

Free-wheeling writer Iris Murdoch returns in a movie starring Kate Winslet and Dame Judi Dench.

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INSIDE



Transgender activists, including Vanessa Edwards Foster (front row, second from left), call for the Texas hate crimes law to be expanded.

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As the Olympics unfold in Salt Lake City, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is omnipresent, although Mormon leaders have remained mum on pro-gay Olympic outreach.

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Patrice and Lady India create a scandal with the Messerschmann family in the delightful 'Ring Around the Moon,' presented by the A.D. Players.

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Gay Enron exec finds silver lining



LOU CHIBBAKO JR.

Gay Houstonian Michael J. Kopper, a former Enron executive, invoked the Fifth Amendment in response to all questions at a congressional hearing last week. Kopper is under investigation with several other former Enron leaders. He and his domestic partner, William D. Dodson, reportedly earned \$10.5 million on a \$125,000 investment as part of dealings that helped lead to Enron's financial collapse.

Lack of legal ties between Kopper and his domestic partner may have helped two make money before company fell

by PENNY WEAVER

Under investigation as part of the flap that began with Enron Corp.'s financial collapse, a gay Houstonian and his partner are a new, high-profile example of a committed gay couple who may have found a way to benefit from being denied the legal right to marry.

Former Enron executive Michael J. Kopper and his partner, William D. Dodson, invested \$125,000 into a partnership firm that Enron executives used to hide the company's mounting debt, according to a report prepared for Enron's board of directors.

When Kopper and Dodson sold their interests in that firm to Enron, the pair received \$10.5 million, the report states. Company officials originally had offered to buy out the two for \$1 million.

"We were unable to locate any direct evidence about who made the ultimate decision on the buyout amount," the report to the Enron board states.

Kopper allegedly allowed his partner to presume ownership in several similar partnerships at the same time that Kopper managed the transactions for Enron. According to reports, former Enron Chief Financial Officer Andrew Fastow suggested to Jeff Skilling, former chief executive officer for the company, that Fastow let his wife's relatives in on the lucrative transactions.

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Local NAMES office may close

Chapters quit over new AIDS Quilt rules; some blast Project for unfair contracts

By JENNIFER J. SMITH

Houston may soon lose its NAMES Project chapter, one of several nationwide offices set to close in an upset at the organization that cares for the AIDS Memorial Quilt.

Less than a year after a controversial move from San Francisco to Atlanta, the NAMES Project is splintering and working to stabilize its finances. At least five of 30 chapters are disbanding, and three of the closures are related to an aggressive new chapter contract issued by the national office last month, officials said.

"The way the national office treats the chapters is criminal," said Don Coombes, display coordinator for the Long Beach, Calif., chapter, the only chapter in Southern California. "We're out. We're through. We've had enough. That contract was the end of it. We're com-

> Continued on Page 9



DALTON DEHART

Houston NAMES project chair Alex Soto refused to comment on the chapter's future this week. Here, volunteers participate in World AIDS Day.

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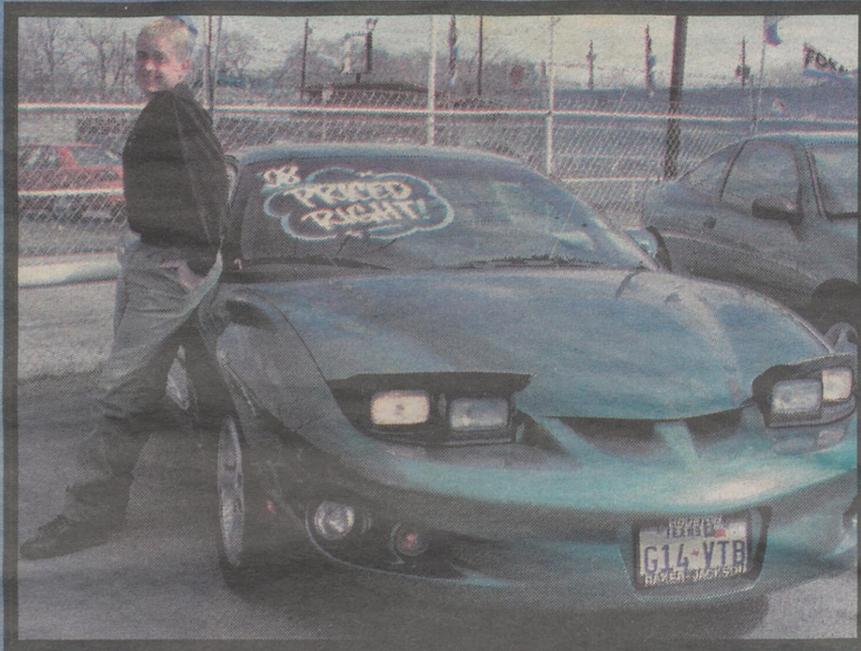
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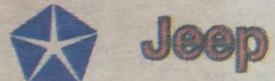
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Activists want hate crimes law expanded

Transgender groups call for addition to legislation after recent killing in Houston

by PENNY WEAVER

Two groups that speak on behalf of transgendered Texans have called for the state's hate crimes law to be amended to include gender identity or gender non-conformity as a protected status.

Leaders of the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition (NTAC) and the Texas Gender Advocacy & Information Network (TGAIN) said the James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Protection Act, which became law last year, should include transgenders in its protections.

Vanessa Edwards Foster, NTAC board vice chair, said the recent murder of a transgender person in Houston is just the latest in tragedies that have prompted calls for more legal protection against violent crime based on prejudice.

"There is very little progress that's being made," Foster said.

The body of Hugo Cesar Barajas, 20, of Baytown, who was known as Bibi Barajas, was discovered Jan. 26 at 5300 Glenmont in Houston, an area known for prostitution. Barajas had been shot several times.

To date, there are no suspects, known motives or known witnesses in the case, according to Houston Police Department spokesman John Cannon.

"[We have] no real new solid leads at all," he said this week. "Right now, [the investigation is] still in limbo."

Foster and other activists said transgenders are often misunderstood and are frequent targets for hate-motivated violence.

"There seems to be a general perception from society just from not knowing much about the [transgender] community," she said. "Usually the only perception they will have of us outside of the entertainment world would be those that they see out on the street corners. That seems to be a general stereotype.

"Their perception is, 'Well they're out there on the street, they should realize the risks,' and [that's] probably kind of oversimplifying the problem," Foster added.

Misperceptions are just one reason both

NTAC and TGAIN are lobbying to have gender identity added to the hate crimes law with other protected categories, including race, religion, age or sexual orientation. The law provides enhanced penalties for crimes motivated by bias against the protected statuses.

"It's tough to lose this many people," Foster said. "What makes it tougher is not having anyone in the legislature see the need for addressing this. It's very frustrating."

Transgenders to picket Houston's HRC dinner

TGAIN announced this week its intention to picket the March 2 Human Rights Campaign dinner in Houston.

"While other national organizations have demanded transgender inclusion in the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), the Human Rights Campaign has remained steadfastly resolute in their effort to deny transgenders the same rights they demand for gays and lesbians," said Sarah DePalma, executive director of TGAIN. "The HRC continues to pursue a policy of transgender exclusion while claiming to be transgender friendly."

HRC spokesperson Wayne Besen said this week HRC does support transgender rights, but the group has been told that adding gender identity to ENDA before the current Congress would harm the bill's chances at passing.

"It's not right to focus on HRC with this — we don't introduce legislation," Besen said. "We've done perhaps more education on this than any other group in the country. Members of Congress right now say that this is not the time to introduce that."

"I think we have done a tremendous amount and we would hope those who are protesting would educate themselves on our organization and see what we have done," Besen added. "I think they would see us as a strong ally in this fight, not a group to picket."

DePalma disputed the HRC's claim that ENDA would be endangered by adding gender identity as a protected status.

"They've been telling us that for 20 years. When we go talk to the legislature, [lawmakers] tell us the opposite, so somebody's not telling the truth," she said. "[HRC is] all smiles but no substance when it comes to transgenders. This is not a new thing."

Kopper, Dodson listed among HRC dinner leaders

➤ Continued from Page 1

Skilling told congressional investigators that he replied to Fastow: "That would be a bad idea."

Kopper and Dodson, as domestic partners but without the legal connection that marriage creates, both had stakes in the off-the-books partnership deals now under investigation.

Houston attorney Mitchell Katine, who represents two gay men in a well-known case that challenges Texas' sodomy law, said that in most cases, being unable to legally marry is a drawback for same-sex couples. What male-female couples can achieve legally and economically in a marriage certificate is almost impossible for gay pairs to access.

But what gays usually consider a negative also can have legal positives.

"There are a number of situations where gay and lesbian people have some advantages of not being married, but probably if you were to put a list of the advantages and disadvantages down, the disadvantages far outweigh the advantages," Katine said. "It's a two-edged sword."

Legal marriage could make a difference

The House Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations continues to look into the actions of the executives who may have contributed to Enron's financial downfall.

Called to testify last week, Kopper invoked his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination at a congressional hear-

ing. His service at Enron included a role as director of the Enron Global Finance division in 1997.

He played a principle role in the formation of Chewco Investments LP, one of several partnership firms that Enron executives created to hide the giant energy corporation's mounting debt, according to the report prepared for the Enron board.

The report says that in December 1997, Kopper transferred his ownership in two of the firms to Dodson, a former Continental Airlines employee.

Attorney Katine pointed out that Kopper and Dodson's assets, without a marriage license, are separate as far as the law is concerned.

"Regardless of being in a relationship, each individual is a separate entity," Katine said. "There are other examples where being in a gay and lesbian relationship gives you an advantage due to not being legally married, but that would be the same thing ... if a boyfriend or girlfriend are living together."

Legally, an unmarried heterosexual couple could do what Kopper and Dodson apparently accomplished, Katine said. Even in a common-law marriage — which Texas law offers — a heterosexual couple would have to step up to legally claim that they should be considered married. Otherwise, they would have no legal binds.

But it could be claimed that such a couple meet the common law standards and are bound by law, even if they have not requested that recognition, Katine said. Three elements must be met for a heterosexual cou-



Attorney Mitchell Katine, who represents two gay men in a high-profile case to fight the state's sodomy law, said the financial windfall of an Enron executive and his partner is an example of one of few economic advantages that gays might reap from being denied the legal right to marry.

ple to request a common law marriage under Texas law: They must live together for any period of time; must have a verbal agreement that they are married; and must present themselves as a married couple in the community, Katine said.

"Once those elements [are in place], then

you are entitled to call yourself a common-law couple," he said. "[But] there's nothing that automatically happens."

If an unmarried heterosexual couple that met those criteria had done what Kopper and Dodson appear to have done in the off-the-books financial dealings, there could be a legal basis to connect the two individuals.

"Somebody could make an allegation that they represented themselves be married," Katine said. "[But] they can't use it to their advantage in one sense and not be held to it in another sense."

Couple gives to many gay causes

Kopper and Dodson, individually and as a pair, have contributed to a number of non-profit organizations for causes assisting gay Houstonians.

The two gave \$12,500 last year to People for a Fair Houston and Progressive Voters in Action, both political groups that led the fight against the anti-gay City Prop. 2. That amount includes \$10,000 to help underwrite a dinner hosted by attorney Richard Mithoff as a fund-raiser for the "No on Prop. 2" campaign.

As a company, Enron also contributed \$10,000 to that same political cause. All such contributions are public record.

Kopper and Dodson are members of a Human Rights Campaign donors club, which requires annual donations of between \$5,000 and \$10,000. For the upcoming March 2 HRC dinner in Houston, both Kopper and Dodson are listed as table captains.

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Voting for Pride parade grand marshals ends this weekend

Saturday is the last chance for Houstonians to vote for grand marshals who will preside over the annual nighttime Houston Pride Parade on June 29. According to the Pride Committee of Houston, Inc., nominees for female grand marshal are Janine Brunjes, Mayor Lee Brown's liaison to gay Houstonians; business owner and activist Herlinda "Mela"

INFO

Pride Committee of Houston, Inc.

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Among candidates to serve as female grand marshal at this year's Houston Pride Parade is Janine Brunjes, who serves as Mayor Lee Brown's liaison to gay Houstonians. Also on the ballot for that honor are Herlinda 'Mela' Contreras and Barbara Walker. Voting wraps up Saturday.

Contreras; and health educator/activist Barbara Walker. Volunteer entertainer Rusty Mueller, also known as Crystal Rae Lee Love, was nominated as male grand marshal, and PFLAG members Jane and Irv Smith were nominated as a couple for honorary grand marshal. Groups nominated are Gay & Lesbian Switchboard Houston and Gulf Coast Archives & Museum. The Pride Committee will hold poll voting for the grand marshal positions at the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, 803 Hawthorne, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Those who wish to vote must bring proof of residency in Harris County or its surrounding counties. Vote tabulation will be conducted by members of the committee's board of directors. Winners will be determined by a plurality of the vote, with any ties resolved by members of the Board. The marshals will be announced March 14.

Annual fund-raiser to benefit PWA Holiday Charities



Volunteers offer their talents, including singing a few tunes, to help contribute to the annual Night In Black Leather fund-raiser, set for March 2 this year.

Organizers of Houston's annual Night In Black Leather (NIBL) are gearing up for another rousing night of entertainment for a cause. NIBL raises funds for HIV/AIDS organizations in the city. Past beneficiaries include Bering Community Service Foundation, Colt 45's, Steven's House and Houston Buyers Club. This year's beneficiary is the PWA Holiday Charities.

As part of the event, volunteers

take the stage to show off their singing and other talents for the audience. A silent auction also will be part of the event, coordinated by Don Gill Production and a number of community activists who step up to volunteer.

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around houston

Human Rights Campaign plans annual dinner

A reception, silent auction and more will be part of the night March 2 for the Houston Human Rights Campaign 2002 Gala at the Westin Galleria. The festivities celebrate the accomplishments of the group, which lobbies for gay rights. The reception and silent auction begin at 6:30 p.m., with the dinner and program, hosted by actor Jim J. Bullock, to follow at 8. Keynote speaker will be Vermont Gov. Howard Dean. Special guests scheduled to attend are actress Cloris Leachman, most recently seen on "The Ellen Show," and HRC Executive Director Elizabeth Birch. Also at the black-tie event, awards will be presented to community activists. The group AssistHers, which helps lesbians with health crises, will receive the Community Service Award. Gay political consultant Grant Martin will be presented the Political Equality Award.

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—From staff reports

Fired aide files sex discrimination complaint against state



Acting Lt. Gov. Bill Ratliff said in August that the firing of a longtime Senate aide was justified, but that aide this month filed a complaint with the Texas Commission on Human Rights. The woman was accused of sexual harassment by another female employee.

AUSTIN — A longtime Senate aide fired in August after employees complained of sexual and verbal harassment in the Senate media office she directed says she was a victim of sex discrimination and has filed a complaint with the Texas Commission on Human Rights, the Associated Press reported. Katherine Staat, former director of Senate Media Services, was fired after an internal investigation into sexual harassment complaints filed by a female employee. The woman who filed the complaints said she was encouraged by a third woman in the office to become a lesbian. The Human Rights Commission has 180 days to investigate Staat's complaint. Acting Lt. Gov. Bill Ratliff said at the time that Staat's firing was justified because the "agency was in a state of disarray." Ratliff's office would not comment on Staat's complaint. But it did release a 24-page investigation report outlining complaints of sexually suggestive behavior, verbal abuse of employees by supervisors and incidents of drinking in the office. Staat, Senate photographer Barbara Schlieff and Shelley Smith, the office's multimedia coordinator, were fired after the investigation. The report concluded that all three were responsible for harassment in the office. Staat, who denies any wrongdoing, now alleges she was fired because she is a woman. She says she is a victim of retaliation

after willfully participating in the investigation. Although the Senate refused in August to release copies of its internal investigation report, Senate Secretary Patsy Spaw supplied a copy to the AP in accordance with state open records laws. Most of the names of those interviewed, including the woman who brought the original harassment complaint, were blacked out. According to testimony in the report, Schlieff asked the woman, "Have you given being gay any thought?" The woman also complained about an e-mail that told her "being a lesbian is the way to go." Most of her complaints were directed at Schlieff. "Everything in the report is wholly false or distorted," Schlieff said. The woman who filed the original complaint also said Staat commented on how "sexy" her lips were after she had suffered a food allergy. Staat says she never made suggestive remarks to her employees.

Female teacher accused of seducing female student

CONROE — A former teacher at The Woodlands High School in McCullough has surrendered after being accused of carrying on a three-year sexual affair with a student, according to the Associated Press. Felicia Shupp, 27, of The Woodlands walked into the Montgomery County Jail about 10:30 a.m. Feb. 1 with her attorney. A county grand jury indicted her Feb. 5 on a charge of sexual assault on a child. She was released after posting \$10,000 bail. Shupp, who was girls' volleyball coach while teaching English at the McCullough campus, is accused of seducing one of her students when the girl was 14, the AP reported. Sheriff's Lt. Dan Norris said the investigation began in January after the student, now 18, came forward with the allegation.

Shupp was teaching this school year at Branch Crossing Junior High, where she taught language arts. She resigned on Jan. 30, said Conroe school district general counsel Carrie Galatas. Norris said investigators found no evidence that other students were involved with Shupp. He would not comment on why the student waited three years to come forward.

Discussion, documentary focus on contributions of women

AUSTIN — The Center for the Study of Gift Economy and Poetic Healings Productions present "Honoring Feminists, Lesbians and Bisexual Women of Color," a grassroots monthly screening/discussion series on Saturday. "Poetic Healings," the 42-minute documentary created, directed and produced by Chinwe Odeluga, is February's selection. It premiered at the Austin Gay & Lesbian International Film Festival 2000. The film shares the poetry of lesbian and bisexual women of color about overcoming abuse, biphobia, breast cancer, lesbianphobia and racism. "Poetic Healings" is funded in part by the City of Austin under the auspices of the Austin Arts Commission and the Texas Commission on the Arts. The screening is free, but donations are welcome.

—From staff and wire reports

around texas

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Study: Hostility increases when masculinity threatened

SAVANNAH, Ga. — Straight men increase their hostility toward gay men when they are made to feel insecure about their masculinity, according to research presented at the Society for Personality & Social Psychology in Savannah, Ga., Reuters reported. "Men with a threatened male ego may be typically more hostile towards gay men, and that could eventually translate into more aggressive behaviors," said Dr. Richard H. Gramzow of Northeastern University in Boston. Seeking to determine the factors that drive prejudice, Gramzow had 60 male and female college undergraduates complete questionnaires measuring their individual sense of masculinity and/or femininity. The questionnaire included a list of personality traits such as "assertive," "nurturing" or "power-oriented." Students were asked "whether they saw that trait as being characteristic of themselves." They were also asked their views of gay men and lesbians. Gramzow found that, among men, "the higher the endorsement of masculine personality traits for the self, the higher the negativity towards gay men," and, to a lesser extent, lesbians.



Richard H. Gramzow, a researcher at Northeastern University in Boston, said men whose masculinity is threatened may be more hostile to gays.

Bisexual teens more likely to engage in risky sex

MALDEN, Mass. — Young men who have had sexual contact with both male and female partners are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors than boys who are uniquely homosexual or heterosexual and sexually active, according to a study published in the February issue of the American Journal of Public Health, Reuters reported. Dr. Carol Goodenow of the Massachusetts Department of Education and colleagues surveyed 3,267 "sexually experienced males" ranging from younger than 12 years old to older than 18 years from Massachusetts public schools. The "most important" finding was that young men who had only gay sex had behavioral risk levels "no higher than those of youths with only female partners." But the survey found that bisexually active participants had "an extremely high-risk profile." Compared to gay participants, bisexual men were more likely to have four HIV risk factors: a history of unprotected sex, multiple partners, injection drug use and an STD.

Gays need tailored health treatment, studies show

WASHINGTON — Several studies released in the last few months on gay men, lesbians and bisexuals demonstrate the need for a better and more tailored psychological treatment for this population, according to the American Psychological Association. The studies suggest that gay men, lesbians and bisexuals appear to have higher rates of some mental disorders compared with heterosexuals. Another study found lesbians reported equally strong levels of mental health as their heterosexual counterparts and higher self-esteem. A new study of gay youth found that they are only slightly more likely than heterosexual youth to attempt suicide. But a different study found that gay youth have higher rates of depression, anxiety disorder and substance use or dependence. Dr. Susan Cochran of the University of California, Los Angeles, said the studies demonstrate the need for better psychological treatment for gay people, an observation consistent with U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher's recommendations in his report on sexuality and health.

LA. AIDS agency appoints new program director

Los Angeles — AIDS Project Los Angeles, one of the nation's largest AIDS service organizations, has appointed Dr. Lee E. Klosinski, a longtime AIDS advocate and current APLA director of education, as director of programs. In this newly created position, Klosinski will oversee health and education programs, all client services and media and marketing. "Lee's promotion is part of a strategic goal to integrate our client services and education programs," Craig E. Thompson, executive director of APLA, said in a news release. "APLA always works to meet and anticipate the needs of people living with HIV and AIDS. As a health educator, Lee possesses an impressive body of knowledge about science, public health and the history of HIV." Klosinski is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and Claremont Graduate University. He began his work with APLA as a volunteer with the AIDS hotline in 1987.

Depression may thwart ability to fight disease

BALTIMORE — Older adults who experience some form of chronic depression may have a harder time fighting off infections and cancers, according to a study in the February issue of Journal of Abnormal Psychology. Dr. Lynanne McGuire, a researcher at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and colleagues found that even chronic, mild depression may suppress an older person's immune system. The researchers compared 22 older adults who suffered from chronic depression to 56 who didn't, on their ability to fight infectious diseases. Participants were part of a larger study on stress and health of caregivers of adults with dementia. "In this study, it seems that it is the length of time of the depression, not the severity that is affecting a person's immunity," McGuire noted.

— From staff and wire reports



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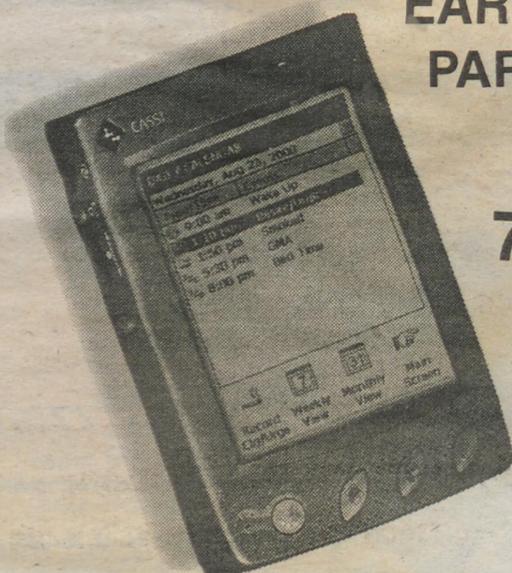
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Boy Scouts stands by anti-gay policy in new resolution

IRVING, Texas — The Boy Scouts of America issued a resolution on Feb. 6 stating that "homosexual conduct is inconsistent with the traditional values espoused in the Scout Oath and Law and... an avowed homosexual cannot serve as a role model for the values of the Oath and Law." The BSA also writes, in a statement about the resolution, "Boy Scouting makes no effort to discover the sexual orientation of any person. Scouting's message is, however, compromised when prospective leaders of youth present themselves as role models inconsistent with BSA standards." The resolution also states that "BSA's values cannot be subject to local option choices, but must be the same in every unit." Scouting for All, an organization formed to fight the Boy Scouts' policy of excluding openly gay scouts and leaders, denounced the resolution. "It is ironic that the BSA core value of respecting diversity is not practiced within the organization," Scouting for All President Scott Cozza said in a statement.



Scouting for All's Steven Cozza and his father have spoken out against the Boy Scouts of America's policy of excluding gay members and leaders.

School trip postponed over Gay Days in Fla.

CRESTON, Iowa (AP) — Creston High School officials say they postponed a band trip to Florida because more than 100,000 adults would be partying in some of the same areas the students might frequent. The fact that the partying adults are in Orlando, Fla., for the city's Gay Days festival had nothing to do with the postponement, said Todd Wolverton, the school's principal. Wolverton said school officials realized a month ago that the trip for 70 Creston band students would coincide with the annual Gay Days celebration scheduled for May 28 to June 3. A travel agent told school officials that the festival was fairly small, Wolverton said. "We were under the impression it might just be a small gathering of folks and they might be at the park one of the days we were there," Wolverton said. Last week, school officials learned that Gay Days attracts 100,000 adults or more. At that point, school administrators decided to postpone the three-day band trip so that it would begin the last day of the gay event.

Teachers union wants gay students protected

WASHINGTON (AP) — The nation's largest teachers union will ask school districts to protect gay students and staff by adopting policies that punish harassment and discrimination. Under a plan adopted Feb. 8 by the National Education Association's board of directors, schools also will be encouraged to develop factual materials for classroom discussions on homosexuality. All staff and students will be encouraged to speak up when they see or experience discrimination based on sexual orientation. "I think it's a pretty clear signal that the organization recognizes there are some pretty serious needs for gay and lesbian children in school — and employees," said Penny Kotterman, president of the Arizona Education Association. A statement by the NEA said the information schools provide should be age-appropriate, nonjudgmental and relevant to subject matter being studied. The NEA represents 2.6 million teachers and other school employees.

Calif. salesman to get trial in harassment suit

SAN FRANCISCO — A former salesman has won the right to have a trial instead of arbitration in his claim that he was harassed because he is gay, the San Francisco Chronicle reported. In the Feb. 4 ruling, a federal appeals court said an arbitration agreement that Circuit City required its employees to sign was unconscionable and unenforceable under California law. The employee, Saint Clair Adams, originally filed his sexual harassment lawsuit in 1997. The case appeared in the U.S. Supreme Court last year after Circuit City filed a federal petition to block the state lawsuit. The Supreme Court ruled that the arbitration was binding, but sent the case back to the appeals court to consider other issues. The appeals court ruled the arbitration was oppressive because it was one-sided. Adams will now get a jury trial to be held in Sonoma County Superior Court, where the original lawsuit was filed.

Partner of 9-11 victim lobbies for compensation

LOS ANGELES — A gay man whose partner died in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks was scheduled to speak at a National Freedom to Marry Day event on Tuesday, according to the Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund. Keith Bradkowski's partner of 11 years, Jeff Collman, was a flight attendant killed in the attacks. Bradkowski is being represented by Lambda in his efforts to get recognition and compensation from the federal fund established for survivors of victims of the attack. "Jeff and I got as close to marriage as we could with our domestic partnership," Bradkowski said, according to Lambda. "But it wasn't protection enough, and now I am legally vulnerable in ways I never imagined." The Feb. 12 event was part of a campaign by Marriage Equality California, an organization working to garner support for equal marriage rights for same-sex couples. — From staff and wire reports



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Mormon church battles gay rights

Latter-day Saints key force in fighting gay marriage, supporting Boy Scouts' gay ban

Editor's note: Part two of a two-part series. Last week's story, available online at www.houstonvoice.com, examined Mormon influence on the Olympics and where the church's theology stands on homosexuality.

by LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN

With the Winter Olympics underway in Salt Lake City, the massive Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints appears to have made good on its public relations promise to curb proselytizing and act simply as "good hosts" to Olympic visitors.

Under orders from Gordon Hinckley, the 91-year-old Mormon "living prophet," LDS missionaries are offering greetings, not attempts at conversation, to the athletes and visitors pouring into Salt Lake, which was founded by Mormon pioneer Brigham Young more than 150 years ago, and which remains headquarters for the LDS Church.

And although the church bans homosexuality, church leaders have remained officially silent while the Salt Lake games have embraced gays in ways perhaps unprecedented in Olympic history.

In an Olympic first, the Salt Lake Olympic Organizing Committee invited two gay activists to serve on a key volunteer committee. Meanwhile, a coalition including the local gay community center distributes safer sex kits on street corners and a "Someone You Know and Love is Gay" billboard sponsored by parents of gays looms over the interstate.

But from the Mormon Tabernacle Choir singing at the Opening Ceremonies to medal presentations held nightly at a plaza in front of the Mormon temple, the LDS Church remains a subtle but significant presence at the Games.

The church's overall approach to gay issues remains anything but subtle, though some critics say they believe the denomina-



Evan Stephens, director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir from 1890-1916, was well-known for his intimate, live-in relationships with younger men.

tion has made similar public relations attempts to soften its language on gays.

"People inquire about our position on those who consider themselves so-called gays and lesbians," Hinckley said in 1998. "My response is that we love them as sons and daughters of God."

If gays "do not act upon these inclinations, then they can go forward as do all other members of the Church," Hinckley said in the statement, distributed by church officials in response to questions about the LDS position on homosexuality.

But gay Mormons say the loving language masks a church that not only continues to condemn homosexuality by excommunicating gay members, but also has become a power force in opposing gay rights measures around the country.

Hinckley's statement on gays as "sons and daughters of God" came at the same time the LDS Church was deeply involved in an anti-gay marriage ballot measure in Hawaii, noted Ben Jarvis, an outreach coordinator for Affirmation, a group serving gay Mormons.

In November 1998, Hawaii voters approved a constitutional amendment allowing the state legislature to ban gay marriage, an end run around a pro-gay legal case pending before the state Supreme Court at the time.

Save Traditional Marriage, the group pushing the anti-gay referendum, benefited from a last minute \$600,000 donation from the Mormon Church.

"It was a right-wing last ditch effort to steal away a victory that was within our reach through the legitimate court process," said attorney Evan Wolfson, who served as director of Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund's marriage project during gay marriage fights in Hawaii, California and Alaska.

'No. 1 enemy of gays'

For gay Mormons, the conflicts between faith and sexuality can be overwhelming — and according to some activists, life threatening.

Mormons make up more than 70 percent of Utah's 2.2 million residents, compared to just 1.8 percent of the total U.S. population, according to the Los Angeles Times.

Utah also has the country's highest rate of suicide among male teens ages 15-19, and suicide is the leading cause of death for men ages 25-44, the Salt Lake Tribune reported.

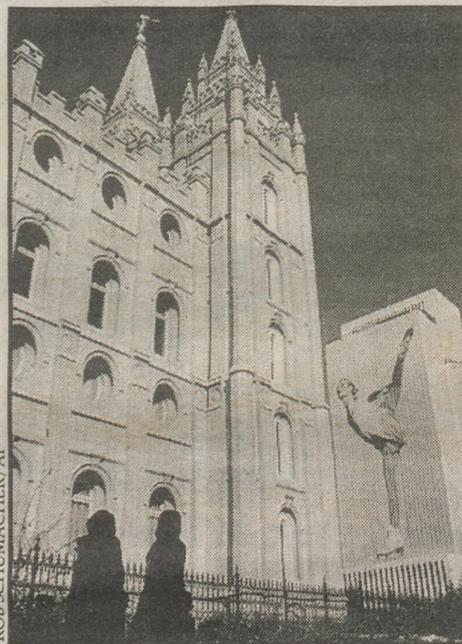
Official studies don't connect the two factors, but some health and gay advocates do.

"A majority of those suicides are related to sexual orientation," Frank Evans, a community health specialist, told the Tribune.

Jarvis, the Affirmation leader, said a spate of suicides in the wake of the passage of California's Proposition-22 — another gay marriage ban with strong financial support from the LDS hierarchy — influenced his desire to officially remove his name from Mormon membership books.

As the fight over Proposition 22 shows, LDS condemnation of homosexuality reaches far beyond just gays raised as Mormons, into some of the biggest gay rights battles of recent years.

The LDS Church provided major funding



As the Olympics unfold in Salt Lake City, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is omnipresent, although Mormon leaders have remained mum on pro-gay Olympic outreach. The official silence stands in stark contrast to the Mormons' key role in battling gay rights efforts around the country.

for the successful efforts to ban gay marriages in Hawaii, California and Alaska — spending more than \$1 million on the 2000 ballot measures in California and Alaska, after spending at least \$600,000 in 1998 in Hawaii.

And as the Boy Scouts of America fought successfully to the U.S. Supreme Court to win the right to ban gays, Mormon church-sponsored troops included 400,000 boys, about 13 percent of the BSA's total members.

The LDS Church filed influential friend-of-the-court briefs on behalf of the Boy Scouts' right to ban gay leaders, and also reportedly lobbied within the organization to encourage the Scouts to keep the ban intact.

"I think it is fair to say the hierarchy of the LDS Church is working as hard as possible to make themselves the number one enemy of gay people," said Wolfson, who also served as lead attorney for the ousted gay Scoutmaster who challenged the BSA's ban.

Hinckley said Mormons must weigh in on "moral" issues.

"We deal only with those legislative matters which are of a strictly moral nature or which directly affect the welfare of the Church. ... God-sanctioned marriage between a man and a woman has been the basis of civilization for thousands of years," Hinckley said.

Not always anti-gay?

As a prophet, Hinckley's word is believed by Mormons to be the divine revelation of God, and thus not open for debate or interpretation.

But while the LDS Church is quick to condemn gay issues now, evidence suggests the Mormon ban on homosexuality has been inconsistent at best — both in the church's early years, and in the not-so-distant past.

In "Same-Sex Dynamics Among Nineteenth

Century Americans: A Mormon Example," scholar D. Michael Quinn documents a pattern of same-sex intimacy in early Mormon culture, including many Mormons who engaged in same-sex relationships.

Examples in Quinn's study include male-only dances hosted by Brigham Young from 1845 to the 1860s; Brigham Morris Young, a son of Brigham Young who performed as a female impersonator in Utah; Kate Thomas, who published lesbian love poetry in the LDS Young Women's Journal in 1903; and Evan Stephens, director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir from 1890-1916 and composer of many official LDS hymns still sung today, who had numerous relationships with young men.

While some early Mormons did face excommunication for same-sex acts, "Mormons at times were even more tolerant than other Americans of sexual activities between persons of the same gender," Quinn found.

The Mormon attitude toward gay relationships changed "from relative tolerance to homophobia" by the 1950s, following the overall American trend toward strict gender roles and condemnation of sexual difference, Quinn found.

By the late 1950s, Brigham Young University, the Mormon college, used electric shock "aversion" therapy to attempt to "cure" gay men.

Quinn, former professor of history and director of graduate studies at BYU, resigned from the school in 1988 to continue his potentially controversial research on the LDS church. Charged with heresy, he was officially excommunicated in 1993.

Around the same time, the Mormon leadership also cracked down on a fledgling pro-gay ministry in the church.

Jarvis, the Affirmation leader, said as he dealt with coming out in the early 1990s, he left his "stake," or congregation, in Irvine, Calif., and began attending a monthly Mormon meeting in Los Angeles.

The group discussed church teachings against any sex outside of marriage, but members were "gay-identified" and accepted as such, Jarvis said.

"There was a very progressive church leader in L.A. at the time, and he recognized that while we couldn't agree on everything when it came to gay and lesbian issues, there was more common ground than people were willing to admit," he said.

Jarvis said that soon after being called in by church leaders at his old Irvine stake and told to "renounce my gay identity" or face discipline, he learned that the L.A. meeting had been cancelled.

"I think it was a precursor to becoming more involved in Hawaii, Alaska and California, because that meeting would have been an embarrassment," he said.

The LDS Church public affairs department disagreed.

"As the doctrine of the Church was fully communicated to the Church's lay ministry in the early 1990s, the need for independent meetings like the ones in Los Angeles was ended," according to a statement from the church in response to written questions.

Several NAMES chapters complain about finances

➤ Continued from Page 1
pletely dissatisfied with it."

Other chapters that are disbanding include the one in Houston, though the reasons are apparently not tied to the new chapter contract. Locally, sources said the chapter is about to disband. But Chair Alex Soto refused to comment, other than to say that the group's publicist was drafting "a formal statement" that would be released in the next two weeks.

Three additional chapters, including ones in Washington, D.C., Ohio and Massachusetts, have yet to sign the new chapter agreement.

By not accepting the contract before the January deadline, chapters are considered to have severed their relationship with the NAMES Project, according to Julie Rhoad, managing director for the group. Rhoad refused to provide a complete list of chapters that are disbanding or have failed to sign the new agreement.

The NAMES Project, founded in 1987, is the keeper of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, a prominent symbol of the struggle against AIDS. The quilt consists of more than 46,000 6-foot by 3-foot panels — roughly the size of a human coffin — dedicated to people who died of the disease. Portions are displayed in about 3,000 venues annually.

Complaints over contract

Local chapter officials interviewed this week complained that they were excluded



MATTHEW A. HENNIE

Julie Rhoad, managing director for the NAMES Project, said the organization has overcome financial struggles, but she refused to identify all the chapters that have disbanded since January. Sources say the Houston chapter may soon close.

from the process that developed the contracts, which they said prevent them from soliciting individual donors, impose fees to use quilt panels, require the adoption of a uniform name, and dissolve individual chapter identities.

In a Nov. 28 letter to chapters, the national office said, "As you know, the NAMES Project Foundation is at the beginning stages of a major change. The organization was teetering on collapse is now in a stable enough position to pursue and continue the strategic planning process."

Part of the planning process was the new chapter agreements sent out in late December, and due back to the national office Jan. 26, Rhoad said. The deadline was later extended to Feb. 9. The agreement has caused confusion over the fate of some chapters that decided not to return it.

"We haven't heard whether we're part of the organization or not," said Tom Prince, president of the Mid-Ohio chapter. "Our board voted unanimously to not sign it." Prince said fees imposed in the agreement and a lack of chapter input prompted the chapter to reject it.

Rhoad said chapter input was reflected, including two elected chapter representatives who served in the group creating the new document.

"We don't want to see anyone go. But we have to have rules, and this contract was drawn up by two elected chapter representatives. The vast majority of the chapters returned their contracts with no complaints," she said.

The Southeast Massachusetts chapter has not yet decided to sign the contract, though officials still consider it a part of the NAMES Project, according to Alvie Ballard, the chapter president.

"We haven't been told any different," Ballard said. "I'd like to think they'd call us, but then they never have before."

Some chapters returned signed agreements, even though officials had serious

reservations, including the South Florida chapter, based in Jacksonville.

"We have to have the quilt, despite the fact that the new fees will cost us \$4,000 per year, a quarter of our budget," said Jodi Ihme, the chapter's president.

But other chapters said that agreeing to the new contract was not an issue.

"I think it's petty to leave," said Avery Gardner, chair of the North Florida chapter in Sebastian. "We're privileged to be able to display a national treasure."

The South New Jersey chapter was asked to disband by the national office last year after its office was broken into and a panel was stolen, according to Steve Burch, a former co-chair.

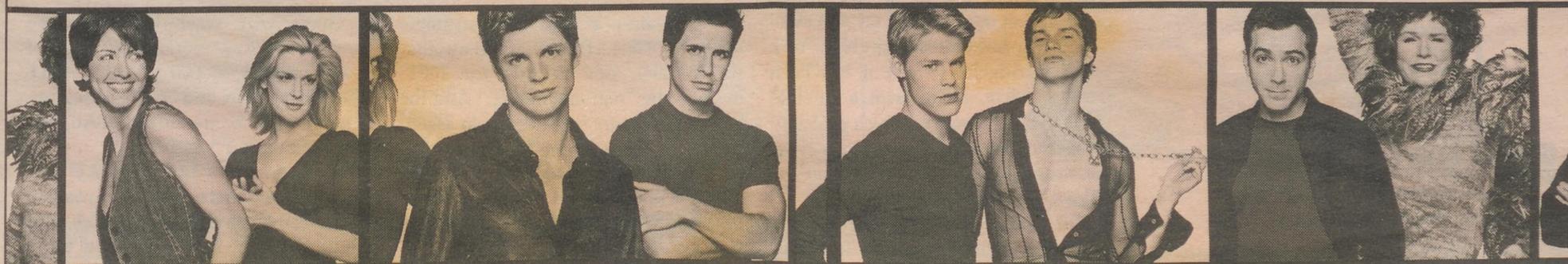
Rhoad said the NAMES Project has overcome several obstacles recently, including nearly \$360,000 in old debt that was paid off. Financial figures for last year are still being compiled, she said.

INFO

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STAFF

Executive Editor
Chris Crain

Editor
Penny Weaver
editor@houstonvoice.com

Production
Natasha Marquez

Contributors
Laura Douglas-Brown, George Jonte,
Kathreen Lee, Jennifer Smith

Webmaster: Douglas Wright

Photographers
Dalton DeHart, Kimberly Thompson

Advertising Sales
Wanda Faulkner
Sales Manager
wfaulkner@houstonvoice.com
cell (713)269-5743

Administration & Sales Support
Carolyn A. Roberts
croberts@houstonvoice.com

National Advertising Representative
Rivendell Marketing Company, Inc.
212-242-6863

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President- William Waybourn
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Issue 1112



EDITORIAL

Sad times at GLAAD

by CHRIS CRAIN

My final act as a "gay activist" was to cast my vote as a board member in favor of Joan Garry to be executive director of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. That was five years ago, and just weeks before I quit practicing law, dropped all my activist affiliations, and returned to journalism.

I don't regret that vote, as Garry has distinguished herself and the organization by using her background at Showtime and MTV to grow GLAAD's influence within the entertainment media on both coasts. More than ever before, gay activists are being heard before defamatory representations of our lives ever make it to the screen. And the annual GLAAD Media Awards in those cities are marquis events that attract attention and top-name celebrities to the cause.

And because so much of the lobbying work happens behind the scenes, the organization will never get proper credit for its real impact, through the way gay-friendly entertainment affects popular culture.

Last week, the GLAAD board voted to shutter the organization's "regional offices" in Atlanta, Washington and Kansas City, Mo. In some ways, the move is a reflection of the focus of the organization under Garry. GLAAD will maintain a full-time staff in New York and Los Angeles, where it has been most effective, along with a satellite office in San Francisco (which probably has about the same life expectancy as the struggling dot.com media that the office was meant to lobby).

But Garry and GLAAD haven't explained the office closures that way. In interviews after the board vote was leaked, and in a press release days later, GLAAD argued that the decision to shut down Atlanta, Washington and Kansas City was a "business decision," but not a financial one, and did not represent an admission that the organization had given up on the media outside of New York and L.A.

"By no means are we abandoning these regions," Garry said, "but setting them up to succeed."

Bad spin job

Unfortunately, Garry is engaging in the sort of media spin that it specializes in training other gay activists to employ when the press starts calling. The truth is that, whatever GLAAD's recent success in the entertainment media capitals of New York and Los Angeles, the organization has been

MIA in its lobbying efforts elsewhere.

It's high time for what GLAAD calls "an accurate portrayal," but of GLAAD itself and how the organization has — Garry's protests to the contrary — abandoned the commitments that were made to local activists in Washington, Atlanta, Kansas City and elsewhere, who saw their groundwork come to naught once GLAAD full-time staffers took over.

For more than four years now, GLAAD's national office has "raided" its regional staff, putting the solo activists working in Washington, Atlanta and Kansas City (and San Francisco) to work on any and every project important to the national office, leaving almost no time or energy for improving media coverage of gays in their respective areas.

For more than four years now, GLAAD has responded to criticism about its ongoing failure to do anything of much value in these offices by acknowledging the problems (a refreshing response) and vowing to do better. It hasn't.

It's time for what GLAAD calls 'an accurate portrayal,' but of GLAAD itself and how the group has abandoned part of its mission and betrayed its local volunteers.

Now, after a "yearlong strategic analysis," GLAAD has figured out that its "number one priority for 2002" ought to be "regional media." And the best way to meet that need is to assign local volunteers (three to six per city) to "media beats," so that they can monitor and respond to how newspapers and TV stations in their area portray gay lives.

In fact, this is exactly the structure that was in place in 1997, when Garry took over at GLAAD, in cities across the United States, including Atlanta, Washington and Kansas City.

But if "regional media" is really GLAAD's top priority, the organization has a weird way of showing it. The board approved a "six-figure investment" to the "regional media initiative," but the money is going to the GLAAD Web site. Using the Internet makes sense, of course, but at this point GLAAD could improve its regional media lobby simply by focusing its staff and volunteers on actual activism outside the entertainment realm.

The staffers assigned to carry out this "top priority" — to recruit, organize and coordinate local volunteers — are being jettisoned from

their local offices, which have been shut down. Garry insists they'll be more effective in N.Y. and L.A. because administrative staff will handle phones and faxes for them. So not only will local volunteers get no face-to-face contact with GLAAD staffers, but they won't be answering their own phone apparently, either.

Anyone who believes in the mission of GLAAD should hope that this nonsensical plan is more a product of rushed, defensive spin over the office closures than the product of a "year-long strategic analysis." Even so, an organization that prides itself in lobbying for "fair representations" could clearly do a better job on that score.

The 'other' media

A truly in-depth strategic analysis of GLAAD might focus on how the organization has thrown itself so completely into entertainment media, while virtually ignoring the news media and the enormous impact that the print and broadcast press plays in how our lives are portrayed.

That's why Washington and the press corps that works here isn't of much interest to Garry or GLAAD. That's why CNN and Southern regional media, which operate out of Atlanta, don't matter much either.

It's been years since GLAAD saw fit to hire activists with a journalism background, who understood and could speak the language of the news media and gain access that gay activists — fulltime or volunteer — simply can't. Fortunately, the National Gay & Lesbian Journalists Association has picked up some of the slack, and has become a much more important player in newsrooms than GLAAD.

In the meantime, GLAAD and Garry should be held accountable for their performance on this "number one priority for 2002" and on whether the organization rediscovers the part of its mission that pays attention to the "other media" — the one that doesn't entertain.

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



VIEWPOINT

Dr. Spock's no longer spooked

by RICH ARENSCHIELDT

Something is yanking my hair. I turn around to see two semi-human eyes peeking over the top of the booth. I scout the area to see if someone has lost control of an exotic pet. No, there are no signs of an escaped infant Sooty Mangabee primate.

The thing continues to look at me. "What could it be thinking? How far can it jump? Am I out of range of its projectile vomiting capacity?" While I am pondering these possibilities, all of a sudden the thing shouts directly into my left eardrum: "WAGAFULEFEBLG!" At this point, I hear (through my only functional ear) an adult voice say, "Jacqueline, sweetie, leave the nice man alone."

Wrong on two counts — the thing is not sweet and I am not feeling very nice.

Throughout my adult life, this scenario has repeated itself several times. In shopping malls, on airplanes, or in restaurants, any bi-ped under 48 inches tall automatically becomes fixated on me. I always assumed that it was because we probably operated on the same ADHD wavelength. Kids have always been fascinated by my awkward appearance and have gravitated to me, much to the chagrin and bewildered embarrassment of their parents, who are forced to answer the question, "Mommy, what's wrong with him?"

As my co-worker and I continue our meal, something else occurs. Seconds later I feel a tiny digit trying to penetrate my other eardrum. "Does this thing want me to only be able to communicate with sign language, or what?"

I contemplate an attack, seeking to utilize a weapon that's nearby and yet won't leave any visible marks or bruises. Finding nothing, I swat at my head, pretending to kill an indoor mosquito. The pint-sized beast is

quicker than I am, and, as a result, I succeed only in giving myself a concussion.

Seeing this, the "enfant terrible" shrieks with laughter. Its handler turns and looks at me. "That is so unusual," she says in a moneyed and astonished way. "Jackie never speaks to strangers. You must have a special way with children."

"Yes, I do," I reply dryly. "I have an attic full of them." (Mommy thinks I'm kidding and continues, unabated). "No, really, do you have any little ones?" I'm confused at her question. I've had my share of small ones, but never for more than one date.

I realize what she means and respond, "No, it hasn't been part my game plan." Apparently, 32 years of hairspray have had a negative cumulative effect on her perceptive ability. She doesn't get it, looks at my female friend and says, "Well, the two of you should adopt; you'd make fabulous parents."

My dinner companion nearly forces iced tea through her nose while trying not to burst into hysterics. I doubt if she has recovered from the possibility of being my wife and bearing my children in the same evening.

A few weeks later I see a series of ads on TV featuring kids who need to be adopted. I wonder how they made the commercials — I can just hear the director: "OK, kids, look happy but lonely." Does Actors Equity allow you to tranquilize children for advertising purposes? The two tykes I see on the screen look angelic, but what about the unseen 8-year-old homicidal maniac in training? While filming is taking place he's in a foster home trying to blow up the gas water heater.

The orphans depicted are so precious and needy they make me want to put on a wedding band, dress in Eddie Bauer heterosexual drag and drive my Episcopal West University Volvo up to get an instant family.

The ad succeeds in making the process look really, really easy. They must have

hired some slick Madison Avenue marketing guns for this simplistic deception. Driving up to the orphanage, I can see the sign, "Shipley's Do-nuts and Drive Thru Adoption Service." Placing an order, I say, "Yeah, I'll take a dozen glazed and one minority 4-year-old kid with special needs."

Thinking that this is a decision that might benefit from the input of others, I consult my family and friends. As expected, they have diverse responses to the adoption prospect. Some readily support the idea, while others counter with comments like, "And what happened to that hamster I gave you two years ago?"

Advice aside, I actually call the agency to ask for "preliminary information" about the adoption process. A very nice social worker-ish lady answers the phone. I suspect that she will try to pre-screen me during this initial conversation. She starts a genteel line of questioning, which, in addition to gleaning normal personal details, also tests my fitness and desire to

be an adoptive/foster parent.

"Are you married?" "No," I respond. "What is your income?" I lie and say, "\$57,000 per year." "Have you ever been convicted of a crime?" "Arrested or convicted?" I ask, seeking clarification. "What kind of work do you do?" Thinking fast, I reply, "I'm a social worker." Her tone brightens immediately — obviously, she hasn't linked the income answer to the occupation question.

With her initial concerns met, she eventually asks what age child I would be interested in. Without thinking, I respond, "Oh, I don't know, just someone old enough to run the vacuum cleaner."

Conversation ceases and I hear only a dial tone. She has yet to call back.

The 55,000 members of the American Academy of Pediatrics now support the rights of same-sex parents and state they should have the same privileges as any other parents. It's probably a good thing I'm not a parent in either category.



The Mostly Unfabulous Social Life of Ethan Green

by eric orner



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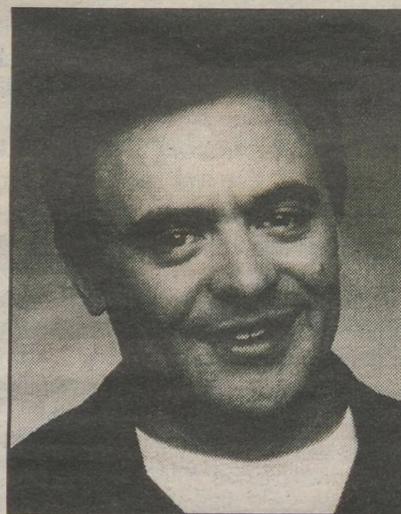
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on the record

"Every time we write a story about someone arrested for anything, I guess the potential for shame and someone committing suicide is there. We don't debate at all whether someone is going to commit suicide."

Carol Young, deputy executive editor of the Providence (R.I.) Journal, defending a six-story series in the paper on the arrest of seven men at a local adult video store, including their addresses and occupations. One of the men, a zoning committee chair in a nearby town, subsequently committed suicide. (Boston Globe, Feb. 6)



Jimmy Baron

"Leave it, it's Beaver."

Jimmy Baron, morning DJ at Atlanta radio station WNNX, on his top 10 list for TV shows that ought to be included on a gay cable network being proposed by Showtime and MTV. Three local gay rights organizations have lodged protests over the routine. (Southern Voice, Feb. 8)

"Homosexuality is a controversial subject that I don't think should be exposed on television like it is a natural way of living."

Nicole Sanchez, editor of the East Union High School newspaper in Manteca, Calif., in an editorial. The article prompted protests by some students in the school. (Sacramento Bee, Feb. 5)

"I grew up making inappropriate jokes about gay people in high school. The first gay person I realized I knew was when I was a medical student. The hair stood up on my head. But gradually I came to see that, just like with every other group, we are similar in 95 percent of the ways in the sense that we all want things to be better for our families and to make the world a better place. To make America strong, people have to focus on things that bring us together."

Vermont Gov. Howard Dean, who is actively considering a run for the White House in 2004, in an interview with syndicated columnist Deb Price. (Detroit News, Feb. 4)



Howard Dean

"It's not a fancy place. We're Alaskans. We don't need fancy places or designer buildings. We just want a place to call home."

Victoria Shaver, an Anchorage lesbian, on the re-opening of the area's gay and lesbian center. (Anchorage Daily News, Feb. 7)

"You know, God even loves the Taliban and today, if we're going to impress God, we've got to get the Gospel out to everyone. ... If the church had been awake and performing that duty, I can tell you that we wouldn't be in the mess we're in today."

Televangelist Jerry Falwell, to about 800 parishioners at Berean Baptist Church in West Palm Beach, Fla., on Feb. 7. Falwell has apologized for comments he made days after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, blaming the attacks on America's failure to combat social influences like homosexuality and feminism. (Associated Press)



Jerry Falwell

"Bob Kunst is reachable. That's why I stopped — because I like him. I may not approve of his lifestyle. ... I'd love to see old Bob walk in here. I'd tell him, 'God loves you. He'll save you from a perverted lifestyle.'"

Jerry Falwell, telling the audience at a West Palm Beach church about a gay activist who has trailed him for years, and who confronted the televangelist before he entered the building. (Palm Beach Post, Feb. 7)

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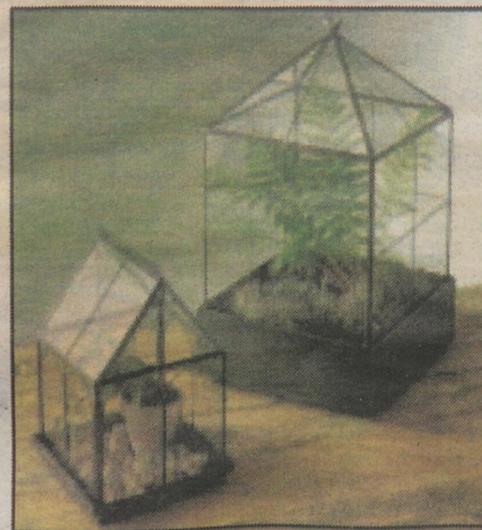
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Out on the Bayou

Dench & Winslet resurrect novelist Iris Murdoch

The free-wheeling writer returns, with her sexuality blazing

By LARRY FLICK

There's a moment shortly before the untimely death of famed novelist Iris Murdoch in the Miramax film "Iris" when the actress portraying her, Dame Judi Dench, shares a brief, intensely intimate exchange with her friend Janet Stone (Penelope Wilson). Their exchange is fueled by the palpable power of a lifelong emotional, almost familial connection. It's also rife with undeniable threads of sensuality.

Were Iris and Janet lovers? The film hints, but doesn't tell. And Dench is opting to leave the question

open to interpretation.

"I just love that we got to play the rich and deep connection these two women share so openly and honestly," she says. "I quite like the fact that it's not spelled out in the film. You take what you want or need from the moment."

Dench adds that she enjoyed playing the boundaries-free aspect of Iris' personality. "She really was free of inhibitions in so many ways. She was truly without restrictions. She did what felt natural and comfortable for her, regardless of how it felt to others. That included sexuality."

It's that high degree of emotional

freedom that will likely draw gay and lesbian audiences to "Iris," a Mirage Enterprises/Robert Fox/Scott Rudin production that masterfully tells the story of the enduring love between novelist and philosopher Iris Murdoch and her husband John Bayley, from the romance of their early days at Oxford in the 1950s to her death in 1999.

In addition to Oscar-winner Dench ("Shakespeare In Love"), the film features two-time Oscar nominee Kate Winslet (known to gay audiences for her role in the 1994 film "Heavenly Creatures," as well

> Continued on Page 16

Judi Dench relives Iris Murdoch's battle with Alzheimer's disease.



Kate Winslet plays a young, sexually liberated Iris Murdoch in Miramax's 'Iris.'

houston voice • february 15, 2002

appts

saturday, feb 16

The mad but wacky scientist from the TV show "Beakman's World" comes to Houston in "Beakman Live!" The performance includes demonstrations that illustrate basic scientific principles. Tickets: \$26-35. 7 p.m., Wortham Center's Cullen Theater, presented by the Society for Performing Arts. 713-227-4SPA.

saturday, feb 16

DiverseWorks presents its "Illumination Gala" to honor four of Houston's most enlightened contemporary arts champions: Cindy Bishop and David Donnelly, and Dan Tidwell and Jamie Mize. 6:30 p.m. cocktails and silent auction, 8 p.m. dinner, 10 p.m. "afterGLOW" dance. Tickets: \$150 and up or \$35 for afterGLOW only. Diverse Works Artspace, 1117 East Freeway. Call Elizabeth Proctor, development director, 713-223-8346.

sunday, feb 17

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston's Spirituality and Sexuality Symposium presents "Sexual Identity — Workshop." The session will explore various dimensions of sexuality, 3:30-5:30 p.m. at the church, 5200 Fannin, room 302. The symposium continues through Feb. 22. All events are free of charge; however, donations are welcome. 713-526-5200

monday, feb 18

Two of America's most celebrated poets will read from their works in Houston as part of the 2001-02 Margaret Root Brown Houston Reading Series. Pulitzer Prize winner Jorie Graham is the author of eight collections of poetry, including "The End of Beauty" and her most recent volume, "Swarm." Mark Strand won a 1998 Pulitzer Prize for "Blizzard of One," one of his 10 books of poems. Tickets: \$5 suggested donation; free for senior citizens and students. 7:30 p.m., Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave. 713-521-2026. www.inprint-inc.org.



Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Mark Strand reads from his work Monday in Houston.

wednesday, feb 20

Jewish Family Service plans the program "Gay and Lesbian in the Jewish Community: An Open Discussion." The meeting will explore the needs of gay and lesbian Jewish people and consider ideas for future programs. 7 p.m., Montrose Counseling Center, 701 Richmond Ave. For questions, call Toby Newman at Jewish Family Service, 713-667-9336, or e-mail tnewman@jfshouston.org.



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Maverick Iris remembered

➤ Continued from Page 15

as in the mega-hit "Titanic") as Iris in her youth, as well as Jim Broadbent and Hugh Bonneville playing her husband John Bayley.

"Actually, I believe that all audiences will be touched by the emotional context of this film," Dench says. "But, yes, the gay and lesbian audience, who crave to see such a vivid, unfettered depiction of human connection will find this film worthwhile."

The film was written by Richard Eyre and Charles Wood, and it's based on John Bayley's memoirs, "Elegy For Iris" and "Iris & Her Friends." The film warmly tells the story of Iris Murdoch and John Bayley, which is viewed by many observers as one of the great literary romances of the 20th century. However, beyond providing a factual chronicle of their relationship, "Iris" also strives to deliver the message that a great love can endure — even through life's most tragic occurrences.

Frequently described as "the most brilliant woman in England," the writer Iris Murdoch was an extraordinary personality and icon of her generation in Britain. From her days as a scholar at Oxford, where she thrilled the world around her with her libertine spirit, through her career as a philosopher and novelist, Iris was truly ahead of her time. For Winslet, two key factors of the project were particularly attractive.

"It was the script and to be perfectly honest, to be offered to play the young Judi Dench was such an honor. I thought: 'How on earth can I not do this?' Plus, when Iris Murdoch was young she was a fiercely intellectual, deeply passionate, slightly wild, bisexual woman and I just thought, 'What a challenge!'"

She adds, "Having not worked for a year, in getting back into it, I wanted to do something that was challenging and would push me again and be a good old shock to the system. It was certainly that and it was wonderful. It's also been great fun because John and Iris were a fun cou-

ple. That's what they were about. "Yes, they were fiercely intelligent, and yes, they loved serious subjects for debate. But they were also like children. I listened to a radio interview with John Bayley, and he does describe himself and Iris being like two children. They loved life and living. Iris loved people, women and men, and was such an extreme woman."

For Winslet, playing a real person carried a considerable responsibility. "I felt conscious of trying to be as close to her as possible. I was very aware of the history, that these are things that really did happen, and that the dialogue was what they actually said to each other. I felt respectful of that, and mindful that we are getting it right."

For Dench, talking to people who knew Iris Murdoch brought useful insights. "A lot of people told me things about her — for example, that she was a wonderful observer and listener. They also said she had no social small talk at all; she just really wasn't interested in that. A lot of her friends also said I looked like her."

Dench watched archival television interviews with Iris as part of her research for the part. "There's something about her manner, the preciseness of finding the word that is right," Dench observes. "She doesn't underline, she doesn't over-stress words like we might. She's also very un-dramatic, no gestures, she just chooses the word that she wants. Through that, you know the kind of mind she has and you get a hint of the kind of philosopher she was."

Winslet describes Iris as "a lot of fun, a real life-liver. One thing that people have said about her is that she had such an incredible spirit. She was a real free spirit and she loved water — lakes, rivers, the sea. I think she was quite an elemental person in that sense, and I'm a little like that as well."

In the end, both actors are proud of the end result, now playing in theaters nationwide. "I think we've done her proud," Dench says. Adds Winslet, "It was a tall order to play such an extraordinary woman. Having seen the film, it feels like a job well-done."



Jim Broadbent and Judi Dench portray John Bayley and Iris Murdoch in their later years in 'Iris.'

eating out

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Brownstone disappoints

Garish interior, mediocre food both border on the tasteless

by KATHREEN LEE

There is nothing wrong with a little entertainment or eye candy while you eat. Live music, belly dancers, opera singers, televised sporting events, theatrical productions, and stand up comedy are often standard bonuses offered to bring diners into restaurants' folds.

The Brownstone, a restaurant/antique store located near the upper Kirby area, lures its customers with an array of antiques and art work displayed for the interest, fascination, amusement or horror of its patrons.

The spacious dining rooms are adorned with gold lame cherubs, garish octopus-like teardrop chandeliers, white porcelain plates with hackneyed and color-faded geisha prints, Baroque style arm-chairs with tawdry red velvet upholstery, paneled accordion room dividers with flaking gold prints, obsidian statues in mere loincloths, and endless other tacky ornaments.

The Brownstone's décor resembles the showy faux refinement sometimes found in homes of the jackpot-winning rag-to-riches nouveau riche who have always cultivated a fetish for the rich, bold and the beautiful without distinction or discrimination. The clutter of all the antique and art pieces together heightens this sensation of ostentation and evokes an impression of cheapness rather than the targeted elegance.

The Brownstone also features another symbolic token of the wealthy: a harpist, who regularly entertains the clientele with muzack renditions of Beethoven's Ninth and other familiar classics.

Even the list of entrees screams "I-eat-rich-therefore-I-am" with fares such as Crispy Duck A L'Orange (\$27), Signature Chateaubriand for Two (\$64), Oven Roasted Australian Rack of Lamb (\$32), Signature Grilled Filet Mignon (\$29.50), and the Brownstone Original Beef Wellington (\$29). Despite the fancy names and expensive costs of the entrees, the Brownstone's dishes fall short of meeting the taste standards expected for such prices.

The preparation of the Pan-Seared Chilean Seabass (\$30) was rather disappointing. Normally the pan-seared exterior should be crisp in order to complement the soft white flesh of the seabass, but the Brownstone's version lacked the requisite texture. Furthermore, the saffron mandarin sauce was barely noticeable and coated the bed of risotto more than the actual seabass.

If you're a vegetarian, better try your luck elsewhere. Appetizer portions of

Organic Field Greens and Caesar or Iceberg Wedge Salad (\$7.50) are your limited choices amidst the Lyonnaise Pork Chops (\$28) and Pepper Crusted Venison (\$30). The Brownstone somewhat accommodated my vegetarian dinner companion, however, and prepared a separate plate of grilled zucchini, red peppers, squash, green onions and mushrooms.

This ensemble (\$18.95) was merely a larger ration of the grilled vegetables they normally serve with the entrees. While there was nothing glaringly amiss about this dish, other than the conspicuous lack of asparagus, the flavor was, in a word, average and certainly not worth the near \$19 they charged.

Caught between Montrose and River Oaks, the Brownstone has incongruously incorporated the colorful and flashy spirit of its one neighbor with the wealth and refinement of its other neighbor to create a Frankenstein of sorts. The combination of the worst of both worlds makes one wonder whether the Brownstone is a garish antique store masquerading as a mediocre restaurant, or a sub par restaurant masquerading as a tawdry antique store.

The clientele who support it seem to do so by choice, so there must be something redeeming about the Brownstone, even if it's only to give its patrons an ersatz sense of cultured affluence.



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on stage

'Ring' a classic delight

A.D. Players offers up an evening of comedy

by GEORGE JONTE

Jean Anouilh is a playwright who, for some reason, gets regretfully overlooked by many theater companies when they are picking season bills of fare. The reason, I believe, is that many theater directors do not understand his plays.

His best known works, perhaps, are "Thieves' Carnival" and "The Waltz of The Toreadors." These two have had very few productions in Houston as well, the latter given a stunning production at The Alley several seasons ago, and the former given a lukewarm but enjoyable production at Country Playhouse some 30 years ago.

Now comes a rarely done work, "Ring Around The Moon." To my knowledge, it has not been done in Houston for many, many years. I believe there was a production at The Alley in its old Perry Street playhouse in the '50s and I overheard a conversation recently alluding to a local academic production several seasons back.

Fortunately for Houston audiences, "Ring Around The Moon" has had a spirited life blown into it again with a thoroughly engaging revival at A.D. Players. Open as of Feb. 8, it will enjoy a long run through March 17, giving local residents plenty of time to make this a stop on their viewing schedule.

I think the thing I like most about Anouilh's plays is that they are not really plays, as such: They are dances. They require a certain style in their staging, a certain panache in their overall presentation. In other words, they must be choreographed rather than merely staged.

Maybe that is what makes a director stay away from them. In this case, Director Jeanette Clift George has done exactly that with this production. She has given it the style and the élan that it requires. Mark Lewis has designed an open, multi-level set with minimal stage pieces, allowing the players plenty of room to perform their dance and enjoy it as well. Sissy Pulley and Erin Rambo have designed lighting and costumes to enhance the production even further.

"Ring Around The Moon" is actually an adaptation of Anouilh's 1947 classic, "Invitation au Chateau," and it has been deftly translated by Christopher Fry, a consummate playwright in his own right. It portrays a comical yet intriguingly deceptive story of twin brothers.

Hugo is heartless (ice water runs in his veins), a master at deception who is determined, it seems, to cuckold every woman his brother falls hopelessly in love with. Frederick, on the other hand, is the incurable romantic — sensitive, yet shy. Hugo has devised a role-switching scheme for the upcoming ball at his aunt's home that complicates matters further.

Each brother strives desperately to free



Patrice and Lady India create a scandal with the Messerschmann family in 'Ring Around the Moon,' presented by the A.D. Players. Pictured, from left, are Lee Walker, Courtney Blythe, Mindy Hines and Marion Arthur Kirby.

the other from unhappy liaisons. It is a delightful romantic comedy yet full of its own charming brand of mystery as well.

Kevin Dean handles the dual roles of the twin brothers with aplomb and smooth flow as he dances the night away in fun and playful deception. Diana, his supposed love interest, is played to the hilt by Mindy Hines. Further intrigue and deception is carried out by Courtney Blythe and Lee Walker as Lady India and Patrice, dancing a tango, as they profess the dangers and guilt brought about by their hopeless affair.

Marion Arthur Kirby gives his usual consistent performance as Messerschmann, Diana's father, whose wealth can buy anything, including misery. Jennifer Bassett is pleasingly whimsical as well as compassionate as Isabelle, a poor ballet dancer hired by Hugo to help carry out his scheme. Brenda Fager gives a likable performance as her mother.

Especially notable is Marijane Vandivier as Madame Desmortes, the rich aunt whose home is the setting for the evening's cotillion. Commanding the stage from a wheelchair, she turns in a thoroughly delightful performance. Likewise, Capulet, her attendant and confidante, is played amusingly blousy by Colleen Ashton. Their dance in Act II, using the wheelchair in carefully charted moves, is one of the highlights of the evening.

The cast is rounded out by an adroitly stiff butler, Joshua, played by Joseph Levander, and a somewhat buffoon but none the less likable performance by Chip Simmons as Romainville, another member of the family who is unwittingly dragged into Hugo's scheme.

It all adds up to an evening of laughter, fun and thoroughly enjoyable theater. Hats off to Jeanette Clift George and her company for continuing to do the old "chestnuts," those delightful classics that are too often forgotten.

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out in sports

Spring sports are in the air

Now's the time to get out of the house and into recreation

by PENNY WEAVER

The closest I've been to sports in years is throwing the tennis ball for my Rottweiler to chase.

I did watch the Super Bowl, but I couldn't decide which team to support 'cause they both had cool uniforms.

But it's spring, and there are plenty of opportunities for us gay folks to recreate and socialize via sports activities, so I've thrown my ball cap into the ring.

Like dozens of others, I attended the Montrose Softball League's Recruitment Day on Feb. 10. It was cold and breezy, with mostly cloudy skies, but the group's mood was upbeat and optimistic at the prospect of a new season.

I'm glad the team that signed me up did so before they saw me play. I didn't embarrass myself too badly, but I felt pretty safe

since I already had been claimed for a team.

As we warmed up to play a game, I tried to remember all the rules. I hadn't played softball for 10 years. Let's see...they're sending me to left field. Now, is that left if you're standing at home plate, or left as you're in the outfield facing home? At least I figured it out and didn't have to ask anyone.

Shouldn't the infielders be wearing body armor or something? The first thing Mom told me when I mentioned I was going to play softball was, "Don't get hurt." Granted, that could be a comment based on my record of klutziness, but just how dangerous is this sport? The last time I played, I was at third base and a huge, muscled football-player-type guy hit the softball (don't be fooled by that name) as hard as he could right toward me.

Sure, I was ready, but the ball hit my shin just below the tip of my glove. It kinda hurt. But I was glad to have stopped the line drive, at least.

So far, though, this pre-season has been good to me. In one game, I did manage to get a hit and get to first base, and I didn't hear any laughter when I was on the field. No bruises, either.

But it's early. I'm checking into that body armor.

There are plenty of great teams and choices for gays in this city; I personally chose softball because it's always been my favorite sport. But there's football, rodeo, tennis, bowling, billiards and lots more. No matter what your sports preference or skill level, there's something out there for you.

Back by popular demand, the *Houston Voice's* sports column will appear every other week. We'll give as much info as we can about all gay and lesbian sports activities in the area, including a regular listing of upcoming games. Anyone is welcome to send sports-related agendas to editor@houstonvoice.com.



DALTON DEHART

Dozens of people turned out last Sunday for the Montrose Softball League's Recruitment Day 2002 at Memorial Park. Those interested played a game at the end of the afternoon's activities. Attendees worked hard to keep warm under cloudy skies and a cold wind. The league's new season officially kicks off April 7, and teams are now being formed.

UNHINGED PRODUCTIONS presents a bold, funny and exciting new work by a Houston playwright

The Man in the Trunk

by Fernando Dovalina

A feuding Houston couple draw into their dramatic whirlpool the gay man who is the husband's best pal, a newly liberated divorcee who knows a secret and a drunk copy editor who's hiding one. **The Man in the Trunk** is hilarious, gut-wrenching and moving.



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For more info...
713-528-6756 or email
maranatha@ev1.net

Maranatha
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community calendar

saturday, feb 16

Houston Outdoor Group. Cajun potluck/social. 5 p.m. Jon or John, 713-290-0220.

every saturday

All-Spanish Worship Service/Culto en espanol. 6 p.m. Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, 2026 W. 11th. 713-303-9403 or 713-861-9149.

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 Outdoor Group. Memorial Park walk. 9:30 a.m., meet in front of tennis center. Jimmy, 713-864-7299.

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

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. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

sunday, feb 17

DJ's Choice show. Non-profit RSICSS (Royal, Sovereign and Imperial Court of the Single Star of Houston, Inc.) holds event at BRB, 8:30 p.m., to benefit PFLAG.

PFLAG-Galveston. Meeting, 2 p.m. 713-867-9020.

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

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. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

monday, feb 18

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, feb 19

Center for AIDS. Men's mixer, 7 p.m. 1407 Hawthorne. 713-527-8210.

Bi-Net Houston. Mixed gender meeting, 7 p.m. 713-467-4380.

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 midnight. 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. Kay, 713-208-1529.

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

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. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

wednesday, feb 20

Classic Chassis Car Club. Golden Girls 2002 general planning meeting. Home of Jeffrey Bules and Steven Hand, 5907 McKnight St. 713-928-9889.

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.

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

www.houstonprideband.org.

Houston Tennis Club. 7:30-9 p.m. Memorial Park at the 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.

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, feb 21

Gulf Coast Archives & Museum. Meeting, 7 p.m. 713-227-5973.

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.

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

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

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. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

friday, feb. 22

Houston Area Bears. Dinner and movie, 7 p.m., Red Robin, I-10 and Silber. 713-867-9123.

www.houstonareabears.com.

every Friday

Freelance Art Classes. By Kermit Eisenhut for HIV+ individuals. 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Light breakfast provided. 713-523-9530.

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. 713-526-5722.

Q-Patrol. Walks the streets. 9:30 p.m. 713-528-SAFE.

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Drop-in 6-9 p.m. • Card Players Club meets every fourth Friday of the month, 7 p.m. Call Jimmy: 713-864-7299 or 281-437-0636 • 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.

Gay & Lesbian Switchboard Houston.

Volunteers offer a friendly ear to callers in need of information, nonjudgmental support, crisis intervention and referral services, emergency shelter and advocacy services to crime survivors who may need someone to accompany them to a hospital for medical attention or assistance in filing a police report. 713-529-3211

Montrose Counseling Center Permanent Endowment, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is looking for an attorney who wants to give back to the community by providing pro bono legal counsel to its Board of Directors.

Attorneys with estate planning or real estate experience are encouraged to respond. Please send a letter of inquiry with your resume/CV to: Montrose Counseling Center Endowment — LC, Attn: Executive Director, 701 Richmond Avenue, Houston, TX 77006, or fax to 713.526.4367. No phone calls.

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.

Volunteers needed. Trauma volunteers needed at Memorial Hermann Hospital to comfort and support family members in the emergency and trauma departments. 866-666-6772.

To list an event, call 713-529-8490, fax at 713-529-9531, or e-mail editor@houston-voice.com. Deadline is Monday at 5 p.m.

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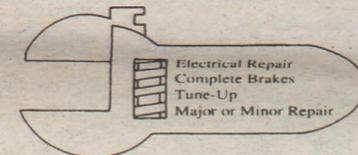
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ACROSS

- One who graces the TV screen?
- Bit of Astroglide, e.g.
- Madonna song in "Dick Tracy"
- New York stat senator Tom
- Wife of Charlie Chaplin
- Pascal of "Rent"
- Scorer of Lewis Carroll pieces
- Blast furnace waste
- ___ Records (Etheridge label)
- Slippery fish
- "Mamma ___!"
- Geert Blanchart's kind of skating
- Gender-bending Virginia Woolf character
- Dangerous to a drag queen's hose
- Stephen of "The Crying Game"
- Annoy
- Spencer-Devlin's "Look out!"
- "War Requiem" composer
- Voyeur's confession?
- Was prominent, with "out"
- Giant Mel
- One that uses testees?
- The Bangles' "___ Flame"
- Riyadh resident
- Randy's skating partner
- Postcoital sigh
- Provide for from International Male
- Water-to-wine town
- "Comedy Tonight" writer
- "Baby Doll" band
- Key West cocktail ingredients
- "You'll Never Walk ___"
- Sculptor Stebbins
- Editor's "Keep it in"
- Birds with gifted tongues

DOWN

- Changes from a threesome to a foursome
- Like a twosome
- Liquid that's shot off
- It's hard to figure out
- Hankie color for handball fans
- "Anything ___"
- Dangles
- Coming soon
- Steptoe's pseudonym
- "___ About You"
- Garfield housemate
- Event for Geert Blanchart
- Disney's "___ and the Detectives"
- Head cover
- James Dean's "East of ___"
- "Cunt" author Muscio
- Nutty as a fruitcake
- Madonna collaborator William
- Witherspoon of "Legally Blonde"
- Nathan and family
- Andy and Barney's besotted prisoner
- Mounted
- Half of Garbo's alliterated name
- Movie about a cross-dresser
- Demolition stuff
- Double-reed instrument
- Panty hose model Namath's team
- Like food that makes you spit
- ___ Exchange (advocate.com feature)
- "Cowboys Are Frequently Secretly Fond of ___ Other"
- Peter the Great and more
- In the manner of Adrienne?
- "Bad Cop, No ___" (police brutality slogan)
- "C'est Moi," to King Arthur
- Arthur of the AIDS Quilt
- "Exotica" director Egoyan
- A sailor may grab it while cruising
- Rosie O'Donnell is one openly
- Long time period
- Actor Hartley
- Ax thrower Ed
- "Once Upon a Mattress" legume
- Beavers' pride

Answers on Page 27

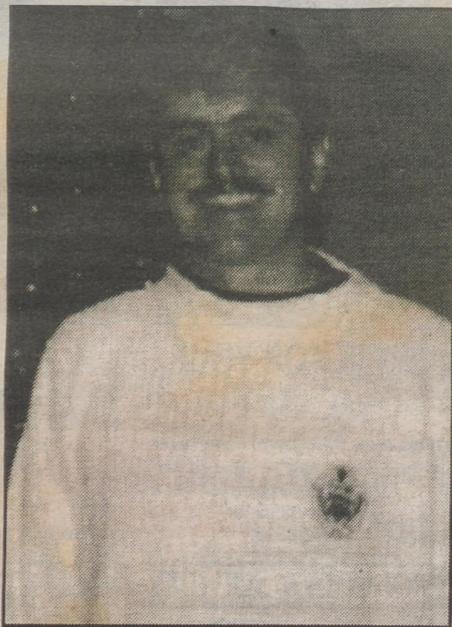
The Passing of a Great Soul

By DAVID E. DIEHL

Bobbie's towering height of six foot two inches, the blonde color that highlighted his brown hair, his caressing big brown eyes, the natural earth tones of his soft and silky skin, and his devastating nearly perfect white smile captivated the attention of vulnerable onlookers. He wore a finely manicured mustache that gave him the look of a sophisticated gentleman. He possessed the understanding of an older, caring brother and the compassion of loving mother. Bobbie Blanton had this mesmerizing way about his person that caused others to want to know and be around him. People enjoyed being in his presence.

Bobbie Blanton and I met on November 15, 1991. Soon afterwards, we became life-companions. We merged our families together: Bobbie's daughter Alicia, my daughter Laura and my son Nathan. Bobbie loved his three children. On November 15, 2001, at a local restaurant and with a few of his co-workers, Kelly, Karen, and Luz, Bobbie and I celebrated our care for one another. After the fellowship, Bobbie and I went home. We lit a few candles and turned on some quiet music. We held one another, as we spent most of the night talking about our past and the possibilities of our future. We loved each other very much. The bond between us was deep and strong, yet we struggled with our present compatibility. We were slowly sinking in the quagmire of Bobbie's primary disease, severe alcoholism. He was a very young forty years when he returned to his heavenly presence on December 13, 2001.

He knew his was ill and deep within himself, he knew he was dying. This was evident, as weeks before he was hospitalized Bobbie thought to update his legal documents. Several years prior to becoming seriously ill, our family physician cautioned him of a failing liver. Bobbie had beat death three times in the previous four years. I guess we were convinced that he had six more lives to go. Maybe we were somewhat denying that this time it could be really happening. Yet, he began to physically show signs that reflected this time was seriously different. His secondary illness, the liver disease, caused his skin to turn yellow. The fluids in his body could no longer be processed properly, so they were backing up into the lungs. This caused him not to be able to breathe well, which was complicated further by heavy smoking. His congenital heart disease was agitated as the heart had to work overtime in order to get any fluids through his body at all. There was evidence in his life that he was beginning to lose his way. Bobbie became afraid. He cried with me as he realized he probably



would not be able to live much longer. Yet, he was still unable to seek help for the disease that was about to be the cause of his premature death. The sickness of alcoholism was about to tragically take another life.

A few days after Thanksgiving 2001, our family physician called my office to let me know that he had just seen Bobbie. He expressed great concern and urged me to encourage Bobbie to enter the hospital. It was just a few short minutes later that Bobbie called me. He told me that he had seen the doctor and the report was not good. He was very upset and he asked me to come be with him. I immediately went to be with Bobbie. After a very heartfelt and sobering discussion, we made arrangements for him to enter the hospital. Bobbie and I spent sixteen very difficult days together as he fought with all that he had to try to get better. It was not to be this time.

Hellish days! That is what they were...day by day. I stayed with him every possible minute that I could. At the end of a very exhausting two weeks, Bobbie decided enough was enough. He made the final decision under the compassionate care of his health care providers that all of the treatments would cease and that he would go home...this time to die. He would come home where he would find the familiar: a proven and honest love, a sincere understanding of his person and present needs, and the confidence of knowing that I would do whatever I had to do and that I would sacrifice whatever I must in order to make sure that he was cared for appropriately and that he had all that he needed to pass in a graceful and dignified way. The health care providers made the arrangements with a local hospice care service to be at our home around the clock to care for Bobbie. He returned home on December 12, 2001. He settled in easily

with only incidental concerns. We placed the hospital bed next to the master bed over looking the outside through the french doors. On this first and only night, I slept on the sofa so Nurse Brenda could stay in the room with Bobbie. My son rested in his room. All was quiet and at peace. It was good to be home again.

On Thursday morning, I arose to the smell of bacon and eggs. Nurse Brenda was cooking breakfast for Bobbie. I showered and dressed to prepare for work. I spent some time caring for and caressing Bobbie before leaving. It was about 11:00 am when I decided to check in on him. The second shift nurse indicated that he had eaten only a few bites of lunch. This concerned me and since my office was across the street from home, I went home to see if I could get him to eat a little. He did eat only a few bites more. He also had one of his favorite ice cream bars, Nestlé's Crunch. This would be the last meal that he would ever eat.

After assisting Bobbie to care for some of his personal needs, I returned to work. I left with a deep sense in my soul that his time of passing was near. This feeling did not leave me; in fact, it drove me back to the house as quickly as I could get there. It was just after four o'clock when I arrived home only to find that Bobbie had fallen into a coma. The attending nurse told me that he was showing signs of passing. My heart began to race and I felt panic coming on. Within seconds, I pulled myself together and placed my focus upon Bobbie.

I love him. He was my first love and relationship. It went on for ten years, in spite of the many challenges, in spite of a few whose efforts were invested into interfering. Some time back, I had promised Bobbie that when he became ill I would always be there for him. I was. Always. Now I was going to be there for him in his passing. I changed from my work clothes and placed on the CD player some Christmas music. I lay down next to Bobbie and rested my leg over his long bony legs and placed his head into my loving embrace. The nurse was ever present as she cared for both Bobbie and me. She was writing in her journal (the hospice nurses write a lot of their time because they are required to document everything that happens in the home while they are there - everything!), as I turned my complete attention to Bobbie. I sadly looked into his half opened eyes and began speaking words of love and care. This dear soul was slowly and surely moving from his earthly life back into his pure, spiritual existence. I reminded him of the people that loved him. I told him again of my deepest affection for him, as I caressed and kissed his face. About an hour passed when I realized

that I had not made any arrangements for transportation and cremation services. I quietly got up from the bed, went to the den, and pulled out the yellow pages. After making several inquiries, I made my choice for services. I changed the music to the CD of Shaina Noll's, entitled "Songs for the Inner Child." To me, this was the perfect music for ministering to a passing soul. Nurse Brenda returned for the evening shift. A charge nurse came in to assess Bobbie's condition. The three nurses agreed that Bobbie would probably pass shortly, most likely that evening.

Once again, I returned to Bobbie's side to continue my vigil. I again reminded him of the love that I had for him. This time I encouraged him to take care of himself. I told him that it was okay for him to go deep within himself and to choose to do what was right for him. I encouraged him to believe that his loving heavenly Father would be there waiting for him with open arms to greet him. I reminded him of friends that had already passed and suggested that they too would be there to greet him. The heavenly music of Ms. Noll was lovingly flowing throughout the bedroom soothing all of our souls. Nurse Brenda was keeping up with Bobbie's breathing patterns. Sometime during the seven o'clock hour, she said to me that she believed he was gone, that he had not taken a breath for a few minutes. I reached down and placed my hand over his heart. I felt a beating pattern. It was my own pulse. His heart had finally failed. For a moment, I panicked deep within myself. For a moment, I was paralyzed. For a moment, my life just stopped. For weeks, my head soared about in a different place. My heart remains sadly broken.

What an honor! It was for me to have been there for Bobbie, to care for the love of my life in his health, in his sicknesses, and at last - in his passing. What a privilege! It was to grow with him, to overcome the challenges of our life together, to share the good that came our way. What a joy! I have in knowing that I was his choice for the person that he trusted and loved...the one he wanted at his side in his last moments.

A great soul has passed. He is now free of his human and physical burdens. He now lives in his heavenly presence, filled with peace and glowing with joy. What an event it will be for me to be together again with his delightful spiritual presence.

Peace be with you...my dear great soul; with honor, respect, and everlasting love.

Bobbie G. Blanton

February 19, 1961 - December 13, 2001

My Stars!

by JILL DEARMAN



YOUR WEEKLY HOROSCOPE

Feb. 15-21

ARIES (March 21 to April 20)



The moon in your money sector on Feb. 19 could put you in a high-rolling frame of mind. Yes, you can find bargains, but just don't spend your way to the poorhouse. A Virgo is looking after your best interests.

TAURUS (April 21 to May 20)



Mercury and Neptune are at the top of your chart this week and could give you a career boost, especially if you work in communications. You are able to articulate complex ideas without dumbing 'em down for the public. How rare! Another Taurus speaks your language.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 21)



This is a tricky time for you, Gemini. It may not be wise to say everything you are feeling to a loved one. You are restless and need to work out your own longings in your own way. Just don't do anything crazy. A Pisces needs you.

CANCER (June 22 to July 22)



This is the right time for you to push a relationship to the next level. You have the power to get what you want in love, but you will have to show extreme courage. A Scorpio wants to know that you are serious.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22)



Mars is stirring up the macho slut in you, darling. Don't sit around waiting for *cuties to come to you*. Get up and go to them. Your old-world charm lures in a Capricorn.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22)



The Sun meets Venus in your house of love and brings you the attention you've been craving. You may feel a little raw, though, as if people can see into your heart. They can! Let your defenses down and take a chance with someone who makes you swoon.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22)



This is now-or-never time when it comes to improving your body image. Deal with issues that have caused you angst for years. You deserve to feel great about yourself inside and out. A Leo is enamored of you from head to toe.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21)



You are the life of the party this week, Scorpio. Do what you can to get your friends together in one room, preferably with music blasting. Blow off steam with another Scorpio.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21)



Mercury meets Neptune in your house of socializing and networking this week, Sag. Schmooze like you've never schmoozed before (and for you that means a lot of schmoozing!). Another Sag wants to get to know you better - at least for a night.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19)



Lighten up and put some energy into meeting new people, babe. No need to shut yourself off from the world. Business and pleasure mix well now, but when push comes to shove, pleasure should come first. A Virgo wants you to come first.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18)



The concrete world is your friend this week, babe. So get out of your head and get into the bed of a wily Pisces. Act like a different person, just as an experiment, and you'll get a different result.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20)



The stars shine on you this week, Pisces, so make the most of it. Pull out an old dream and dust it off. You've settled too much this year. This is your time to go for the gold. A Cancer will inspire you.

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

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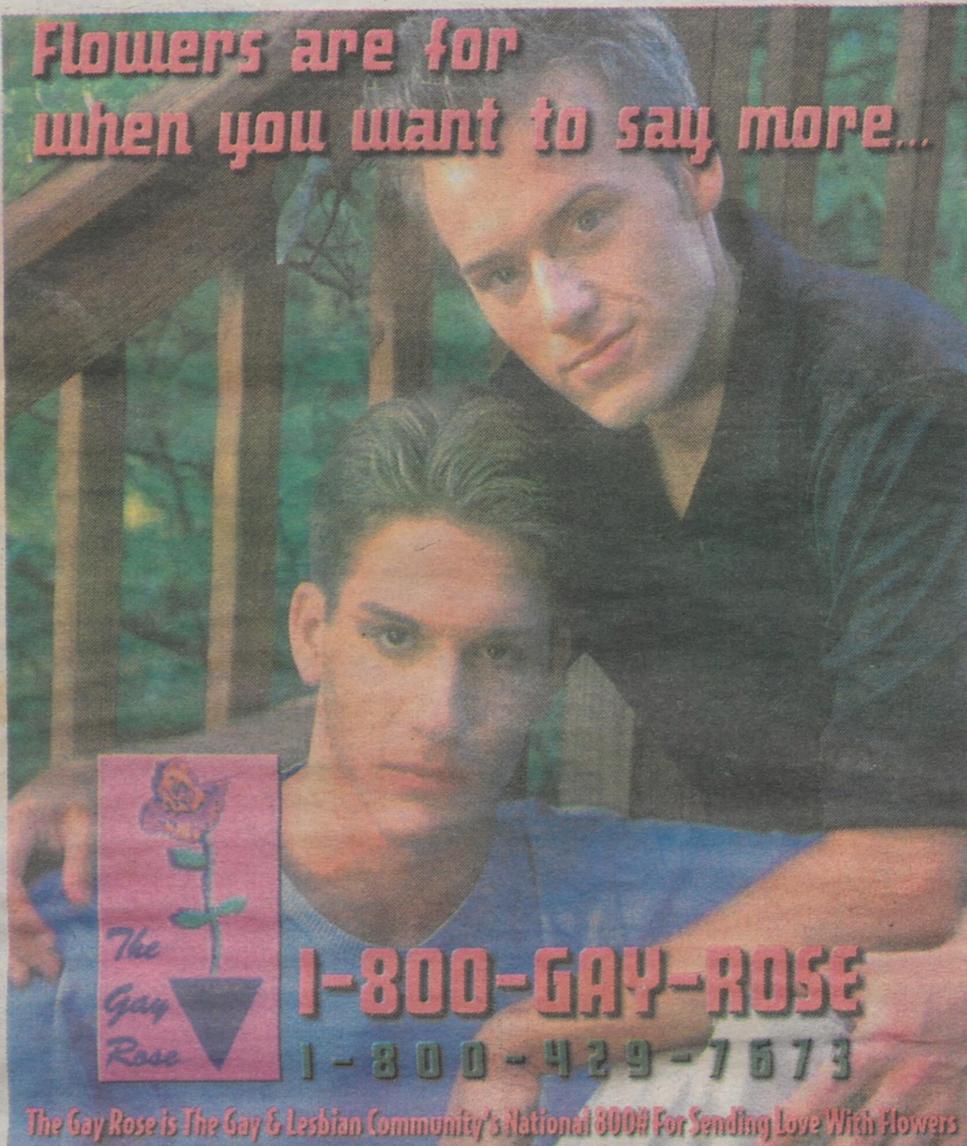


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answers to puzzle on page 24

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