoption was not legal at the time it was granted.

"We'll be looking for an answer to that," she said.

No geographical restrictions

Trefethern added that although Van Stavern prevailed in gaining visitation rights, "We asked for no geographical restrictions, and we did get that."

Warren said her client has indicated that if Hobbs ever moves out of the area, she will uproot and follow to be near the child.

Although some gay and lesbian activists have charged that Hobbs' attempts to void the adoption could have detrimental effects on future gay and lesbian adoptions, Trefethern said, that was not her client's intent.

She said Hobbs' argument is that in her case, the adoption did not coincide with state law as it was stated at the time.

"This is just one specific case,"



Kathleen Van Stavern on Monday won joint custody of the biological daughter of her former partner in a jury trial that lasted five days in Galveston.

Trefethern said.

Van Stavern and Hobbs were partners in 1998, when Hobbs gave birth to a daughter by artificial insemination. In 2001, Hobbs adopted the child.

The relationship between the two women ended in March of 2004, and Van Stavern began making child support payments of \$400 a month and sought to gain joint custody.

Hobbs fought Van Stavern's petition for joint custody on the grounds that at the time of the adoption, an adoptive parent was required to be the spouse of the biological parents. The family code has since been rewritten to ease those adoption restrictions.

Hobbs' petition was heard in Galveston on Sept. 9, 2004 by Associate Family Court Judge Stephen Baker, who ruled in favor of Van Stavern. The judge's ruling was based on a provision in the family code that stipulates adoptions must be challenged within six months of being granted.

Baker's ruling was appealed to 306th Family District Court Judge Janis Yarborough, who upheld the associate judge's ruling.

Attorneys for Hobbs took the case to the 1st State Court of Appeals, arguing that Yarborough did not have jurisdiction over the case. The appeals court upheld the rulings of Baker and Yarborough.

An attorney for Hobbs appealed the lower court rulings to the Texas Supreme Court, which declined to hear the case.

With the legality of the adoption answered, a jury began hearing testimony on the custody case on April 5.

After a brief deliberation, Warren said, the jurors returned a verdict Monday afternoon.

local news

House needs to be educated about gay issues, Farrar says

HOUSE, continued from Page 1

neighborhood, argued with Chisum as he read the proposed amendment in a public hearing on April 4 that it would write discrimination into the Texas Constitution.

Chisum replied, "This doesn't discriminate against anyone. It discriminates against a practice, not a people"

In an e-mailed statement, Wong, whose district includes part of Montrose, said, "I have talked to advocates of gay partners who have made a strong commitment to build their lives and their families together. I respect their hopes, dreams and heartaches, and I believe that allowing civil unions but keeping marriage only between a man and a woman should be the path our country takes."

Randall Ellis, executive director of the Lesbian Gay Rights Lobby of Texas (LGRL) said he finds it difficult to believe that committee members approved the proposal in spite of overwhelming opposition at the April 4 public hearing.

He noted that about 650 individuals gave verbal or written testimony oppos-



Although State Rep. **Martha Wong** (R-Houston) voted in favor of advancing House Joint Resolution 6 from the State Affairs Committee to the full House, she says she favors civil unions.

ing the proposed amendment and added, "Fewer than five were in favor of the resolution."

While he said he is disappointed that Wong voted in favor of the proposed amendment, Ellis said, he plans to contact her regarding her opinion on civil unions.

A civil unions resolution

"I'd love to see her help us push forward a constitutional amendment that would do exactly what she says she

wants," Ellis said.

Of the more than 20 Houston House members contacted by the Voice either by phone or e-mail regarding the proposed amendment, only Wong and three others responded.

Through e-mail, Rep. Scott Hochberg indicated that he had not yet read the resolution.

Rep. Jessica Farrar said in a telephone interview that she fears legislators who don't necessarily approve of the resolution will vote for it because of pressure.

"Because of the political climate we're in, they'll need to cast this vote to prove their conservative credentials," she said.

She pointed out that in the past, legislative bodies have used the constitution to preserve rather than deny rights.

"I don't want discrimination written into our constitution," she said. "Traditionally, the constitution has been a document that provides justice in the form of rights for women and the vote for African Americans."

Farrar has proposed a forum for fellow state legislators that would help educate them regarding same-sex families prior to the House vote on HJR 6.

Texas Rep. Garnet Coleman (D-Houston), whose district also includes a portion of Montrose, telephoned the Voice to voice his opposition to the resolution.

"The whole notion of prohibiting marriage for same-sex households flies in the

face of what the constitution is all about," he said. "This (HJR 6) is about a nationalized effort to amend the U.S. Constitution. It will serve as an indication of whether or not it is doable."

Organizations that support same-sex marriage have condemned the committee vote and are closely monitoring the actions of the Texas House.

Maria Gonzalez, president of the Houston GLBT Political Caucus (PAC), noted regarding the committee vote, "Six legislators voted to legislate discrimination against thousands and thousands of Texans by supporting HJR 6."

The caucus and Equality Knocks had hoped to convince Wong to vote against the resolution by urging residents of her district to contact her and voice their opinions.

"Clearly, Rep. Wong chose to respond to political pressure instead of supporting her constituents," Gonzalez added.

If HJR 6 is approved by two-thirds of the Texas House and Senate, it will be go before voters in November.

Both Farrar and Coleman said the resolution seems to be on the fast track and could come up for a vote before the end of April.

Ellis said LGRL will closely monitor HJR 6 as it proceeds from the House to the Senate and publish updates from time to time on the organization's Web site.

MORE INFO

Lesbian Gay Rights Lobby of Texas
www.lgrrl.org



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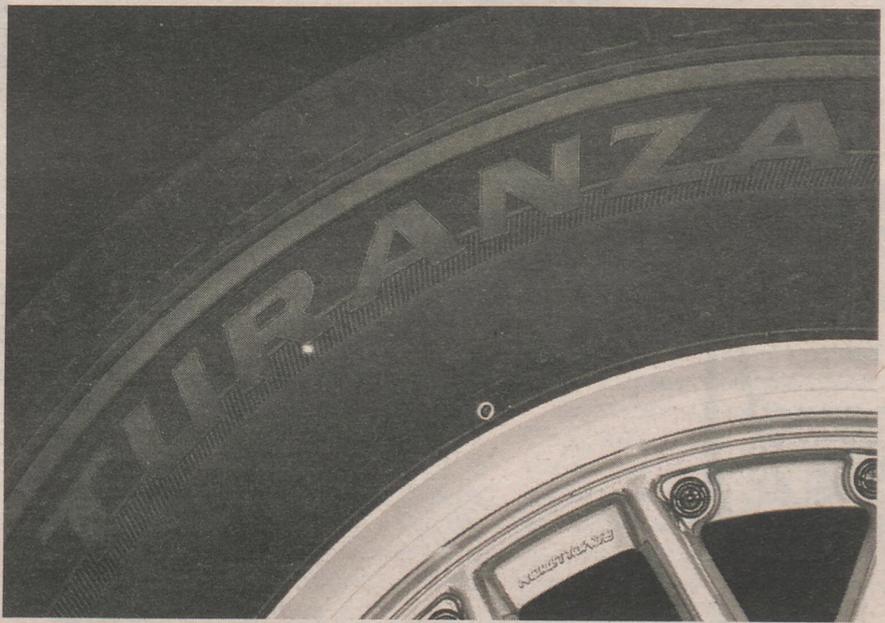
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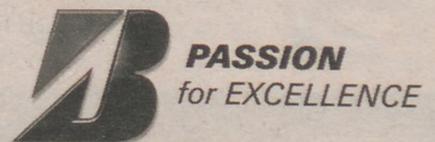
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national news briefs

Army soldier wounded in Iraq comes out, wants to return

WASHINGTON (AP) — An Army sergeant from Ohio who was wounded in Iraq wants a chance to remain in the military as an openly gay soldier, a desire that's bringing him into conflict with the Pentagon's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. Sgt. Robert Stout, 23, says he has not encountered trouble from fellow soldiers and would like to stay if not for the policy that permits gay men and women to serve only if they keep their sexual orientation a secret. "I know a ton of gay men that would be more than willing to stay in the Army if they could just be open," Stout said in an interview with the Associated Press. "But if we have to stay here and hide our lives all the time, it's just not worth it." Stout, of Utica in Licking County, was awarded the Purple Heart after a grenade sent pieces of shrapnel into his arm, face and legs while he was operating a machine gun on an armored Humvee last May. He is believed to be the first gay soldier wounded in Iraq to publicly discuss his sexual orientation, said Aaron Belkin, director of the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military at the University of California-Santa Barbara.



Sgt. Robert Stout, 23, of Ohio, who was wounded while serving in Iraq, now wants to serve as an openly gay member of the U.S. Army. (AP photo courtesy of Robert Stout)

Gay rights supporters in Maine campaign to curb repeal effort

AUGUSTA, Maine (AP) — Supporters of Maine's new law banning discrimination based on sexual orientation have begun a campaign to discourage people from signing petitions that call for a referendum on repealing the law. Pat Peard of Maine Won't Discriminate, which supports the anti-discrimination law, said volunteers plan to begin an "outreach" approach in the coming weeks to convince voters that the law is good and should stay on the books. The bill, which Gov. John Baldacci signed last month, prohibits discrimination in employment and other areas based on sexual orientation. The law is similar to previous gay rights legislation that voters rejected in 1998 and again in 2000. The state Constitution allows voters to repeal a law with a "people's veto" if opponents collect enough signatures within 90 days of the end of the legislative session in which the bill was signed into law.

Feinstein comment on gay marriage wins her Calif. 'Pink Brick' award

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — In Dianne Feinstein's hometown of San Francisco, hard feelings apparently linger about the senator's remark that the push to make marriage legal for same-sex couples hurt Democrats in the November election. Organizers of the Gay Pride parade held in the city every June announced last week that Feinstein was the winner of this year's "Pink Brick" award, a dubious honor bestowed on the public figure a San Francisco group decides has done the most to damage the gay rights cause. President Bush and talk show host Laura Schlessinger are previous winners. Joey Cain, president of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Pride Committee, said Feinstein was nominated for the prize for telling reporters the morning after Bush's re-election that progress on the gay marriage front "has been too much, too fast, too soon." Howard Gantman, a Feinstein spokesperson, called the senator's nomination for the Pink Brick "very unfortunate," saying it neglects Feinstein's long record of support for gay and lesbian issues.

Kan. attorney general says he won't attack DP benefits

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Even with new language in the Kansas Constitution dealing with same-sex unions, Attorney General Phill Kline says he won't attack public or private benefit plans covering the domestic partners of gay men and lesbians. Kline, who strongly supported the constitutional amendment approved by voters to ban gay marriage and civil unions for gay couples, said last week that it does not apply to benefits that companies offer their employees. The attorney general also said in a statement that his office "will not seek to alter any benefits policy of any political subdivision in the state as a result of the amendment's passage." Spokesperson Whitney Watson said while Kline's office isn't aware of any public agency providing benefits to the partners of gay and lesbian employees, staffers have received numerous questions about the amendment's effect.

Republican consultant marries male partner in Mass. ceremony

WASHINGTON — Well-known Republican consultant Arthur J. Finkelstein announced last week that he married his male partner in a December civil ceremony at their home in Massachusetts, the New York Times reported. Finkelstein, 59, who has directed a number of political campaigns for conservatives both in the United States and Israel during the last 25 years, said he and his partner of 40 years married to ensure they have benefits identical to those of married heterosexual couples, according to the Times. He has worked to defeat Democrats in political campaigns by defining them as liberal, the newspaper noted. Finkelstein has been linked during his career to such anti-gay politicians as former Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina, according to the newspaper. Most recently, GOP insiders said Finkelstein plans to set up a political action committee to campaign against Hillary Rodham Clinton's re-election in 2006, the Times reported.

From staff and wire reports

arts cover story

As Conn. inches closer, Ore. weighs civil unions

CONNECTICUT, continued from Page 1

on civil unions before the suit was filed and that the ultimate disposition of the lawsuit could take three years.

"Regardless of whether the legislature approves civil unions, the legal claim advanced by GLAD is the same," Cunningham said. "It is an equal protection claim, a constitutional claim."

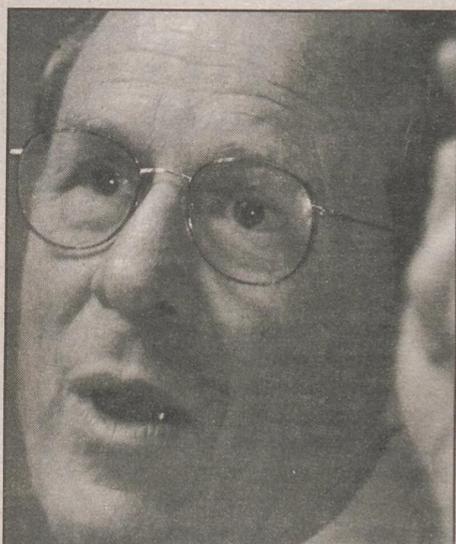
"The issue is being discussed through the legislature, the courts and in the court of public opinion. Marriage law is a patchwork that will be figured out state by state," she said. "Over the long haul, time is on our side and we will have marriage."

The controversy over whether the bill should be amended to include language specifying that marriage is defined as between a man and a woman was settled when the amendment stating just that passed on an 80-67 vote.

Republican Connecticut Governor M. Jodi Rell is on record saying that she is opposed to same-sex marriage, prefers that the civil unions bill include language defining marriage as between a man and a woman and would veto the bill if it could change the definition of marriage. Days before the House was scheduled to vote, Rell asked the state's attorney general, Richard Blumenthal, for a legal opinion on the effect of the civil union bill on state marriage law.

As the House gathered to begin discussion of the bill, Rell released a statement in which she said, "I am grateful for the attorney general's prompt response to my questions about the potential effects of Substitute Senate Bill 963 on Connecticut's marriage laws. He could not have been more clear: This bill in no way permits gay marriage."

The Family Institute of Connecticut is a major opponent of civil unions in Connecticut. The organization did not return Blade calls seeking comment, but states in its Web log "Connecticut in the



Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski requested that the legislature approve a bill granting civil unions for gay couples. (Photo by Rick Bowmer/AP)

Crosshairs" that the civil union bill is same-sex marriage by another name.

The Family Institute of Connecticut has said that it believes marriage should be denied to same-sex partners because is a union that is designed for procreation.

Connecticut is one of only nine states that have not passed a Defense of Marriage Act defining marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman.

Ore. governor calls for civil unions

Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski announced on Wednesday that he intends to request a bill that would provide civil unions for gay citizens in that state and another to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation.

"As I stated in January, we face a great moral challenge to make sure opportunity is an open door through which every citizen can pass — not a revolving door which turns for some and doesn't budge for others," Kulongoski said in a released statement.

Oregon residents approved a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage in November, but did not also ban civil unions or other type of recognitions for gay couples.

Calif. court upholds DP law

In California, the Court of Appeal for the Third Appellate District in Sacramento ruled on April 4 that the state's domestic partner law does not violate Proposition 22, which was passed in March of 2000 and states that "Only a marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California."

California has recognized domestic partnerships since 1999 but in 2003 the Legislature enacted AB 205, a much more comprehensive domestic partnership law that gave domestic partners all the same rights as spouses under state law.

As of June 9, 2003, according to Equality California, 20,215 same-sex and senior couples have registered with the state as domestic partners.

A conservative group called Campaign for California Families was the plaintiff in the case, which was argued by the Alliance Defense Fund and Liberty Counsel. The plaintiffs sought to have the domestic partnership law declared void on the grounds that the California Legislature illegally amended Proposition 22 by extending to domestic partners rights that had traditionally been limited to spouses.

The court ruled that domestic partnership is not marriage and that the voters did not intend to block the legislature from granting legal protections to domestic partners when they enacted Proposition 22.

The Court wrote, "Given the existence of domestic partnership statutes in California when the initiative was put on the ballot, Proposition 22 needed such language if it intended to supplant the Legislature's authority to enact and to amend legislation regarding domestic partnerships."

This ruling upheld the decision of San

Francisco Superior Court judge Loren McMaster, who upheld the validity of AB 205 in a decision issued Sept. 8, 2004.

"This is a resounding victory for fairness and equality," said Kate Kendell, executive director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, one of the groups arguing in favor of the domestic partnership law. "Domestic partnership is not marriage, and the court soundly rejected the tortured efforts of extreme right-wing groups to distort the language of Proposition 22 to strike down validly enacted legislation protecting lesbian and gay people and their families."

In a written statement, Campaign for Children & Families President Randy Thomasson said, "Judges and politicians who suck all the value out of marriage have trashed the people's vote and cheapened this sacred institution."

Thomasson called for a constitutional amendment "to protect marriage for a man and a woman."

The Liberty Counsel said that it plans to appeal to the California Supreme Court.

On March 14, San Francisco Superior Court Judge Richard Kramer ruled that California's ban on same-sex marriage was unconstitutional, because it constituted impermissible gender discrimination and violated the fundamental right to marry. This case will be appealed in the California Court of Appeal.

Meanwhile, momentum is gathering behind the Religious Freedom & Civil Marriage Protection Act (AB19), a bill sponsored by Assemblyman Mark Leno (D-San Francisco). This act would restore the gender-neutral pre-1977 language in the California Family Code that defined marriage as a contract between two individuals.

The California NAACP and the Anti-Defamation League have officially announced support for the measure.

Equality California expects AB19 to pass the Assembly Judiciary Committee.

State-by-state roundup of legislation

WASHINGTON

OLYMPIA (AP) — Two conservative Democrats helped Senate Republicans derail the latest attempt by the Legislature to pass a gay civil rights bill, sending it to a hostile committee where it is likely to die. The Senate's procedural move took majority Democrats by surprise, coming during floor action last week on non-controversial bills. The Democrats hold a 26-23 advantage, but the move succeeded when conservative Democrats Jim Hargrove of Hoquiam and Tim Sheldon of Potlatch joined Republicans in shunting the bill off to the Senate Judiciary Committee. The House passed the bill in February, 61-37. The bill, which would ban discrimination against gays and lesbians in jobs, housing and insurance, has been introduced — and rejected — annually for nearly 30 years in the Legislature.

KANSAS

TOPEKA (AP) — Any proposal to prohibit gays and lesbians from adopting children is likely to meet with little enthusiasm from Gov.

Kathleen Sebelius. There's no such proposal in the Legislature, but some gay rights activists fear the idea could surface. Fueling their concerns was voters' approval last week of an amendment to the Kansas Constitution banning gay marriage. The amendment also declares that only traditional unions of one man and one woman are entitled to the "rights and incidents" of marriage. Currently, the state doesn't allow couples — gay or straight — to adopt children if they are not married, but individuals can become adoptive parents.

NEBRASKA

LINCOLN (AP) — The Legislature gave its approval last week to a proposal that would ban discrimination against gay employees at four major research institutions in Nebraska. The discrimination ban would apply to the University of Nebraska Medical Center; the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Creighton University and Boys Town National Research Hospital. All four of them receive money from the state's tobacco settlement fund for health-

related research. Officials with all four institutions said they already have policies covering sexual orientation discrimination. Because they already have those policies, adopting the discrimination proposal is redundant, said Omaha Sen. Jim Jensen, chair of the Legislature's Health Committee. Even so, the Legislature's action is important because it provides an explicit prohibition in state law, said its sponsor Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers. Before it becomes law, the bill must pass two more rounds in the Legislature and be signed by Gov. Dave Heineman.

VERMONT

MONTPELIER (AP) — Citing instances where people have been beaten up and denied medical treatment because of the gender by which they identify themselves, advocates asked a House committee last week to expand the state's anti-discrimination laws to cover transsexuals and people who are transgendered. "They face discrimination in ways people don't think about every day," said Jes

Kraus, a labor lawyer who described himself as a female-to-male transsexual. "This bill would be the first step to remedying these issues." The bill would add the phrase "gender identity or expression" to the catalog of protected classes in anti-discrimination statutes covering everything from public accommodations to housing to financing to employment.

MINNESOTA

ST. PAUL (AP) — The state Senate last week rejected an effort to force a floor vote on a constitutional amendment that would ban gay marriage as thousands of ban opponents rallied outside the Capitol. Sen. Michele Bachmann, the Stillwater Republican who's led the push for the ban, said Senate Democrats have denied her repeated efforts to get the bill heard. Senate leaders countered that Bachmann, a candidate for the U.S. House, is flouting Senate rules to advance her own political career.

From staff and wire reports

Something more valuable than acceptance

Self-acceptance may be the greatest benefit of sexual reassignment for astrologer Lilly Roddy

By DAWN RORIE

While others struggle for acceptance from the people around them, astrologer and transgender activist Lilly Roddy has found something much more valuable: self-acceptance.

Lilly Roddy, who spent a large part of her life as Phil Roddy, says she always knew she was a transsexual, but didn't have a word to describe how she felt. Phil identified as a bisexual man for some time before deciding to begin the gender transition process in 1997.

"The decision came about when I had no other way to avoid this," Roddy remembers. "Essentially, when I ran out of excuses."

As a well-known astrologer with many clients in the Houston area, there was no option to undergo the transition in private. Reaction from her clients was, for the most part, supportive.

"Because narcissism is alive and well, most people just asked, 'You're not going to quit doing astrology, are you?'" Roddy says, smiling to herself. "There was no negative reaction."

Despite the positive conversations she had with many of her clients, in the first year of her transition, Roddy lost 66 percent of her clientele. This economic blow was one of many struggles she was to face on her journey of self-realization.

In addition to the various personal issues she was facing — fear, rejection, and the need to be loved and supported — Roddy realized that the people close to her were going through a sort of "coming out" process, as well. She explains that gender transition is often hard for friends and family members because they feel deceived, as though they have been lied to about the person's true identity.

When she announced her transition, Roddy was surprised to note that some of



As she journeyed from being Phil Roddy to Lilly Roddy, the Houston astrologer found something unexpected along the way, self-acceptance. (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

the most bizarre reactions she received came from her lesbian friends.

"I had a friend ask me, 'When you transition, you're not going to give up being funny, are you?'" she remembers. "I told her, 'Yes, I'm trading it for a bitch gene!'"

Her friend looked stunned for a moment before she leaned forward and asked, "Wait, you're being funny now, aren't you?" Roddy laughs as she remembers the look on the woman's face.

The battle for self-acceptance was the most difficult. According to Roddy, many of the negative experiences she has had have been due to her own fears of how people would react to her. It was upon going to the DMV to change her name and gender on her driver's license that she decided that confidence was the key.

She describes how she walked up, put her paperwork on the counter, and loudly announced, "I'm Lilly Roddy and I'm here to change my name and gender. Have you dealt with that before?" After an initial shocked silence, she was whisked through the line quickly and very politely.

The experience was a positive one,



Lilly Roddy (left) along with fellow transgender activists (from left) Phyllis Randolph Frye and Vanessa Edwards Foster sang and offered encouragement to the crowd at Transgender Day of Remembrance. (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

Roddy says, "because I let them be nervous, not me."

Liking herself is the most important thing, Roddy says. She has learned not to internalize other people's negativity and expectations for gender roles.

Roddy's confidence and determination have made her a role model and leader in the Houston transgender community. She was one of the original officers of Community Awareness for Transgender Services (CATS). Also, she has served on the board of the Texas Association of Transsexual Support (TATS). Roddy is currently serving as president of the National Council of Geocosmic Research (NCGR), which is an all-inclusive astrological organization.

In 1999, Roddy helped to found the Unity Committee, which strives to unite the various transgender organizations throughout Houston. Each year, the Unity Committee organizes the Transgender Unity Banquet, which is the only annual event in which members of the various transgender groups come together as one.

This year's banquet, which will be held Saturday, will feature Houston City

Controller Annise Parker as the guest speaker.

Parker, a lesbian who has been supportive of transgendered persons and has had transgender activists working in all of her election campaigns, says it is important for gays and lesbians to support the transgender community.

"We have to recognize that the transgender community is part of our community," Parker says. "They have always been a very visible part of our community. While it is OK to see and note the differences (in our communities), it is not OK to say that we're going to fight for our rights, but not yours."

Roddy agrees with the need for gays, lesbians and transgendered persons to support one another. She says the biggest challenge currently facing transgendered individuals in Texas is job security. There are currently no laws that protect gays, lesbians and transgendered persons from being fired for sexual orientation or gender identity.

As a vocal and active member of TATS, Roddy continues to support transgender causes. She also writes an astrology column for Outsmart.

i LILLY RODDY

Age: 52

Birthplace: Port Arthur

Home: Houston

Education: BA in sociology from the University of Texas

Occupation: Astrologer

Relationship: Partnered for seven years ("With a wonderful partner!")

Pets: 2 cats: Tigerlily and Quan Yin

i MORE INFO

Houston Transgender Unity Banquet

Saturday

Westchase Hilton Grand Ballroom

9999 Westheimer

Cocktails and reception at 6:30 p.m.

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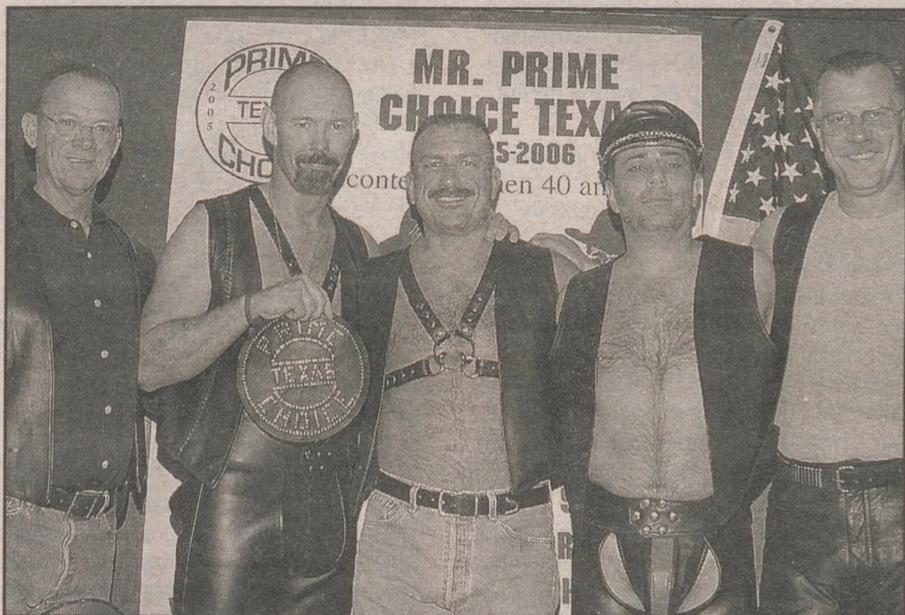
(Photos by Dalton DeHart)



Models **Audi Resendez** (left) and **Justin Perلمان** (second from right) modeled the latest in intimate wear to promote the Alley Theatre's production of 'Underpants' to an Act Out crowd that included **Kelly Dempsey** (second from left) and **Megan Bartels** (right).



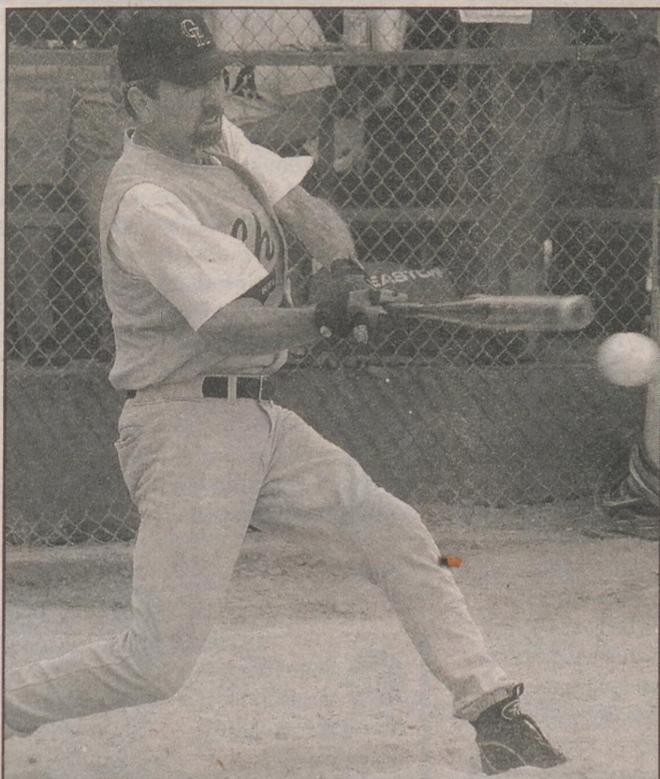
Barry Mandell, executive director of the Houston Theater District, spoke at a dinner meeting of the Greater Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce regarding 'Coexistence,' an outdoor diversity exhibit brought to downtown through a partnership of Holocaust Museum of Houston and the City of Houston.



At the recent Mr. Prime Choice competition, principals posed for a photo including (from left) **Don Gill**; the new Mr. Prime Choice, **Laurence Van Volkenburg**; **Steve Carbone**, Mr. Prime Choice 2004; **Greg Misakayan**; and **Robert Harwood**, director of the event.



Fashion designer **Jerald Jason** (center) is surrounded by models after a showing of his latest designs for women at Indigo.



Ron Harper hits one home at a Montrose Softball League game last weekend.



Houston attorney **Mitchell Katine** (left) and his partner, **Walter Domingo**, both pitchers, turned out for Montrose Softball League last weekend with their children, **Sebastian** and **Sabrina**.

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Forum

HOUSTON VOICE

APRIL 15, 2005

PAGE 10

editorial

Old men die, old prejudice dies harder

What can unite three warring religions? Hatred of homosexuality — as embodied by John Paul II.

By STEVE WEINSTEIN

W

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, must have been a slow news day, since our “newspaper of record,” the *New York Times*, chose a group of old, increasingly irrelevant men in Jerusalem, to dominate its front page. The photo showed Christian, Muslim and Jewish leaders assembling for an extraordinary press conference.

There they were, in their elaborately bizarre ceremonial garb. (True story: A publicist once told me that he was working with the Vatican on a TV program in which the pope would appear. He said one of the Holy Father’s aides — an obvious queen — asked him, “Do you want him in his party dress or his day drag?”)

What on earth could bring these three religions, which are usually at each other’s throats, especially in the Holy Land, to unite? What else but hatred of homosexuality? They were there to denounce an international gay celebration scheduled to take place in Jerusalem. The religious leaders, who together tend to the holiest places in Western monotheism, said they would do everything in their power to disrupt such an event — despite the Orthodox Jewish mayor of Jerusalem explaining that the event was perfectly legal and was allowed to take place.

Well, at least we have the bitter satisfaction of knowing that we were the means of bringing these religions together. We can also thank them for publicizing the event.

What would probably have remained off the radar of most major media organizations will now receive full coverage. The result will probably be a record turnout. Thanks, guys!

Who knows? This may even be the start of a trend, or a new way for them to raise money to maintain the holy places under their jurisdiction. For a fee, they could condemn gay events.

The Saint at Large, for example, could contract with them to pour their wrath on that Sodom. Or the West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce could have them spew venom on their little Gomorrah.

ASIDE FROM THE PATHETIC SIGHT OF men purportedly of good faith showing nothing but pure hatred for their fellow men (and women), this ecumenical bile served as a warm-up for the big media sobfest that soon followed.

The death of Pope John Paul II has been greeted with a collective breast-beating unseen since President Kennedy’s assassination. Or maybe Princess Diana’s car accident.

Amid all of the hair-shirt hoopla, very few voices have dared make themselves heard above the din. I understand Anderson Cooper on CNN tried to mention that not everyone revered the pope, but Christian Amanpour quickly struck him down. If that’s true, score half a point for our side.

The fact is, under the guise of love for the poor, this pope has done as much as anyone to increase their burden. And, as reported on page 7, he has ceaselessly used the world’s largest and most powerful bully pulpit to fight us, our rights, our very lives, tooth and nail.

It always strikes me as quite a spectacle how anyone who claims to love the poor so much can take such a firm stance that is the worst possible for their well being.

Mother Theresa selflessly devoted herself to the world’s poorest people in the world’s worst slums. How someone can do that and not realize that advocating against simple contraception dooms these people is beyond me.

The only possible explanation is cynical in the extreme — but in the absence of any other rational reason, it’s the only one I’ve got: These people want to put themselves on a fast track for sainthood.

In the case of Mother Theresa, it’s working beautifully. This pontiff beautified her in record time, and I’m sure we’re going to see a Saint Mother Theresa well within our lifetime.

AS FOR JOHN PAUL II, VATICAN insiders are probably recording miracles while the crowds file by his body as I write.

What’s truly pathetic is that people can actually believe that contraception is a sin. The theological roots for this insanity rest in the late-medieval University of Paris, where scholastics led by St. Thomas Aquinas took a misreading of Aristotle’s biological works

(translated into bad Latin) to mean that life starts at the moment the “homunculus” (the tiny little people inside sperm — you didn’t know that, did you?) reached the female cavity. From this, we have a policy that has influenced millions of people, United Nations policies and governments from Africa to Oceania. Because of it, tens of millions of people will die of AIDS — all because a group of old men in Rome have determined that a tiny piece of latex constitutes a grave sin.

As for homosexuality, the pope’s steadfast policies ensured that he kept his blinders on throughout the entire priestly sex-abuse scandal. As the American Church was engulfed by wave upon wave of the most sickening details of priests entering little boys’ rooms and forcing them into sex, the Vatican maintained its silence.

Study after study has shown that priests, who are secluded from the world at an early age and denied the most rudimentary knowledge of sexual functions, operate at the sexual level of a preteen. Think Michael Jackson without the talent.

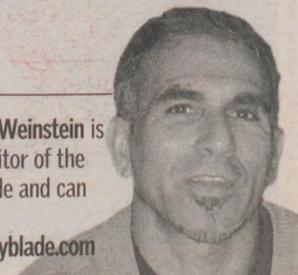
Under John Paul II, the church refused to take baby steps toward acknowledging that human sexuality is a basic need, that if it’s denied to adults, they turn to other desires (alcohol’s a pretty good substitute, but young boys are better).

I don’t hold out much hope that the next pope will be any more realistic. The Curia is such a self-contained body that only someone who has risen through the ranks — that is, is himself emotionally stunted enough to remain in the priesthood — can aspire to the Throne of Peter.

I don’t mean to sound like a Catholic basher. Whoever rules in Rome, there will be tens of thousands of priests, nuns and monks who truly love the poor, who devote their lives to their welfare, who even love them enough to flaunt the outdated rules of their beloved Mother Church.

But the sad fact remains that more people in human history have died at the receiving end of the Holy Roman Church than any other cause. I’m glad the pope apologized for some for some of this carnage, but it was more than a bit like closing the barn door after the animals had escaped.

@ Steve Weinstein is the editor of the *New York Blade* and can be reached at sweinstein@nyblade.com



viewpoint SUE NULL



Attending a town hall meeting called by a Republican legislator seemed to be fruitless, but it turned out to be a **golden opportunity** to educate others in attendance.

Finding friends in unlikely places

LAST SATURDAY MORNING (APRIL 9), I had three possible political/service projects on my calendar. I thought of ignoring them all and staying at home to catch up on other things. But at the last minute, I headed off to the town hall meeting of U.S. Rep. John Culberson (R-Houston) at River Oaks Elementary School.

What could possibly be accomplished there? After members of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) had already had a most unfruitful meeting with him, and a previous town hall meeting, I had no illusions of being able to influence Rep. Culberson in any way. So why bother? I rationalized that maybe I could talk with and influence some of the attendees.

I was able to speak from the floor: "Representative Culberson, you have spoken at length in both this meeting and a previous one about your total devotion to your eight-year-old daughter. Like you, I am also a parent who passionately loves her children and wants only the best for them. But two of my four children are homosexual, and are represented by a Congressman (you) who co-sponsors second-class citizenship for them with your support of the Federal Marriage Amendment."

I went on, "I do not understand how someone who professes conservative values of non-intrusion into private lives feels it appropriate to intrude into my children's lives and limit their opportunities in life. Conservative values should

support love and commitment wherever they can be found.

"You refuse to support new programs that cost the government money. Marriage equality costs the government nothing; in fact, the GAO has found instances where marriage equality represents a savings to the government.

"You spoke of the need for the judiciary to protect the rights of minorities. My children are sexual minorities and instead of protection, you are sponsoring discrimination against them.

"As a mother, it is very painful for me to see discrimination against my children just as you would find it painful if your daughter were discriminated against.

"Surely there many more important things for Congress to deal with than to deny civil rights to my children."

AS I TURNED TO SIT DOWN, MANY IN the audience erupted in applause. This was a total shock, since I had expected a more conservative group. It turned out that many who attended were not pleased with Rep. Culberson's stand on various issues.

Rep. Culberson began a long convoluted answer that of course, he supported equal rights, but that "activist judges" were a major problem and that it wasn't appropriate to write legislation for a special group, (having conveniently forgotten about legislation written for one special person, Terry Schiavo) because then there would be more and more special



At a town hall meeting called by U.S. Rep. John Culberson (R-Houston), not everyone opposed gay marriage.

groups demanding special legislation.

The woman next to me shouted, "But you're not answering her question! She's not asking for special legislation." He continued his explanation, which made no sense to most of us, and again, people started to grumble noisily, "You're not answering her question."

I stood up to explain that I certainly was not asking for special legislation, and that I was only asking him not to promote the FMA. The disgruntled audience saw that he was trying to worm his way out of a difficult situation and began shouting at him; the meeting got in quite an uproar!

About 40-50 people attended and I was able to easily get 20 cards signed that support marriage equality. Afterward, people gratefully thanked me for speaking up,

and I thought how strange! This was the meeting I was not going to attend. I left with a rather giddy feeling of having found some momentary success.

The moral of all this? Obviously the telling of personal stories makes an undisputable point, even with those generally opposed to your point of view. So seek out opportunities, get out there, speak up, talk to anyone, talk to everyone, and don't be cowed into silence. You might achieve more than you ever dreamed.

@RSue Null is advocacy chair for PFLAG's Houston chapter and can be reached through this publication.

THE

Q What would entice you to attend a circuit party in another city?



Having friends there to go see and hang with.

JAY RESCH, 28
Houston
Maintenance man at Lovett Inn



Wild party custom.

NELSON MORA, 30
Houston
Model



My friends. I like to go places with friends and have a gay ole good time.

ALEX FREIRE, 27
Houston
Operations administrator



Hot men, good music and a good time.

JOHN UTSEY, 22
Houston
Audiovisual technician



Meet cute guys and make new friends. Also dance to exotic music.

DANIEL MOLINA, 29
Dallas
Dental student

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All news is good news

Whether he's praising Eminem or talking about his business, Sir Elton's always in the news.

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APRIL 15, 2005

two 'L' words

AIR AMERICA HOST ADDS
'LESBIAN' TO 'LIBERAL' RADIO'S SUCCESS

By DYANA BAGBY

h

USTLING ALONG NEW YORK'S Sixth Avenue on her way to the Air America Radio office on a recent afternoon, Rachel Maddow explains during a cell phone interview that what she does as co-host on the nation's newest liberal network morning show "Unfiltered" is

not activism.

"It's radio," Maddow says. "We do political talk. You could call it part of a movement, but not activism. Activism to me is designing a winnable campaign and implementing it."

As a lesbian, Maddow knows about activism. At 31, she's already a veteran activist for gay rights and for AIDS causes.

"As a queer kid growing up in San Francisco with AIDS exploding in my neighborhood, I knew I had to do something," she says.

At 17, Maddow was volunteering with AIDS service organizations before moving into prevention.

"AIDS is the defining thing in my life," Maddow says. "It makes me understand the world and my place in it."

While involved with ACT UP! as a teenager, Maddow became involved with a subcommittee on prisoner's rights.

"They were a bunch of old lefties who were the most interesting people I ever met," she says. "And the battle was real clear — it was about saving people's lives who were in state custody."

Maddow took her political interests with her into an academic career that included a Rhodes scholarship. She went to Oxford and earned a Ph.D. in politics. But her career took a sharp turn while taking time to write her thesis: She tried out for a radio show on Massachusetts station WRNX.

"I was crashing with friends in Massachusetts, working odd jobs, when they told me to try out. And they hired me on the spot. Radio came to me, I didn't come to it," she says.

MADDOW NEVER HIDES HER SEXUAL ORIENTATION and has always been out on the air.

"I don't make apologies for who I am," she says. "I don't hold back."

But she says that she still hears complaints from some listeners if she mentions being a lesbian.

"I'm as open about my life as any other host but still



Lesbian hosts **Rachel Maddow** and **Laura Flanders** have slots on Air America Radio, which was designed to serve as a beacon for socially progressive listeners. Air America Radio can be heard in 46 markets nationwide and its programming boasts continuous play on XM and Sirius satellite radio, as well as 3.5 million Internet listeners a month.

hear complaints. [But] I'm talking about torture memos, not sodomy — unless there's a Supreme Court decision," she says.

Laura Flanders, another lesbian commentator on Air America Radio, hosts her own weekend show from 7 to 10 p.m. on the network. She appeals more to a 20-something crowd.

Maddow and "Unfiltered" co-hosts Lizz Winstead, a co-creator of "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart," and Public Enemy rapper Chuck D are making a career of railing against the Bush administration, the war in Iraq and Republicans in general. But they also know their job is to make sure more people continue to tune in.

AIR AMERICA SERVES AS A BEACON FOR SOCIALLY progressive listeners, but the network faces tough competition from talk radio's current entrenchment in a largely conservative landscape of on-air personalities including Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity and Michael Savage.

A June study from Washington, D.C.-based Democracy Radio, another liberal radio network featuring Ed Schultz and Stephanie Miller, reported that national and local conservative programming totaled nearly 42,000 hours every week, with progressive, or liberal, programming clocking in just 3,042 hours.

"We're not just waging a battle," Maddow says. "We're competing for ratings."

And the competition they offer is stiffer than some critics initially imagined.

Coming up on its first year of business, Air America Radio is now in 46 markets nationwide — up from a beginning of only five markets. Its programming also boasts continuous play on XM and Sirius satellite radio as well as 3.5 million Internet listeners a month.

Air America Radio began airing in metropolitan Washington, D.C., on Jan. 20. The Al Franken Show is on each weekday from noon to 3 p.m.; the Randy Rhodes Show airs from 6 to 8 p.m. "Unfiltered" is not yet on the schedule, though Air America officials said early last month that it would be in the rotation.

Officials at WWRC-AM in Washington did not return calls from the Blade for comment.

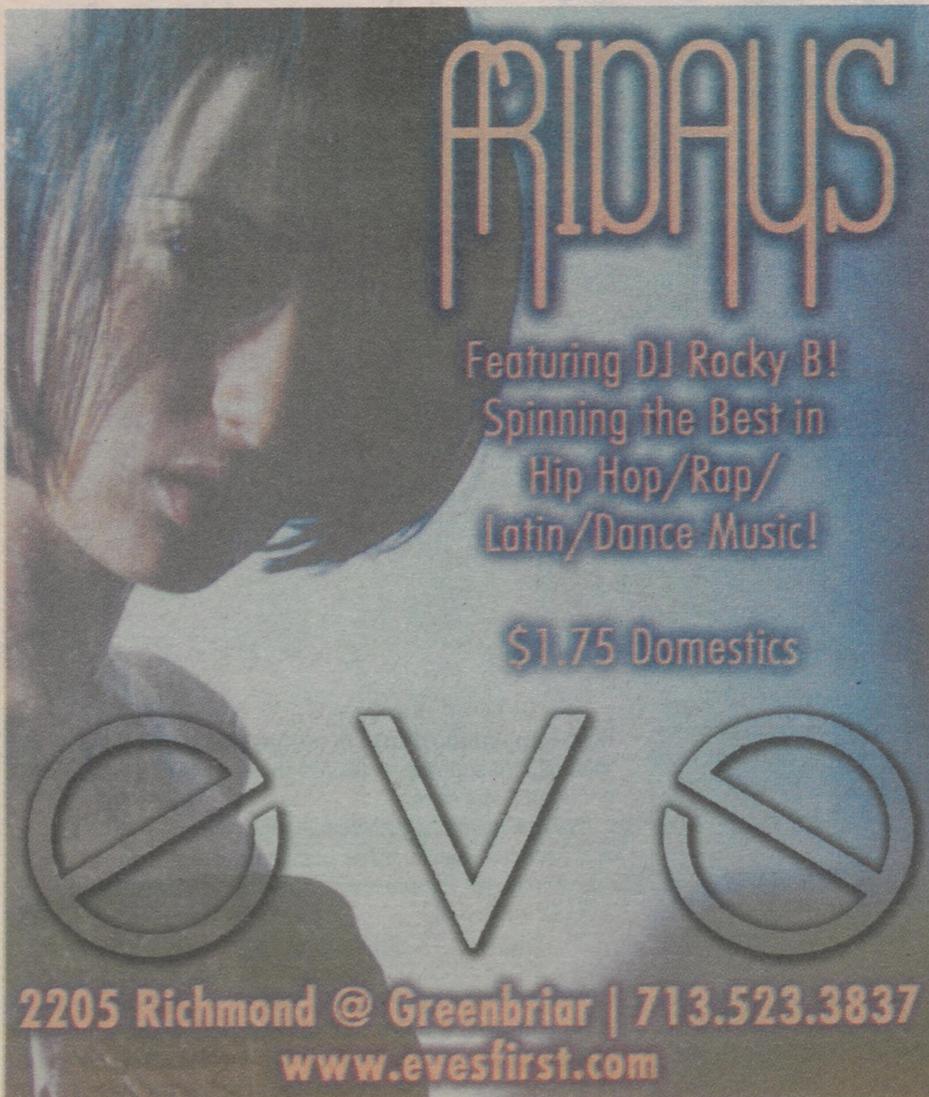
The network's ability to appeal to listeners across the country is a far cry from its early months, when several bumps in the road made it appear Air America might fall flat.

The hype surrounding the network's launch was

Please see **AIR AMERICA** on Page 19

SUMMER AT SEX CAMP: In a new book, diverse characters learn about sex and each other at camp. Page 14

'RING OF FIRE': A USA Network film examines whether a gay taunt led to a 1962 boxing match death. Page 15



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books MIKE FLEMING



Fact-based novel 'Sex Camp' takes readers on a humorous, informative trip through the ins and outs of a real-life religious sex retreat.

Let's talk about sex

A HUMAN SEXUALITY WORKSHOP and an Episcopal church-run campground might seem to be odd bedfellows, but the two actually come together in real life. They also form the backdrop for gay author Brian McNaught's entertaining novel "Sex Camp."

Published in January, it's the first novel by McNaught, a former Atlanta resident and sexuality educator whose non-fiction books include "On Being Gay" and "Now That I'm Out, What Do I Do?"

"Sex Camp" follows six staff members and 32 participants who meet one summer in upstate New York for the Annual Workshop on Sexuality, a weeklong series of intensive training sessions on topics including sexual orientation, gender identity and intimacy. The setting, workshop and staff members — of which McNaught is one — are real, as are their names.

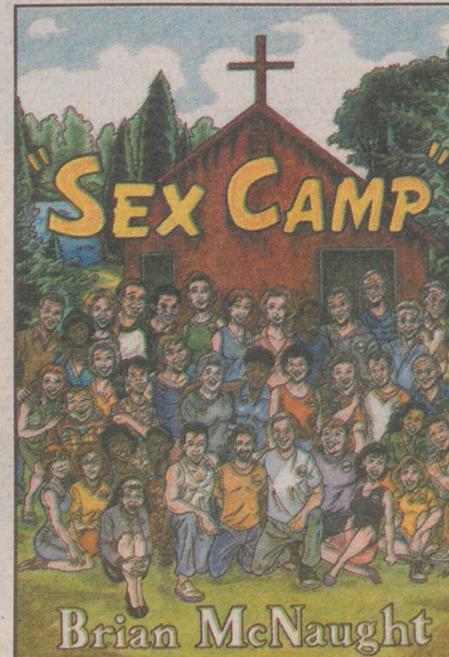
The gay and straight workshop participants are composites McNaught based on real people who took part in the workshop during its nearly 30-year run. They're health professionals, educators, activists and clergy representing a cross-section of contemporary society. McNaught deftly captures and disseminates their distinct personalities and idiosyncrasies in the book.

The author creates truthful and fascinating interpersonal dynamics among the characters. A homophobic Planned Parenthood worker bunks with a lesbian. Other characters include a straight, married, cross-dressing church organist, a hunky wheelchair-bound straight man, two football coaches meeting gay men for the first time and a sex therapist with a gay son.

"I'm hoping that the broad cast of characters, which is so diverse and accurate in the make-up of the group, helps people understand that that's the world we live in," McNaught tells Southern Voice.

AS THE CHARACTERS INTERACT IN and out of the training sessions, their vastly conflicting value systems conflict. McNaught demonstrates a keen ear for dialogue, both casual and clinical. It's a pleasure to peer vicariously into the microcosm.

The details are so tangible, readers



A diverse cast of characters are educated about sex and each other in Brian McNaught's 'Sex Camp.'

should feel as if they are there. McNaught respects the reader's intelligence by avoiding condescending prose while making the factual information in the workshops understandable and relatable.

McNaught says that in life, as in the book, the workshops positively affected the participants — including himself, even on his first uneasy visit when he was struggling to accept himself as gay.

"I grew just as the participants I describe in the book, emerging from a very negative and uninformed background into this incredible identity of being self-affirming," McNaught says. "I'm hoping readers of the book will see that it's a great celebration of sexual health."

Of the many compelling characters, the writer struggled most to fairly flesh out the character of Peter O'Shea, a self-identified ex-gay Lutheran Church worker.

"I didn't want him to be a caricature of what an ex-gay person is," McNaught says. "It would have been easy to have him constantly spouting Biblical quotes, but I wanted him to be a sympathetic character who is on a journey. There are people out there who are really struggling and claim to be ex-gay because it may be the only way out of the pain they're feeling."

By the time readers reach the final page, the characters are so real that they serve as catalysts for personal change. Readers should recognize something of themselves and people they know in these characters. And when they find that they've learned a few things along the way, they'll be all the better for having spent the summer at "Sex Camp."

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television SCOTT LACY



USA Network film looks at boxing match in 1962 in which a gay taunt may have led to the death of an athlete on live television.

Tragedy in the ring

THERE ARE CERTAIN DUOS LINKED eternally in the public's imagination, united by tragedy, each guaranteed a spot in the other's obituary. Emile Griffith and Benny Paret are such a pair.

This linkage is the soul of USA Network's film "Ring of Fire: The Emile Griffith Story," a film whose underlying question is whether a person's life can be defined by a single, tragic event.

This moving 86-minute documentary, directed and produced by Dan Klores and Ron Berger, mixes in a 60's slant on issues that remain with us today: namely homosexuality in sports and political opportunism in the face of tragedy. But the primary thrust of "Ring of Fire" is the 1962 bout that left Benny "Kid" Paret dead and Griffith, the three-time welterweight champion, struggling to escape the shadow of the tragedy.

The story begins as fight manager Howie Albert plucks Griffith, a sensitive Virgin Islands immigrant with astonishing physical gifts, off the street. Griffith is a natural in the ring. His fast hands and lightning jabs propel him through the ranks of amateur boxing and into the pros, where he knocks out Paret to win the welterweight title.

Six months later the two fighters meet again, and this time Griffith falters, giving the title back to Paret and setting up a decisive and fateful rematch.

The film portrays Paret, a Cuban exile, as Griffith's opposite. He possesses few of Griffith's physical gifts, but he is tough and relentless and willing to absorb punishment. This stubborn ring style, coupled with Griffith's fast hands, will prove a fatal combination.

When Griffith and Paret meet for their third title bout in 1962, anticipation is running high. Things only get more intense at weigh-in when Paret taunts Griffith by calling him maricón — Spanish slang for "fagot." Griffith is furious.

In the ensuing bout, televised live before millions, Griffith unleashes a torrent of blows so furious that referee Ruby Goldstein, stunned by the speed of Griffith's advance, steps in too late. Paret slumps to the canvas, unresponsive, and Griffith's life is forever changed.

THE FILMMAKERS PAINT A LUSH picture of the post-fight hysteria, replete with opportunistic politicians, an angry Spanish community, and gun-shy net-



A fateful boxing match between Emile Griffith and the late Benny Paret is recounted in a documentary slated to air on the USA Network on Wednesday, April 20. (Photo courtesy of USA Network)

works who banish the sport from television for a decade.

Griffith, crushed and confused, reluctantly resumes his boxing career. He later becomes a corrections officer and adopts a grown son. And though he has seemingly moved on with his life, we can see that he is not quite free of the shadow of Paret's death.

The film's emotional crescendo comes when Griffith meets with Paret's adult son for the first time. The encounter, while presumably brokered by the film's producers, nonetheless packs an emotional punch.

"Ring of Fire" is strengthened by a who's who of old-school scribes and boxing wags — Jimmy Breslin, Pete Hamill, and Norman Mailer among them — who weave the narrative backdrop that elevates "Ring of Fire" far above a typical sports documentary.

Griffith's sexual orientation is addressed briefly here and there. Early on, the film mentions only Paret's taunts and the whispers in the boxing community. The documentary is nearly over when Griffith himself finally addresses the subject. But he doesn't acknowledge his orientation so much as imply it, and viewers are left to reach their own conclusions.




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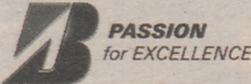
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Michael Morrow on:

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Filmed just prior to his death in 1994, Michael Morrow looks at the genesis of the cult classic film series, "The Minister Mike Show," created in response to "Todd's Greatest Regret," a hateful documentary in which a mother prayed to Jesus to give her son AIDS.

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Admission \$5.00

presented by
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MORE INFO

'Ring of Fire: The Emile Griffith Story'
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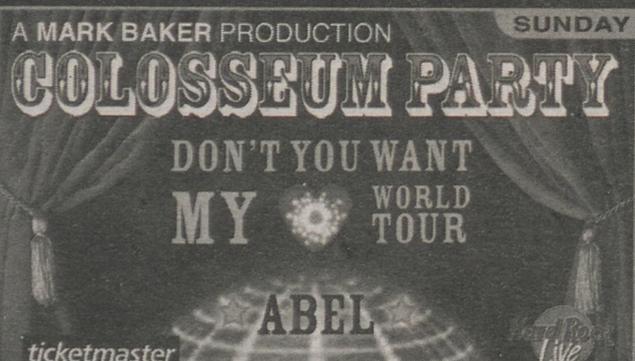


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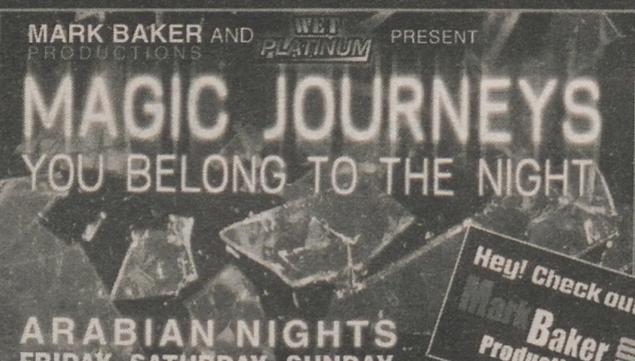
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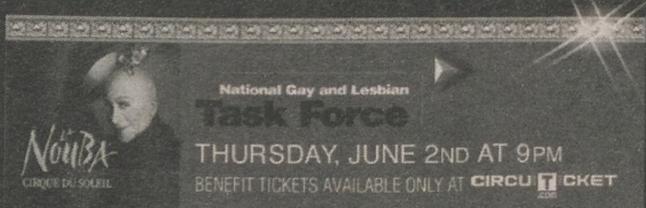
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nitelife JOHNNY HOOKS



A send-off for Jill Jordan at EJ's, a film about Minister Mike, another Loft Party at Faraggo and a concert by the duo Singapore banned.

Luck to Jill

WELCOME BACK TO HOVO ON THE Go-Go. This week we're simply up to our ears in events, so get out your blackberries and hold on, because Saturday and Sunday are full of things to do!

PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS darlings. The one and only **Miss Jill Jordan** (looking svelte and fabulous after losing some major weight!) will be at **EJ's** Saturday night for her **Miss Gay Texas USA Classic Sendoff Show** Sunday night at **Inergy**, 5750 Chimney Rock. **Roxanne Collins** and **Raven St James** are among those who will be performing to raise monies for Jill's pageant appearance.

HotGG loves EJ's, especially on that huge patio when the weather is as beautiful as it has been lately. Check out the bar's new **SHOT guys**.

Delicious, the guys are that is. EJ's 2517 Ralph Street at Westheimer.

THIS FILM IS A MUST SEE.

"**Religious Bigotry Exposed: Michael Morrow on The Minister Mike Show**," a new film based on the late Houston artist's critically-acclaimed television series, will be screened at the **Rice Media Center** at 7 and 9 p.m. Saturday. "The Minister Mike Show" won awards and caused a controversy when it first aired on Houston Public Access television more than 15 years ago. According to co-star **Tek Wilson**, "Minister Mike" was born in 1990, when Morrow, a healthy, HIV-positive, gay man, saw a program on Houston's local access station that changed his creative life forever. "**Todd's Greatest Regret**" was a program in which a Christian mother refused to accept her son's homosexuality. In fact, Todd's mother asked Jesus to give her son AIDS, in order that he be brought more quickly to the Lord. Oh Tom Delay would be so proud! The Rice Media Center is located on the Rice University Campus, 6100 Main Street, entrance MS-549.

AFTER THE FILM, HEAD OVER TO **Farrago**, 318 Gray, for the next **Loft Party** thrown by **DJ Surain** and **Zeke Ziliak**. According to Ziliak "Our goal is to draw the same good-mix crowd that has so much fun at Montrose Berryhill on Sunday afternoons. And since April 16 just so happens to be my 29th birthday, I'm hoping for an especially strong showing. I'll be at the bar enjoying cocktails starting around 9:00-ish, and the loud music will start sometime after 10 p.m., once owner **Chuck Russell** has ended his restaurant's normal serving hours." Color HotGG there!



Jill Jordan appears at EJ's for her Miss Gay Texas Classic Sendoff Show.

THE CHARLES ARMSTRONG TEAM has done it again. They presented another check to the "**Bush-Clinton Tsunami Relief Fund**" for \$2,600.00 raised from the door proceeds at the recent **Houston Ultra DJ Event**.

This Sunday you'll find **DJ Limey** taking a spin at the tables at South Beach. And you can enter to win tickets to the **Paullina Rubio** show at the weekly **Café Con Leche** on Wednesday at, where else, SoBe!

NATIONALLY KNOWN DUO **JASON and deMarco** will be at **Bering Memorial United Methodist Church** Sunday. Sunday morning they will sing several songs during the 10:50 a.m. worship service and then be in the Fellowship Hall afterwards. At 7 p.m. Sunday, they will be in concert in the sanctuary. Tickets are now available for \$10 and may be purchased Sunday morning after both services or at the door Sunday night. Doors open at 6 p.m. Visit www.jasonanddemarco.com/music.html to hear some of their tunes. Bering Church is located at 1440 Harold Street.

DID YOU KNOW THAT THE **BRAZOS River Bottom** opens every day at Noon? Did you also know they have great drink specials, also starting at Noon? Well now you do. The **Krewe of Olympus** is throwing a **Caribbean Holiday** there on Sunday. The Holiday starts at 7 p.m. BRB has **Jody Blankenbaker** and **90 Proof** every Friday night as well. Stop by 2400 Brazos or call 713-528-9192 for all the info, pardners!

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

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

Really seeing red

Elton John goes broke,
Tatum O'Neal goes wild
and Cherry Jones goes out

SIR ELTON JOHN ALWAYS LOOKS good in red — just look at his hit “The Red Piano” show in Las Vegas. Too bad the same can't be said for his company.

London's Daily Mail reported last Friday that John's company, Twenty-First Artist, is more than \$50 million in debt, a figure that almost doubled from a debt of more than \$27 million a year ago.

“Everything is big with [John],” accounting expert Cliff Dane told the Mail. “He makes a lot of money and he needs to keep making it. He is borrowing more than he is earning for the company at the moment.”

This report comes just days after the news that John and his business partners in Twenty-First Artists signed a five-year contract with Sanctuary Group, the world's largest management agency for music artists, including BEYONCÉ and The Who. Sanctuary will be taking over the business for the duration of the contract.

“I feel strongly this will represent the continuation of a very creative period for me,” John, 58, told the Associated Press about the more than \$30 million deal.

According to the Mail's accountants, John better have a long, lucrative creative period if he wants to get out of debt and continue living his well-noted extravagant lifestyle. But he is just as well known for his charity. Last year, he was the United Kingdom's biggest donor, giving almost \$40 million to different causes.

Some gay activists and artists aren't going to be that charitable when they hear what Sir Elton says about homophobic rapper EMINEM in the latest issue of Rolling Stone.

“From the start, I've always admired Eminem's thinking,” John writes in the magazine's second “Immortals” edition, where great artists write about the merits of other great artists.

“That's the reason I wanted to appear on the Grammys with him when I was asked [in 2001], despite all the nonsense talked about his being homophobic. Let the BOY GEORGES and the GEORGE MICHAELS of the world get up in a twist about it if they don't have the intelligence to see his intelligence.”

Tatum tantrum

Last week former child actress



Tatum O'Neal

TATUM O'NEAL got in quite a pickle at New York City bar Pop Burger, according to the New York Post's Page Six.

According to one of the gossip column's spies, O'Neal, 41, arrived drunk and knocked a drink



Elton John is always in the headlines, whether for his business affairs or his love for Eminem.

on a fellow patron. Instead of apologizing, she went outside to smoke where she picked up a pretty blond woman.

The two ventured inside and started to play tonsil hockey at one of the bar's tables.

“They started fooling around and were full-on making out,” the spy says. “Then she started feeling the girl's boobs and rubbing her crotch. It got so graphic that the manager had to keep sending a waiter to the table to tell them to stop because they were causing a scene.”

Last year, O'Neal published her memoir, “A Paper Life,” which included all sorts of dirt about her past with cocaine and heroine, her tennis-playing ex-husband JOHN MCENROE and her famous father RYAN O'NEAL. She's lived a wild life, but even this seems a bit much for Tatum.

Cherry pie

Speaking of spies, Dish got word from one of his about Broadway actress and current “Doubt” star CHERRY

JONES. Put this in your “unverifiable but interesting file,” but Dish's friend says he saw the openly lesbian Jones getting close with fellow Broadway actress SARAH PAULSON.



Cherry Jones

Paulson is currently starring in the Broadway revival of “The Glass Menagerie,” which is playing right down the street and a bit longer than “Doubt.” After a recent performance, the spy saw the two leaving “Menagerie” through the backstage door hand-in-hand.

They may be more than friends.



Send comments, suggestions to
Dish@houstonvoice.com

eclipse cover story

Conservative climate could help liberal radio, expert says

AIR AMERICA, continued from Page 13

unprecedented, including star commentator Franken publicly proclaiming his mission on the station was to defeat George W. Bush.

But Air America quickly ran out of money and was kicked off the air in Los Angeles and Chicago, two of its three largest markets. Numerous management changes came in the first six months, and there was even a week the network didn't make payroll.

And with Bush's re-election, critics doubted the network could survive.

Even libertarian Neal Boortz, whose talk show is syndicated around the country, predicted on the air that Air America was destined to crash. But he recently backpedaled a bit when he told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution that he now welcomes the competition of the network's rising success.

"I didn't think it was going to succeed. I'm pleased that it [might]," Boortz told the newspaper in December. "I'm rooting for them."

Interestingly, the current conservative political climate may only work to infuse the network with more support, including raising \$19 million in private funding to cover costs.

"It is successful in terms of getting a lot of attention, it has grown and has some ratings to speak of," says Michael Harrison founder and editor of Talkers magazine, a trade publication.

"And it has definitely raised awareness in the industry that there is a market for different political views," he adds.

Franken, who recently signed a multi-year contract, actually beat out Rush Limbaugh's ratings in the heavily desired 25-to-54-year-old demographic in New York City in the month of December.

Clear Channel Communications Inc., considered by many to be a conservative Republican bastion, is even jumping on the Air America success wagon.

On Jan. 19, the media giant announced it converted three stations in Washington, D.C., Detroit and Cincinnati with talkers from Air America, according to Reuters. And on President Bush's inauguration day, the Wall Street Journal ran an extensive piece about Air America's rising success.

"What happened on Nov. 2 may have

RACHEL MADDOW

Age: 31

Occupation: Co-host of Air America Radio's 'Unfiltered,' which airs in certain markets nationwide, though not in Washington, D.C.

Relationship status: Long-term partner, artist Susan Mikula

Home: West Cummington, Mass., and New York City

Education: Graduated from Stanford University in 1994; obtained her doctorate in politics at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar

Activism: AIDS Legal Referral Panel, ACT UP, Empty the Shelters, and the Women's AIDS Network in the Bay Area. In Britain, general manager of the AIDS Treatment Project, the UK's first community-based HIV/AIDS treatment advocacy organization.

been bad for America, but it sure was good for Air America," Rob Glaser, chair of Air America, told the newspaper.

For radio expert Harrison, who says he is still unsure about Air America's long-term success, watching Clear Channel pick up Air America in some markets is not surprising.

"[Air America] is a viable player," he says. "The biggest myth about radio is that it wants to promote an agenda. The truth is that the goal of radio is to make money."

And that's where Harrison says he is concerned about Air America's future.

"Where they have yet to prove how long they can continue on an upward projectory is to make the transition from raising money to making money," Harrison says.

AS A CO-HOST OF ONE OF THE network's weekday shows, Maddow says her job is not only to deliver news and viewpoints less represented on mainstream media outlets, but entertaining listeners as well.

"We work really hard all the time and take it very seriously," she says. "Going in the studio is like going into surgery. Once those studio doors close and the red light goes on, there's no turning back. I feel like the way we do the show is baking, not cooking. You put in all the ingredients, but you don't know really what you have until it's over. Until the timer goes off, we're live."

Preparing for a daily show is like cramming for a tough exam every day, Maddow adds. Her schedule includes waking up at 5 a.m., getting to the office by 6 a.m. and spending the next three hours going over breaking news and researching topics from environmental concerns raised by three-legged frogs to declassified "torture" memos written by President Bush's nominee for U.S. Attorney General, Alberto Gonzales.

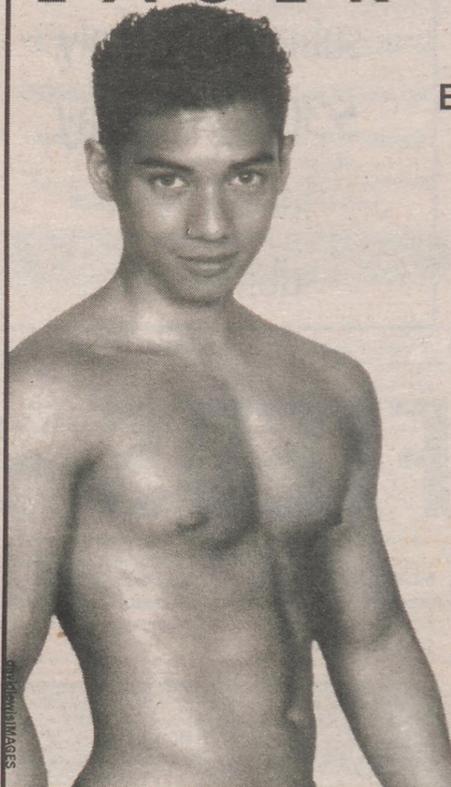
"It's all very spontaneous what we do," she says. "If anything, this show makes me more superstitious. There's a lot of luck when you're on the fly."

MORE INFO

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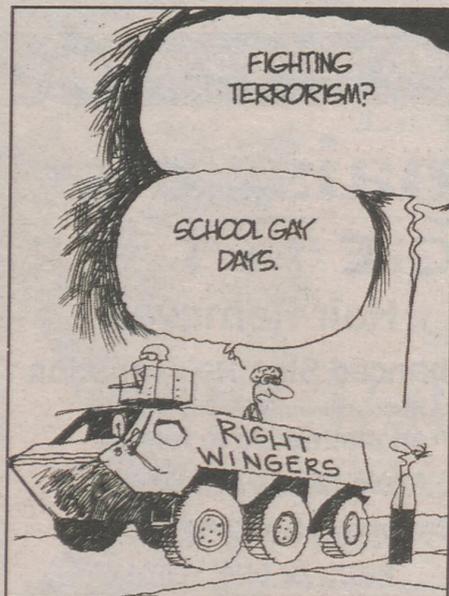
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SHARE / HOUSTON

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YAH. WE GAY BOYS ARE LIKE MARY POPPINS. WE FLY IN, MAKE EVERYTHING "PRACTICALLY PERFECT IN EVERY WAY" --

ALL SUPERCALI-FAG-ILISTICEXPIALIDOCIOUS.

-- AND THEN WE FLY AWAY TO DO THE SAME IN SOME OTHER NEIGHBORHOOD!

SEE? ANOTHER STRAIGHT COUPLE WITH A BABY STROLLER. I SAY, TAKE THAT SHIT TO THE UPPER WEST SIDE WHERE IT BELONGS!

OH, RICHARD. I THINK IT'S KINDA SWEET. BESIDES, SOME OF THOSE COUPLES PUSHING BABY STROLLERS HAPPEN TO BE GAY.

YEAH, BUT AT NIGHT THOSE COUPLES PUT THEIR BABIES TO BED AND HEAD OUT TO THE EAGLE TO FIND OTHER HOT DADDIES TO DIAPER AND SPANK THEM.

YAH, WHATEVER. BUT YA DO HAVE A POINT... THE OL' GAY NABE JUST AIN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE --

WOOSH!!!

THEN AGAIN, THANK GOD SOME THINGS IN CHELSEA NEVER CHANGE...

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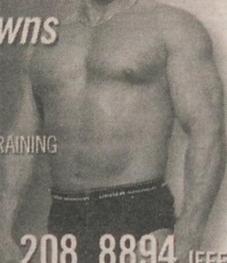
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bitch session



HI MOM! YES, I'M GAY, AND I KNOW you've found copies of this gay rag under my bed. I know you've been reading them. You didn't put them back in order.

YOU WEREN'T INVITED TO THE PARTY because we hate your boyfriend. Dump him and you might get an invite.

YOU DON'T THINK WOMEN CONCERN themselves with finding a man with money as well as looks and who is great in bed? What cave did you just crawl out of? Where do you think gay men picked up those superficial expectations to begin with?

TRIMMING A CROTCH IS COMFORTABLE? I shaved my crotch, armpits and butt once upon a time and when the hair grew back it itched something terrible. Too much maintenance to bother with that. When will people realize again that hair is actu-

ally sexy on a guy?

LESBIANS PAY US GAY MEN AN unintended compliment by holding us to a much higher standard than they're willing to apply to themselves.

I'M STRAIGHT, AND I HAVE TO SAY that I have more respect for those who are completely out of the closet than those who hide behind their true identity. Those who are in the closet I find to be the emotional basket cases.

WHY IS IT THAT THE ONLY PEOPLE who don't use leashes to walk their dogs are gay men? Not all gay men of course, but the ones who don't all seem to have a chip on their shoulder like they dare you to say something.

MAYBE THE SO-CALLED LESBIANS WHO

Problem with Gay Society #45: All my online conversations seem to end after the phrase "five inches."

have "fallen for a man" but still identify as lesbian were never really dykes at all — but merely confused, afraid of sex and men, and baby-slinging closet breeders.

TO THE GUY WHO IS "SHOCKED" THAT a man with HIV would not announce his HIV status to everyone at a sex club: What planet are you living on? As long as he plays safe, get over it.
WHY DO SO MANY GAY MEN CLAIM to be something they are not?

There are thieves and fakers amongst us who are headed for a big dyke beat down.

I CAN'T REALLY GET BEHIND THOSE tiny little-boy tushalitos on men over 25. On a man, I want to see an ass!

BECAUSE OF BIOLOGY OR MEDIA hypnosis, most men today, gay or straight, expect to date people who are not just good-looking but hot. If you're a gay man or a straight woman and nature or your best efforts haven't made you "hot," you

can really feel screwed.

WHY DO ALL THE GUYS I FALL IN love with have to be straight? It's not fair, at least they can carry on a conversation and talk about their feelings!

I WENT OUT TO A GAY DANCE CLUB this weekend after being away from the scene for several years. It is unfortunate to see the same guys still trying to use the scene and drugs to escape the unhappiness of their lives.

PLEASE DON'T TELL ME, OR ANYONE, that you're "HIV negative" when your best friend tells me a week later that you haven't been tested in over three years. You're no stranger to a hook-up with a stranger, and you're not positive that you're "negative!"

I AM SO TIRED OF GAY MEN WHO ARE self-conscious to the point of distraction. Enough already with what you wear, who you know, where you work, where you live or vacation.

EX-GAYS DO NOT PROVE CHANGE IS possible. They prove there are people out there who are good at lying to themselves.

Editors' note: These are real bitches, sent in by real readers, about gay life's little annoyances, and the big ones, too. Got a bitch? Call 1-800-858-8088 or e-mail: bitch@expressgaynews.com



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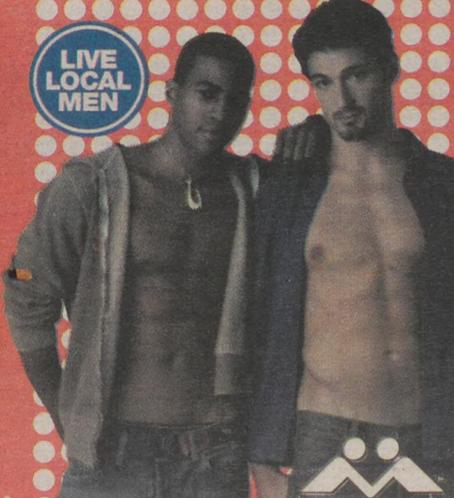
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