

houston VOICE

Anticipating a new health crisis among gay men in Texas, openly gay state Rep. Glen Maxey sponsored a new law that aims to bring hepatitis C to light. **Page 4**



It was a film that changed Gene Mikulenka's life. The gay cowboy from Houston talks about the years since 'American Cowboy' was made, as a film festival plans to screen it again early next month. **Page 17**



ISSUE 1013

ALL THE NEWS FOR YOUR LIFE. AND YOUR STYLE.

MARCH 24, 2000

Counting gay couples

With 2000 Census forms arriving in the mail, activists are urging same-sex partners to 'make your family count'

by LAURA BROWN

For only the second time in history, gay couples will have the opportunity to register their relationships on the United States census, the massive survey that provides one of most important sources of demographic information in the country.

Every 10 years, the U.S. government undertakes a massive count of its citizens, examining everything from age and race to how many households have indoor plumbing and how long residents commute to work. Results help dictate everything from federal funding for local communities to the number of seats each state gets in the United States House of Representatives.

The census currently offers no way for single gays or gays who don't live with their partners to be counted, but couples who share the same home can check

Coming next week:
How gays in Houston are filling out their Census forms

"unmarried partner" as the relationship between them.

In 1990, the Census Bureau added the "unmarried partner" category primarily as a way of documenting heterosexual couples who do not marry.

But more than 150,000 same-sex couples also checked the box—a massive undercount of gay partners, to be sure, because many didn't answer the question and the bureau refused to count same-sex pairs who described themselves as "married" instead.

Now, two of the nation's largest gay think-tanks have launched an unprecedented initiative to make sure gay couples know they can be counted as "unmarried partners" on

> Continued on Page 12

Your answers are important!
Every person in the Census counts.

Person 2

1. What is Person 2's name? Print name below.

Last Name _____

First Name _____ MI _____

2. How is this person related to Person 1? Mark ONE box.

| | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Husband/wife | IF NOT RELATED to Person 1: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Natural-born son/daughter | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adopted son/daughter | <input type="checkbox"/> Roomer, boarder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stepson/stepdaughter | <input type="checkbox"/> Unmarried partner <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brother/sister | <input type="checkbox"/> Foster child |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Father/mother | <input type="checkbox"/> Other nonrelative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grandchild | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent-in-law | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Son-in-law/daughter-in-law | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other relative — Print exact relationship _____ | |

3. What is this person's sex? Mark ONE box.

Male Female

Millennium March is one month away and counting

Controversies continue, but plans shaping up for major events headlined by gay celebrities and community heroes

by LAURA BROWN

Melissa will be there. So will Ellen & Anne, George, Nathan, k.d., Garth, Martina and Margaret (Cho, that is, not Thatcher). For gay Texans, the question now becomes: Will you?

Only a month remains before the Millennium March on Washington, scheduled for April 30. Despite ongoing controversies, plans for the event are growing clearer, and activists are reaching out to make sure Houstonians and others from around the state will attend.

"I go to town hall meetings and I see 100 people involved in the gay rights movement, then I go to the bars and see 3,000 who aren't," said Dianne Hardy-Garcia, the MMOW executive director who is on leave from her post as executive director of the Lesbian Gay Rights Lobby of Texas.

"Our job as leaders is to inspire people to get involved, when our work (to win gay rights) clearly is not done," she said.

"I think if you go, you will be really energized and empowered," said Glen Paul Freedman, a member of the MMOW's Leadership Council and Atlanta activist.

Gay celebs headline weekend concert, rally

The event may be called the Millennium March, but the actual march will be only a small slice of events during the April 28-30 weekend.

After some attendees at the 1993 March on Washington

Controversy continues over March

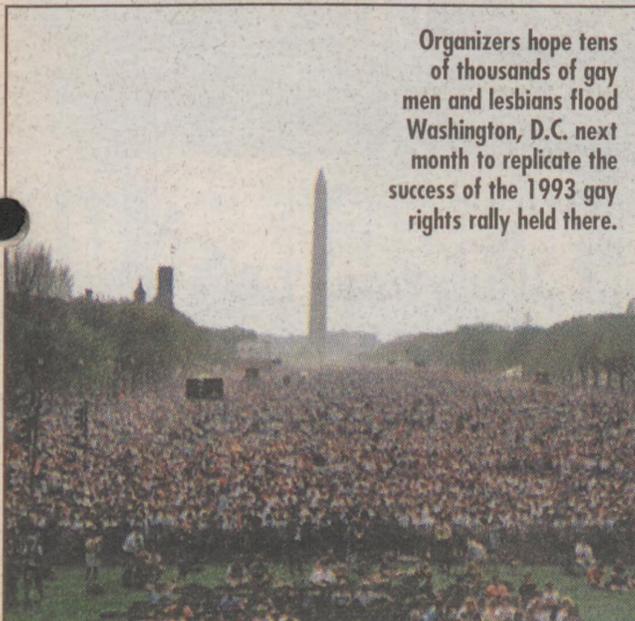
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Mr. & Ms. Gay go to Washington

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Three Texans take key organizing roles

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Organizers hope tens of thousands of gay men and lesbians flood Washington, D.C. next month to replicate the success of the 1993 gay rights rally held there.

complained that their groups waited hours to start marching, missing most stage presentations, MMOW organizers initially didn't plan to have a march at all.

The schedule now calls for marchers to assemble at 8 a.m. for a march to step off promptly at 10 a.m. The march will be led by Native American drummers, followed by one representative from each group participating in the march.

"We're marching at 10 a.m. and we're leaving. We're not going to be on queer time," Hardy-Garcia said. "If people get up early enough to march, they deserve to get good spaces on the mall."

Following the actual march, participants will gather on the National Mall for a rally from noon to 6 p.m.

A "Family Gathering" area will offer special events for the 5,000 to 10,000 families expected to attend the MMOW, organizers said. Stage speakers will address a variety of gay rights issues, with a special focus on "GLBT Vote 2000," a major effort to rally attendees to participate in the

> Continued on Page 14

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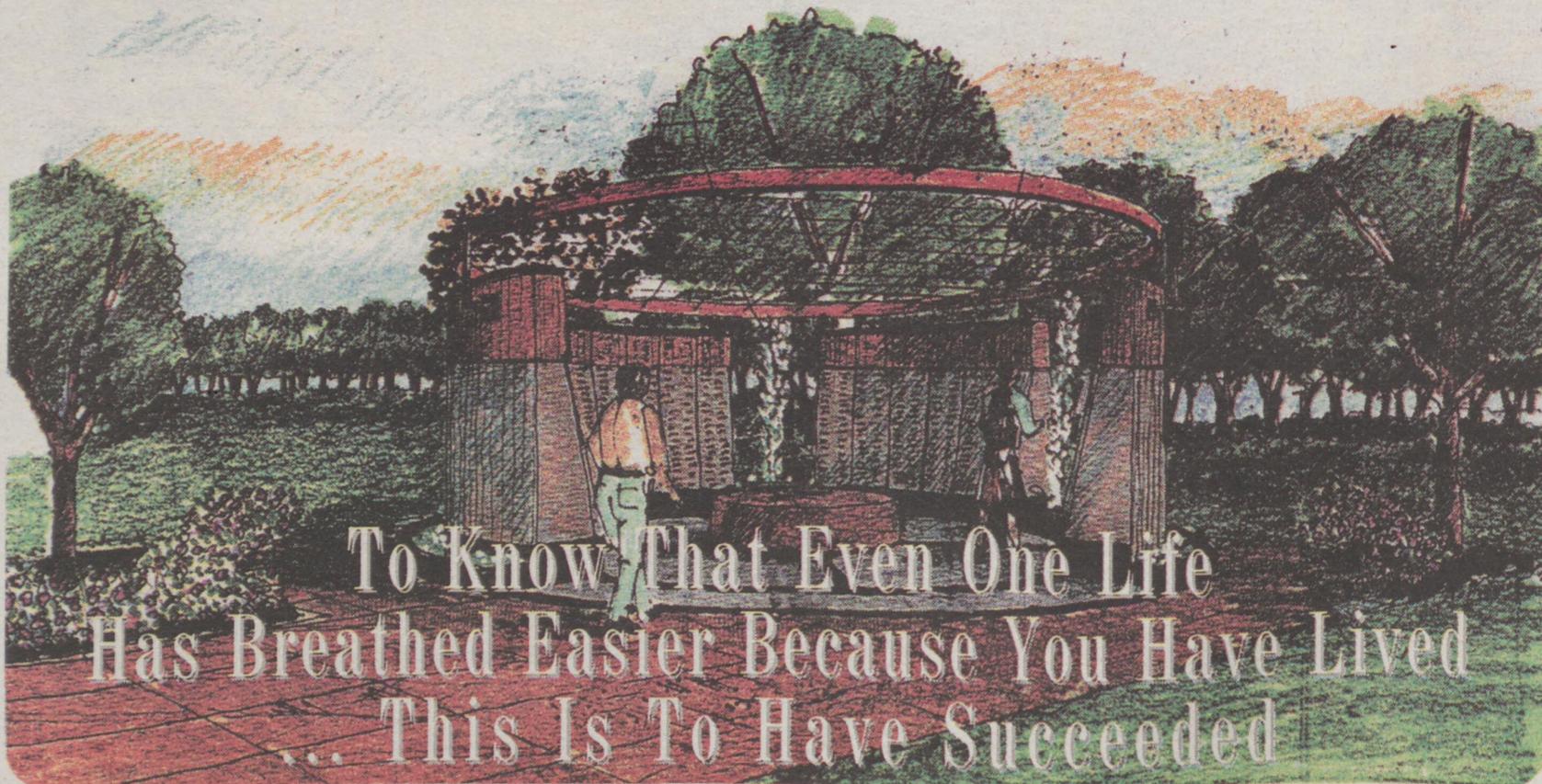


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houston voice

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Lawmaker leads charge on new 'gay crisis'

State begins first-of-its-kind study to determine scope of hepatitis C and to launch an aggressive education and prevention campaign

by GIP PLASTER

Hepatitis C is becoming a health crisis of the magnitude of HIV/AIDS, according to some experts, but until recently, few gay men and lesbians in Texas have paid much attention.

But the virus affects the gay community directly: Gay men are often considered at "mid-risk" for contracting the virus that can cause liver damage and even death.

A first-of-its-kind bill passed through the Texas Legislature last year, sponsored by openly gay state Rep. Glen Maxey, aims to bring the issue of hepatitis C to light by finding out how prevalent the virus is in the state, educating people about the risks and making testing available for the virus at AIDS clinics.

"When we have an epidemic raging throughout our community, we have to step out and do something about it," Maxey said. "Clearly, hepatitis C is a huge, looming public health crisis in our state."

Texas lawmakers are unlikely to authorize funding involving hepatitis C unless they understand the scope of the problem, Maxey said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 360,000 Texans carry the virus, but that number is extrapolated from national estimates and is simply not accurate enough, according to Maxey.

"We've got to define the problem so we're not talking abstract issues. We have no hard data in Texas and that's what this study is for, to lay that predicate," he said.

Maxey said he remembers the apathy associated with the beginning of the AIDS epidemic and said the state cannot afford to do nothing again.

"I was around at the beginning of the HIV virus where everybody just stood around and watched it happen. We can't afford the loss of human life again, and we will not as a state be able to afford the healthcare costs from hepatitis C without being proactive," he said.

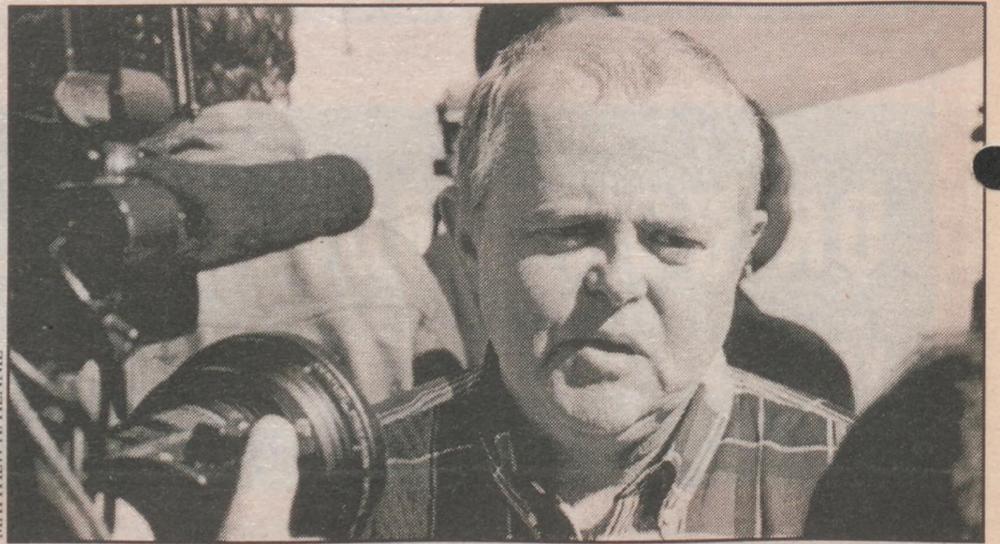
New law prompts study

House Bill 1652, passed by the Legislature last May, calls on the state Department of Health to conduct a seroprevalence study to determine the presence of the virus, and requires the department to promote public awareness of the illness and the availability of testing for the virus.

The department is also charged with training public health clinic staff about the virus and with developing a prevention program.

In addition, the bill mandates that hepatitis C testing programs be put in place at facilities that already offer HIV testing.

"It was the best alternative because we



Concern about hepatitis C among gay men prompted openly gay state Rep. Glen Maxey to sponsor legislation that will study the disease and its impact.

wanted to use the existing infrastructure," said Robin Chandler, a Maxey aide who is coordinating the bill's implementation with state health officials.

"It's not like we're going to build hepatitis C clinics. We don't have the money for that," Chandler said.

The legislature provided \$3.5 million for the bill, including the study, which is the first by any state to measure the scope of hepatitis C in the general population.

Work began on the study in February, according to Dr. Kathi Shupe, who is working on the study for the state health department.

Shupe said the samples the department is currently testing for the virus are from 3,000 blood specimens collected from AIDS and STD clinics. The study team is trying to determine the levels of the virus in each of three risk groups, Shupe said.

Intravenous drug users and those who have tattoos and body piercing are in the highest risk group; recipients of blood transfusions before 1992 and people with multiple sex partners are in the mid-risk group. Multiple partners increases the chances of encountering a partner who may not even be aware of being a carrier of the virus, health officials said.

Shupe said the state does not specifically include gay men in the mid-risk group, but some health experts consider all gay men at an increased risk for hepatitis C because the virus can be transmitted during gay sex.

The general population makes up the lowest risk group.

Study prompts privacy concerns

The most difficult samples to collect will be from the general population, but state officials are talking to representatives of four large health maintenance organizations to try to obtain blood samples from patients who have had blood drawn for cholesterol screenings or other routine tests.

Shupe said the study team is only provided the age, zip code and risk group for each blood sample, and said privacy should not be a concern.

"It's a blinded study, so we have no idea who the samples are coming from," she said.

Maxey said privacy should be no more a

concern with this study than with any other medical issue, but he said he will be working during the next legislative session to make all medical records more private. Public health privacy matters in general will be one of his focuses, he said.

Although the study, education and testing authorized by the bill have taken a year to get off the ground after the bill was passed, officials at the Montrose Clinic in Houston, a supporter of the bill, says it is already ahead of the curve.

In January, the clinic began offering free hepatitis C tests along with its HIV testing to clients who want it. Most people who come to the clinic know little about hepatitis C, said Katy Caldwell, the clinic's executive director.

"What we're experiencing anecdotally from clients is similar to what we experienced in the mid-80s with HIV," Caldwell said.

Little known about transmission

The hepatitis C virus causes an inflammation of the liver. That inflammation can lead to cirrhosis and cancer. Signs of the virus can include flu-like symptoms, dark urine, light stools, jaundice, fatigue and fever.

The virus can be spread through sex, and may be blood-borne, though health experts aren't quite sure. Other methods of transmission include IV needles, razors and from an infected mother to a newborn. Tattoo and body piercing tools can also spread the virus.

As many as 85 percent of hepatitis C patients experience chronic, or recurring, disease. Five percent die from the virus.

Although few treatments are available for the virus, some are effective, health officials said.

"It's really crucial for you to know if you have hepatitis C," said Dr. Lawrence Mass, a physician and writer who is credited with being the first to write about AIDS. Mass is also a co-founder of New York's Gay Men's Health Crisis.

"The treatment is significantly successful, as high as 40 percent. And it is not just treatment. It's probably a cure," he said.

Mass said people are not taking hepatitis C seriously.

"Everybody across the board is casual

> Continued on Page 8

Around the South

For more extensive coverage: www.houstonvoice.com

Texas basher released under defunct early release program

HUNTSVILLE, Tex.—Paul Chance Dillon, one of 10 Woodlands men convicted in the 1991 gay-bashing death of Paul Broussard, was released from prison March 16 under an early release program that the state of Texas repealed in 1996. Dillon, now 30, had served about six years of his 20-year sentence. Dillon and nine cohorts drove to Montrose on July 4, 1991, looking for gay men to harass. The group spotted Broussard and two friends leaving a gay bar. One of the youths, Jon Christopher Buice, stabbed Broussard to death, and received a 45-year sentence. Dillon got 20 years. Others received 15-year terms or probation. Although powerless to contest or halt the release, Nancy Rodriguez, Broussard's mother, traveled to Texas from her Georgia home, to be present. "I don't want to confront the guy," Rodriguez said. "I want him to see me. I want him to know I'll be watching him until I die... I'm going to be his worst nightmare."

Louisiana court to hear appeal of ruling overturning sodomy law

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—The Louisiana Supreme Court will hear arguments on the constitutionality of that state's 195-year-old sodomy on April 11. The crime-against-nature law, which makes oral and anal sex between consenting adults felonies punishable by up to five years in prison, applies equally to homosexuals and heterosexuals. In throwing out the law in February 1999, a unanimous three-judge panel of the 4th Circuit Court of Appeal said noncommercial, consensual oral and anal sex is protected by the right to privacy in the Louisiana Constitution. In its ruling, the appeals court reversed the 1996 conviction and three-year suspended sentence of Mitchell Smith, who had been accused of raping a woman. An Orleans Parish criminal district judge only found him guilty of "crime against nature" because both Smith and the woman admitted they engaged in oral sex, which Smith said was consensual. The high court has consolidated Smith's case with a challenge from several accused prostitutes who say the crime against nature law punishes prostitutes more severely for soliciting oral sex rather than intercourse. Under the crime against nature law, oral sex for money is punishable by up to five years in prison. Prostitution, defined as offering intercourse for money or trade, is a misdemeanor with a maximum sentence of six months.

Fla. man fights with dead partner's family over home, possessions

FT. LAUDERDALE—A judge ordered the family of a TV cameraman killed earlier this month to return the property of their son's gay partner, and to allow him back into the house they shared at least until they have him formally evicted, the *Miami Herald* reported March 15. Frank Gagliano, 36, says he and Rob Pierce had been in a committed relationship for the past four years and that they lived together in Pierce's home for the last two years. Pierce, an award-winning television photographer, was killed on March 3 when the station's helicopter crashed. Gagliano alleges in a lawsuit that "the Pierce family chooses to deny the fact that Rob was in a committed relationship with Frank and was gay." Since Pierce, 34, died without a will, under Florida law, his estate passes to his father. Broward Circuit Judge Thomas Lynch signed the order temporarily restoring Gagliano's rights, but the family's attorney said there is no evidence at this point that Gagliano has any right to the house or its contents. "It's not relevant if they were a couple, and the family has no position on that," said Joy Carr. "Frank does not have a lease. He is not on the deed or on the utility bills. The name on everything is Robert Pierce, solely. He has to prove that he has a financial interest." Though Broward County's human rights ordinance allows same-sex domestic partners to register with the county, Pierce and Gagliano had not done so.



Award-winning TV photographer Rob Pierce was killed earlier this month, setting off a court battle between his family and his gay partner.

Election of mayor gives Fla. city gay majority on city council

WILTON MANORS, Fla. (AP)—An openly gay city council member has been elected mayor, making this municipality north of Fort Lauderdale one of only two in the nation with an openly gay majority. John Fiore received 56.7 percent of the votes, defeating former mayor Sandra Steen. Fiore, 46, has been on the council since 1988 and was the vice mayor. The other gay council members are Gary Resnick and Craig Sheritt. West Hollywood, Calif., is the only other U.S. city with a gay majority on its council, according to the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund, a Washington, D.C.-based political action committee. "The functions of running a small city government will remain the same," said Sloan Wiesen, a fund spokesman. "No matter who is gay or straight on the council, a pothole will still be a pothole."

—From staff and wire reports

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Riders needed to make financial impact on AIDS ride

by GIP PLASTER

About \$302,000 of the more than \$2.1 million collected from the 1999 Tanqueray's Texas AIDS Ride—about 16.5 percent—will be returned to benefiting agencies, according to a financial report released this week.

That number, slightly better than preliminary figures reported earlier this month, was about \$74,000 less than was returned to benefiting agencies after the 1998 ride, organizers said.

Last year's event drew fewer riders and collected less than money than a year earlier, officials said.

Even though the 1999 event returned less money to beneficiaries than a year earlier, the percentage of the funds raised and given out to beneficiaries was slightly better—16.5 percent of the money raised last year was returned to beneficiaries, compares to just over 14 percent a year earlier, according to the financial report.

But the amount was still significantly less than similar rides in other parts of the country.

Organizers said they have cut costs, but need more riders to take part this year to get a better return.

"The thing that I was most thrilled about is that we were able to cut almost \$640,000 out of expenses from ride one [in 1998] to ride two," said Karen Estes, co-executive director of the Resource Center of Dallas, the primary beneficiary of the ride and the group responsible for the event's finances.

"We're really going to do good things this year if we can just get more people on bicycles," she said.

But a financial turn-around for the ride may be a slow process, said Kevin Honeycutt, senior vice president of operations for Pallotta Team Works, the company that founded the ride and is responsible for event logistics.

"I'm hopeful that it will be better in 2000, but I don't think anything will happen quickly there," he said.

Honeycutt, a Texas native, said he is not sure why the state's rides have not attracted as many participants as events in other parts of the country.

"It's been a difficult market for us to crack. We definitely are trying to get the results better and better every year, but they weren't as much better as we had hoped this year," he said.

Since 1994, AIDS rides around the country staged by Pallotta have raised about \$128 million; some \$70 million of that—about 54 percent—has been returned to agencies, officials said.

The 1999 Tanqueray's Texas AIDS Ride raised about \$2.1 million, a drop from \$2.7 million a year earlier. Some 615 riders took part last year, compared to 702 in 1998.

Rider support expenses were reduced in 1999 to \$479,000 from almost \$746,000 a year earlier, according to the financial report. Administration and marketing expenses dropped from about \$1.54 million to about \$1.34 million.

But the poor results in Texas aren't the worst Pallotta has seen.

After returning to beneficiaries nearly 26 percent of the \$1.35 million raised from the

first ride in Florida, just 10.3 percent of the \$1.3 million raised was returned the second year. Beneficiaries dropped out and the event has been discontinued.

The first Wisconsin ride returned about 11 percent of the \$806,640 it raised, while the event a year later returned 53 percent of the \$578,233 that was raised.

"The secret to the event is butts in seats. It's a high fixed-cost event," said Steve Hawkins, a board member of the Resource Center of Dallas.

Historical data seems to support Hawkins' conclusion.

California AIDS Ride 6 returned to participating agencies 71 percent of the \$5.21 million raised and drew 2,995 riders. Other event with large numbers of riders also returned more than half of the money raised to beneficiaries, according to figures supplied by ride organizers.

Only the rides in Texas and Florida, and the first event in California, have failed to attract more than 1,000 riders.

In Texas, a severe shortfall in the amount of money returned to beneficiaries of the 1998 AIDS Ride led at least 10 agencies to pull out of the 1999 event. Only \$380,000 was distributed among the 40 AIDS groups that took part in 1998, less than the expected \$1.4 million that was supposed to be split among the groups.

The Resource Center and other benefiting agencies provide seed money for the Texas AIDS Ride in hopes of recouping their investment, plus a profit. But while the costs of fundraising are high, the return on each



MATTHEW A. HENNE

Despite trimming costs, a financial turn-around for the Texas AIDS Ride may be a slow process, said Kevin Honeycutt, who helps oversee logistics of the event for Pallotta.

agency's initial investment is better than the return on most traditional investments.

Beneficiaries for the 1998 event recovered their initial investment, or seed money, and made a profit of about 56 percent on their investment. Profits from the 1999 event were more than 60 percent.

In Houston, Center for AIDS, New Hope Counseling Center and PWA Coalition take part in the ride.

INFO

Tanqueray's Texas AIDS Ride

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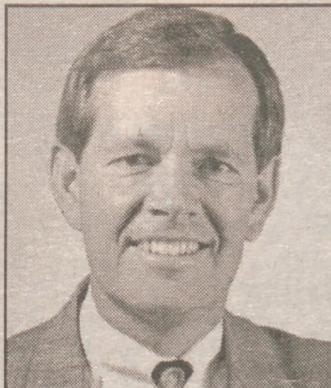
Around the Nation

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Utah anti-gay adoption bill signed; Miss. revives similar ban

SALT LAKE CITY—Utah Gov. Mike Leavitt signed into law a bill that bans placement of children for adoption or foster care in homes where unmarried adults are living together in an intimate relationship, the *Deseret News* reported March 17. The bill effectively prohibits same-sex couples, unmarried heterosexuals, and polygamists from adoption and foster care. The new law "may not meet the agendas of adults, but it is in the best interest of children," said Scott Clark, head of the Utah Division of Child and Family Services board of trustees.

Less than a week after killing a bill that would have banned homosexual couples from adopting children, the Mississippi House revived the issue amid public pressure. Lawmakers had been deluged with phone calls since a proposed gay adoption prohibition died without debate. Unlike earlier legislation, the revived bill would not refuse to recognize adoptions by gay couples from other states. The bill was resurrected Tuesday in the House Public Health Committee as part of another proposal dealing with nurse practitioners' roles in adoptions. The House was expected to take up the bill Wednesday. "There's not going to be much flamboyant debate. It will be voted up or down," said Rep. Jim Ellington (R-Jackson), who expected the ban to pass. Ellington said more than 50 people called him in support of the ban and that he heard from no opponents. David Ingebretsen, director of the American Civil Liberties Union in Mississippi, said the state would likely be taken to court if the bill becomes law.



Utah Gov. Mike Leavitt signed a bill banning adoption and foster care by gay and unmarried heterosexual couples, as efforts were revived to do the same in Mississippi.

Continental, Whirlpool enact pro-gay employment policies

BENTON HARBOR, Mich.—Whirlpool Corp. announced that it has formed an organization for gay and lesbian employees, and banned discrimination based on sexual orientation. But the company says it does not plan to extend health and other benefits to unmarried same- or opposite-sex partners of its workers.

In New York City, Continental Airlines flight attendants ratified a new contract that extends insurance coverage to same-sex and opposite-sex domestic partners. The new contract also allows flight attendants to designate any person they choose to receive flight discounts, Reuters news service reported March 17.

Gay British man to be deported after fight to stay with partner

SAN DIEGO (AP)—A gay British man's fight to remain in the U.S. with his American partner ended after he dropped his immigration appeal. Charles Lago, who had criticized the government for not considering domestic partners for residency as it does married couples, told a federal immigration judge March 13 that he was accepting that he had no legal right to stay in the country. Lago, 43, will be prohibited from returning to the United States for 10 years because he overstayed his tourist visa by more than a year. "I understand the law is the law, but I think the 10-year bar is unfair," he said outside the court. Lago had argued that his deportation would create a hardship on his partner of 12 years, Charles Snell. Lago, whose tourist visa expired in 1992, and Snell are active in the theater communities of Los Angeles and San Diego. Lago plans to move to Canada and open a theater in Vancouver. He said he and Snell will continue their relationship. "Maybe we'll meet on the border," he joked.

'Balancing' display with HIV stats rejected at Mass. photo exhibit

WESTHAMPTON, Mass.—A woman who wanted to "balance" a photography exhibit of positive images of gay, lesbian and bisexual youth with statistics about HIV infection and reparative therapy has lost her battle, the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* reported March 14. Schools Superintendent William G. Erickson turned down Barbara Zalot's request because she is not a member of a school-based group and her material was inappropriate for the event. "This is not an open forum about lifestyles," said Erickson. "It is a school-based student group that is sponsoring an exhibit, period." Zalot said that the Safe Schools program has gone too far. "We were told from the beginning that the Safe Schools Task Force was being put into place to prevent the harassment of gay and lesbian students," she said. "But what is actually happening is an affirmation of homosexual behavior."

Calif. court to decide if new school law applies retroactively

SAN DIEGO (AP)—The attorney for an award-winning California teacher who claims she suffered harassment because she is a lesbian has urged a state appellate court to apply a new law retroactively to her case. Dawn Murray, a biology teacher, claims she was denied a promotion and suffered ongoing harassment by her colleagues at the 2,000-student school. She filed a lawsuit in 1996 but a trial court dismissed the case, ruling that under California law, discrimination could be claimed in cases regarding hiring, firing or promotion but not harassment. Last year, a law passed the California legislature banning same-sex harassment in public schools.

—From staff and wire reports

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Discussion to focus on differences among women

by KAY DAYUS

In an attempt to better understand the differences and divides among women of various races, cultures and lifestyles, the University of Houston-Downtown is hosting a panel about the diversity of women.

As part of the school's Women's Month 2000, members of the panel—"The Diversity of Women: What We Bring to the Table"—will be asked to confront the issues that exist between women and try to arrive at some common ground on which to build, said JoAnn Pavletich, an assistant professor of English at the school.

"Women can be just as homophobic and racist as guys," Pavletich said. "Straights work to keep lesbians in the closet and lesbians are sometimes prejudiced against the transgendered."

But this panel is not only about sexual orientation, but also race, ethnicity, class, body-type and image, and political orientation, she said.

The discussion won't be to find specific answers, but to "continue to ask the questions," Pavletich said. "We want to listen to an array of different perspectives to find common ground among women."

Members of the panel are drawn from a broad cross section of society, and include City Councilmembers Annise Parker and Carol Galoway, author Lucy Grealy, transgender activist Phyllis Randolph Frye, and UHD students LaTasha Connor and Evelyn Castillo-Gonzalez.

Upcoming panel will explore differences Viewpoint, Page 11

Frye, who is looking forward to some lively discussion, said she has experienced little prejudice from the lesbian community against the transgendered.

"There have been some incidents. It's like straights against lesbians and like whites against women of color. There are always people who discriminate," she said. "(But) I have been very well received over the decades" since she came out as transgendered in 1975.

Participants on the panel will give a five-minute introduction about their relationship to other women and the concept of a "sisterhood" that does not cross boundaries. Afterward, Pavletich hopes for a discussion between panelists and audience members.

Although women have many differences, Pavletich said, "what we have in common is sexist oppression" and hopes the event will provide a forum for women to hear each other's concerns and ideas.

"It is important for women to listen to one another. It is important for straights to listen to lesbians and for whites to listen to women of color to find out what makes up our different worlds," she said. "We need to find ways to alleviate racism, classicism and homophobia."

To mark the end of Women's Month at the university, Dr. Molly Woods, the school's provost, will host a reception prior to the panel. The reception will be held at 6:30 p.m.



MATTHEW A. HENNIE

Annise Parker, the only openly gay member of Houston's city council, is scheduled to take part in a forum on the diversity of women next week. Transgendered activist and attorney Phyllis Randolph Frye will also participate.

INFO

The Diversity of Women

March 29, 7 p.m.

713-221-8482

University of Houston-Downtown

Academic Building

White Oak Room

Gays could face new 'health crisis'

> Continued from Page 4

and not very concerned about it, to an extent that I find it troubling. People don't want to raise the alarm of panic. They didn't want to do it with AIDS. They never want to," he said.

But Dr. Steve Goldstone said he does not think the virus will rise to the epidemic level that HIV has, and added that other health issues facing gays are just as important.

Goldstone, author of "The Ins and Outs of Gay Sex: A Medical Handbook for Gay Men," is founder of GayHealth.com, an information source being launched next month.

He said the number of cases of hepatitis C is still far lower than the number of cases of hepatitis A or B, both of which are preventable by vaccine.

Gay men should be as concerned about syphilis, gonorrhea and the virus that causes genital warts as about hepatitis C, Goldstone said.

"I don't want to be an alarmist. I don't want to say, 'Oh my God. This is the next health threat.' Because we don't even know how hepatitis C is transmitted sexually," he said.

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Action! Alert

Gay themed shows hot during TV ratings sweeps

by PAIGE PARVIN

The high-pressure ratings period known as "February sweeps" is traditionally an opportunity for network TV to show off its best stuff, and this year a surprising number of shows featured gay-themed story lines.

Popular evening dramas "Third Watch," "Ally McBeal," and "ER" brought prominent gay issues to the screen, including hate crimes, bisexuality, and domestic violence among gay couples.

Of these three, "Third Watch" drew criticism from a gay media watchdog group, while Emmy winners "Ally" and "ER" earned praise for their handling of gay themes.

Cops, firefighters and paramedics exchanged controversial views on gays on a recent episode of season newcomer "Third Watch," a thematic marriage of "NYPD Blue" and "ER."

The episode opens with a brutal shooting at a gay wedding, where one of the grooms and most of the attendants are gunned down.

"Where's the bride?" demands an investigating officer, whose surprise and disgust is evident when a colleague points to another man.

"This was a hate crime," insists the priest, adding that he's one of the few in the city who will perform same-sex unions.

The ensuing search for the shooter gives some characters the chance to swap homophobic remarks, tempered by more tolerant reaction from others.

At one point, a black and a Hispanic paramedic have a highly scripted exchange over the merits of gay civil rights, with the black character declaring he's "tired" of gays comparing their struggle to that of blacks. Race is not a choice, while "sexual preference" is, he claims.

His colleague counters by bringing up the murder of gay college student Matthew Shepard, insisting, "It's not about sexual preference. It's about not being killed for being who you are."

The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation cautioned that this staged exchange doesn't make up for the defamatory comments that pepper the show, like one remark by an openly bigoted cop:

"If queers don't like getting shot at maybe they oughtta live like men."

"Fags, queers, butt boys. ... What year are we living in?" demanded Scott Seomin, GLAAD's entertainment media director. "This is ridiculous. Those terms are unacceptable and not negated by the paramedics' conversation."

Seomin said he has scheduled a meeting with the episode's writer, John Ridley, to discuss the language used on the show.

A week later, Monday's "Ally McBeal" featured the title character toying with the idea of dating a handsome young judge—until she learns he's bisexual.

His honesty throws cold water on Ally's interest. When he confronts her, she cites a litany of textbook reasons for not dating a bisexual man: She'd worry about satisfying



Michael Beach (left) and Anthony Ruivivar debate gay rights in a recent episode of 'Third Watch' that drew fire from GLAAD.

him sexually, she'd worry about him checking out men, and she'd worry about diseases.

"I suppose I am much more homophobic than I ever knew," she confesses, finally.

The judge eloquently refutes all her trademark whining, but to no avail.

"Ally" has been criticized in the past for its unflattering portrayals of gays. But GLAAD applauded this episode for its straightforward look at Ally's conflict.

"We saw her bigotry and fears, and she got called on it," said Seomin. "And ultimately, she called herself. It was clear she was losing out. And it was very educational."

A recent episode of "ER" wove a gay theme seamlessly through its array of sub-plots. When "ER" doc Mark Green recognizes the signs of abuse in a same-sex relationship, he urges the victim to get help.

"It was a very sensitive portrayal," Seomin said. "He treated the case just as he would any case of domestic abuse."

Other shows that have recently drawn praise from GLAAD for their treatment of gays include "Family Law," which featured a transgendered parent; "West Wing," which has dealt with anti-gay hate crimes; and a "Chicago Hope" episode that featured a boy who'd been raised as a girl since infancy.

Dramas that have not done so well in GLAAD's eyes include another episode of "Chicago Hope," in which a gay man came into the hospital with a Golden Globe award stuck in his rectum, sparking jokes among the surgeons; and an "NYPD Blue" in which a seasoned cop departs from his usual character to exhibit homophobia, Seomin said.

INFO

'Ally McBeal'
David E. Kelley, producer
1600 Rosencrantz Ave., 3rd floor
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

'ER' and 'Third Watch'
John Wells, executive producer
4000 Warner Blvd.
Bldg. 133
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VIEWPOINT

Stand up, stand proud—be counted

by MELINDA SHELTON

In 1986, a van load of women from Baton

Rouge—bleary-eyed from a 23-hour drive in a vehicle with little heat—arrived in Washington, D.C., just after dawn on a crisp April morning. The disheveled group stumbled into the downtown YWCA to shower, change clothes and hit the streets by mid-morning.

The air in D.C. was electric, alive with energy generated by tens of thousands of other travelers from across the country. By noon, more than 250,000 people, mostly women, marched onto The Mall and demanded our reproductive rights be protected and domestic violence ended.

Three years later, some of the same women from Baton Rouge NOW piled into a Jeep Cherokee and once again headed to the nation's capital to join more than 700,000 other activists. Right-wing politicians, emboldened by a Reagan-Bush White House, were chipping away at reproductive rights on state and federal levels, and NOW and other women's rights groups staged the massive protest.

And in 1993, some of the Baton Rouge women traveled yet again to D.C., this time to march for equal rights for the gay and lesbian community. It was a historic day, made so because it marked the largest-ever gathering of gays and their supporters. Never before had our nation, or the world, seen more than 500,000 gay rights supporters standing shoulder-to-shoulder on the Mall. The gay rights movement was given a face, and the numbers translated into votes and political power.

For those of you who have never felt such power, who have not marched past the White House, arms linked, voices raised, tears streaming, take heart.

For those of you who have never felt such power, who have not marched past the White House, arms linked, voices raised, tears streaming, take heart.

If you have not stood on the Mall, bordered by the U.S. Capitol on one end and the Washington Monument at the other, and felt your fear and anger transform into hope and self-empowerment, your opportunity has arrived.

Go to the Millennium March on Washington on April 30. If you can't afford a three-day trip (festivities begin April 28), then at least plan to be there April 30 for the March and rally.

If you're one of MMOW's critics, and there are plenty and for good reason, thanks to an organizing board that continues to practice divisive politics, fine. Don't go.

But don't tell me, and hundreds of thousands like me, not to go. Don't tell me I shouldn't stand up and be counted, especially when you know numbers translate into votes, and votes influence politicians.

Don't deny me the gift of feeling pulsating adrenaline as I join hundreds of thousands of my sisters and brothers and friends in a march down Constitution Avenue, our voices reverberating to the hallowed halls where lawmakers daily decide just how equal our rights will—or will not—be.

And don't you dare tell those of us who do go that it was for naught. If one more gay activist is born from the Millennium March on Washington, if one gay youth returns home with a greater sense of self, if a lesbian or gay or bisexual or transgender couple can be empowered to the point of joining, or creating, a local movement for domestic partnership or gay marriage rights, then the MMOW will be an incredible success.

For those of you who do want to go, don't let the distance or expense deter you. Do like NOW activists have done for decades: economize. Make banners and sell signatures for a buck—with the promise that you'll carry it onto the Mall. Chip in to rent a van or fill a bus. Carpool with designated drivers who grab catnaps. Spend the night in cheaper motels in northern Virginia or southern Maryland and take public transportation (the Metro) into the city.

Go to the March web-site (www.mmow.org) to plan your trip, and grab a ticket to HRC's Equality Rocks concert April 29 at RFK Stadium.

Just go. And know your life will be changed forever. Marches do that.



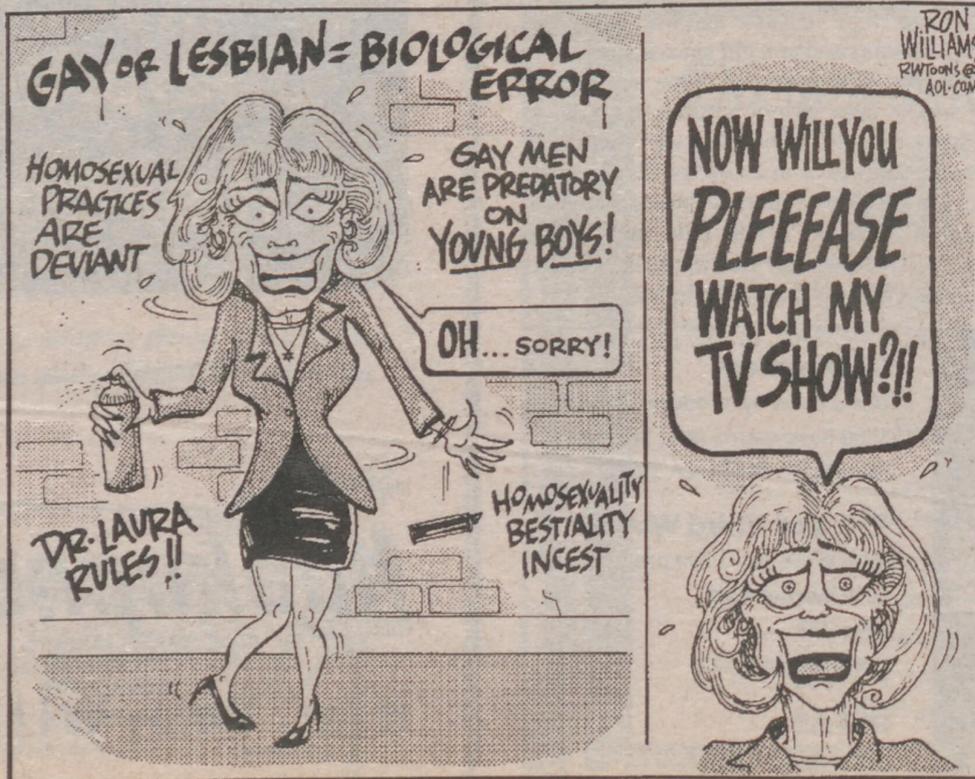
Kudos and check-marks

While the right-wingers work themselves into an anti-gay frenzy, let's revel in our gains:

Newsweek, in its March 20 issue, put gays on its cover and produced a spectacular 15-page report, "Shades of Gay." It also picked up on Baton Rouge's champions for students' rights, Leslie Spillman and Marty Pfeiffer. Send letters of praise for this quality journalism to: Letters Editor, Fax 212-445-4120, e-mail letters@newsweek.com.

Census 2000 is underway and gay couples have the opportunity to be counted like never before. Do you have a live-in partner? Then check the "unmarried partner" box, fill out her/his name, and send in the form. Don't worry, the Census Bureau is mandated by law to keep names confidential—for 72 years. Be counted.

Melinda Shelton is editor of Impact News in New Orleans, a sister publication of the Houston Voice.



VIEWPOINT

We're different, but can we overcome our differences?

by JOANN PAVLETICH

Growing up in a working class family that had, it seemed, a well-developed sense of style and sophistication, it never occurred to me that wealthy people might be significantly different from us.

After all, Aunt Josephine had the most fabulous gold lamé tent dress in the 60s—it was worn on Christmas Eve with matching gold earrings, the hanging globe variety. Aunt Sophie regularly had lady friends over for lunch where they ate salads and jello molds with fruit in them.

I couldn't imagine anything fancier or classier—until I went away to college.

I lasted one year. And although my grades were not great, I didn't flunk out. Rather, I was outclassed.

Most of the other students were from places like Long Island and Shaker Heights, Ohio. They had been to prep schools, Europe and Sun Valley. I had been to Joliet Central High School and the Wisconsin Dells, which is the Midwestern version of New Braunfels. Somehow, it didn't compare.

While at college, I fell in love with a young woman from Beverly Hills, Calif. and proceeded to learn a very hard lesson about difference. We shared a sense of adventure, a lot of laughs, and, well, we were both women. But the ways that economic status had shaped both of us kept us thousands of miles away from each

other, even when we shared an apartment.

As a lesbian and a feminist, I would like to believe that women who are different from one another—women of all races, ethnicities, class positions, sexual orientations, physical and mental abilities, eye color and dessert preference—can overcome our differences to build a world that is safe and nurturing for all women. I would like to believe that women can create a world where everyone can develop their talents and live out their dreams.

But I know that women can be just as racist, homophobic, classist and downright ugly as any male, patriarchal, power-monger. Some say these behaviors are a result of patriarchal oppression. That may be; but it remains that women oppress each other.

Straight women's fears work to keep lesbians in the closet; lesbians want to see transgender women isolated; white women do not understand the struggles of women of color; rich women exploit poor women. The list of marginalizing beliefs and actions is long.

What, then, do human beings who claim the title, "woman" have in common? Anything? What is this thing we sometimes call sisterhood?

That question will be the topic of discussion on March 29 at the University of Houston-Downtown. As chairperson of Women's Month 2000 at UHD, I believe it's necessary to question the whole purpose of a women's month. Given our profound differences, how

I would like to believe that women can create a world where everyone can develop their talents and live out their dreams. But I know that women can be just as racist, homophobic, classist and downright ugly as any male, patriarchal, power-monger.

can we even begin to talk about what it means to be a "women?"

The upcoming discussion—"The Diversity of Women: What We Bring to the Table"—will begin to explore the question. And it is our hope that many from the GLBT community will join us.

Don't worry, though. This panel will not be a series of lectures. We envision it as a conversation between interested people—any interested person.

It is my hope that this panel will be particularly interesting to lesbians and transgendered people. The threat of being called a lesbian has kept many straight women from asserting themselves as women. Some heterosexuals have felt the need to distance themselves from anything tainted with lesbianism so that their own connection to power and authority will remain safe.

Similarly, some lesbians reject transgendered women as not sufficiently "female" to be allowed into the fold. Our divisions are deep; our needs are many; the importance of

this conversation is high.

The University of Houston-Downtown is, in many ways, the perfect host for such a discussion. As an open-admissions institution, we offer opportunities to many who have historically been excluded from higher education. We have one of the most multi-culturally diverse student bodies in the country.

Yet, diversity also creates complications. For example, what do I—a white, working-class lesbian with a Ph.D and left-wing tendencies—have in common with a straight, middle-class Latina who doesn't even think she knows any lesbians and is active in her church's anti-abortion activities? Join us Wednesday night to help us develop a few answers.

JoAnn Pavletich, an assistant professor of English at the University of Houston-Downtown, also advises Alpha Lambda, the school's gay and lesbian student group. She can be reached at 713-221-8482.

LETTERS

The ambiguous Mr. Ripley

To the Editor:

In your Jan. 7 editorial about "The Talented Mr. Ripley" ("The evolution of the gay stalker"), an obtuse swipe is taken at the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation for our actions—or presumed lack of action—surrounding the film.

I say "presumed" because no reporter from your paper contacted us to find out the truth.

In fact, GLAAD discussed "The Talented Mr. Ripley" with many national media outlets during the weeks following the film's release. GLAAD's view on the complex film:

- Writer/director Anthony Minghella's film is intentionally ambiguous regarding Tom Ripley's sexual orientation. Audience members will come away with differing interpretations of Tom's relationship with the film's other male characters.

- The point of the film is that the character of Tom Ripley is a young man with no self-identity, and that includes his sexuality. Ripley is obsessed with becoming someone else. If he accepts that he cannot become that person, to him the next best thing is to become the romantic object of that person.

- Tom Ripley is a man obsessed with becoming someone important and amoral about any means to achieve what he wants. Those characteristics are not specifically or exclusively gay in our society.

- Ultimately, GLAAD believes that

attempts to label Tom Ripley as "gay" or a "gay serial killer" do a disservice to Minghella's complex look at the evolution of Ripley's self-identity.

*Scott Seomin
Entertainment Media Director, GLAAD*

Segregation runs rampant

To the Editor:

I am a professional photographer and get asked many times by community organizations to donate my time, money and talent. But there is hardly ever a thank you. It seems that the members of the groups are only concerned about themselves and getting their name out. Organizations have volunteers, but they call on outsiders a lot. These outsiders sometimes donate more than the members of the organization. But are the outsiders ever recognized? I know it takes a lot to put on events, but everyone should be recognized.

Here is my second complaint: Why don't the organizations in Houston support one another? Every year, I photograph an event in Shreveport, and I am amazed at the number of different organizations that are present. But here, it seems that the organizations have an "all about me" attitude. They are all collecting money for AIDS, but they can't unite and do things together. Why do we have to segregate in our own community? Let's unite and make this community better than what it is.

*Steven David
Houston*

With or without GLAAD, we should 'stopdrlaura'

To the Editor:

When Anita Bryant spewed her hatred for our community in the 1970's, we did not debate or hesitate in our response. We boycotted Florida orange juice. When Caesar Chavez called for a boycott on grapes and lettuce, we boycotted grapes and lettuce.

We did not ask for a "place at the table" to debate the issues. We simply, and extremely effectively, refused to buy those products.

I strongly disagree with the position espoused by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation that we "keep a place at the table" with Paramount Studios over plans to give "Dr. Laura" her own television show.

No other civil rights movement would allow a hate monger to spew viciousness on her own national show. We ought to circumvent GLAAD's decision and refuse to support anything that Paramount does until the

studio execs cancel her show.

This includes picketing every local TV station that has signed on to carry the show, and boycotting movies produced by Paramount.

For most of the 70's, I performed in pilots and TV shows for ABC. I know how these studios think and what they respond to.

The only thing they respond to is a direct threat to their revenue, and if that doesn't work, the actual loss of revenue.

GLAAD's handling of this issue is not only ineffective, but totally out of line with the feelings of most gays.

As we learned with "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," our "leadership" must not be allowed compromise our civil rights.

*Robin Tyler
Los Angeles*

Editor's note: The letter writer is a long-time gay rights activist, producer of the 1993 March on Washington and former producer of the Millennium March on Washington. She is participating in a newly formed coalition called stopdrlaura.com.



Let us know what you think

Send the editor your letters (400 words maximum) or op-ed submissions (800 words maximum). Names may be withheld upon request, but submissions must include a name and phone number for verification.

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'Married' or 'unmarried'?

While gay advocates say the 2000 census could yield a wealth of information about gay relationships, a study by one Census Bureau researcher suggests some fascinating statistics will be washed out when information from this year's census finally becomes public.

Jason Fields, a demographer in the Census Bureau's fertility and family statistics branch, compared same-sex couples who described themselves as "married" versus those who checked "unmarried partner" during a 1998 "dress rehearsal" for the 2000 Census conducted in Sacramento, Calif., and South Carolina.

Fields' study—a working paper that does not represent the official policy of the Census Bureau—found significant differences in gay "married" couples and gay "unmarried partners."

Same-sex households with children were seven times more likely to describe themselves as "married," while same-sex pairs in South Carolina were five times more likely to say they were "married" than couples in California.

Gay couples over 40 were three times more likely to call themselves "married" than younger couples. In South Carolina, female couples were 38 percent more likely to call themselves "married" than males.

While stressing that the "dress rehearsal" data is not a national sample, "defining themselves as married may be a starting point for gay and lesbian couples in developing their own family identity" Fields sug-

gested in his paper.

"This may be especially true as their relationship involves children, extended family, and in particular public interactions."

But while Fields concluded that "we would benefit by recognizing characteristics of these family systems as soon as possible," the Census Bureau decided to deal with gay couples who identified themselves as "married" in this year's census by simply adding them into the "unmarried partners" category instead.

The solution isn't perfect, Fields said, but it will be more accurate than 1990's more complicated way of dealing with same-sex "married" couples by either changing the gender of one partner or changing the relationship.

The Census Bureau will not be able to allow same-sex pairs to simply remain in the "married" category until Congress or some state legalizes same-sex marriage, Fields said.

And although sociologists and other researchers may be interested in self-identification trends like those noticed in Fields' paper, that information will not be available to study because all same-sex partners will be edited into the "unmarried partner" category before census data becomes public.

"Unedited data isn't made available to protect people's privacy, and also for other reasons—people put down some really bizarre stuff," Fields said. "There's a whole category of people who put down that they're the son of God or aliens."

'Make your family count'

> Continued from Page 1

the 2000 Census, which arrived in many mailboxes this week.

Using the slogan "Make Your Family Count," the Institute for Gay & Lesbian Strategic Studies and the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute hope to rally gay citizens to "Out the Census."

To further improve the counting of gay couples, the Census Bureau has decided to change the way it handles same-sex couples who check the "married" box.

Rather than changing the gender of one partner or assigning some other relationship, computers will now automatically transfer all of these pairs to "unmarried couples"—although research by one Census Bureau employee suggests some other method may be needed in the future.

Nothing to lose, much to gain?

According to gay census advocates, gay couples have nothing to lose—and much to gain—by answering the Census as openly and honestly as possible.

"This is invaluable information, and put simply, we want it," said Ann Northrop of the Institute for Gay & Lesbian Strategic Studies. "The whole point is we have run this movement on anecdotes for far too long, and we need some real, hard facts."

Data on same-sex couples that comes from this year's census "will be an absolute value to us, and the number one reason is simply because I am not making these numbers up," agreed Paula Ettlbrick, family policy director of the NGLTF Policy Institute. "This is our very own U.S. government."

The "Make Your Family Count" campaign sponsored by IGLSS and NGLTF lists a variety of ways census data will be useful in the fight for gay rights: community centers can use it for planning services; political groups will have more concrete information to use when lobbying; and researchers will have important demographic information about gay couples, including race, age, and the number of children in the household.

The census sample "is certainly a very strict slice, but having the data will allow us to begin to paint a picture of our community," Northrup said.

"When we are talking about marriage and domestic partnership, wouldn't it be a good idea to know what our families look like, where they live, what their education levels are, and their race, gender, and age?" she asked.

'Count' campaign addresses fears

Some might fear that the almost certain undercount—it would be virtually impossible for the census to count every

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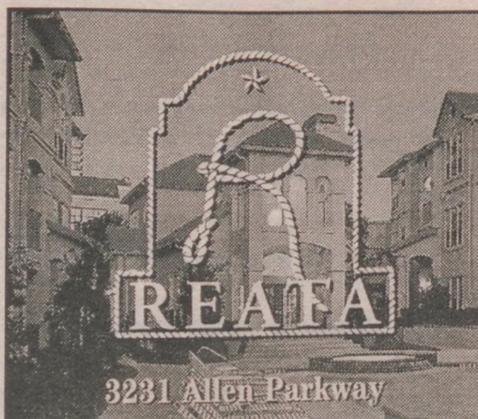
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gay couple in the country—could be used by gay rights opponents to argue against the need for domestic partner benefits or other family policies.

Both Ettelbrick and Northrup downplayed that concern.

"I don't want to tie our numbers in the census to our rights to full and equal citizenship. ... [Our enemies] will try to use it, certainly, but there are obvious answers to that," Ettelbrick said. "Good public policy doesn't require representing 'x' amount of the population. We pass laws to protect all kinds of people."

Some same-sex partners may fear identifying themselves in a gay relationship since many states, as well as the federal government, do not have laws banning job discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation—a concern acknowledged by the Human Rights Campaign, the Washington-based gay lobby.

"Because of fear of discrimination many people may not feel safe enough to answer honestly, and this may lead to an undercount," HRC Executive Director Elizabeth Birch said in a statement supporting "Make Your Family Count."

"We look forward to the 2010 census when more discriminatory barriers will have fallen, and questions about sexual orientation can be asked more directly and answered more honestly," Birch said.

Census Bureau officials, however, stressed that while census forms contain names, they must by law be kept confidential for 72 years—meaning such data from the 2000 census won't be available until 2072.

Census data released earlier than the official date is done by statistics only, without

information that identifies individuals, and the agency cites a perfect record of no confidentiality breaches in all of its 209 years.

Instead of security or anti-gay groups taking advantage of an undercount, Northrup said she is most troubled by gay people she has heard from who say they will boycott the census to protest a government that gives them nothing in return for their relationships.

"As a member of ACT UP, I've spent a lot of my life in the streets or in jail in the last dozen years, and I have no use for government on many levels, ... so I am in complete sympathy with anyone who wants to mess with the government.

"But in this case, it is what my mother and grandmother used to call 'cutting off your nose to spite your face,'" she said.

Gay category not likely soon

While gay couples who live together can identify themselves on the census as "unmarried partners," single gays and couples who don't live together still have no way to make themselves known because the census has no general demographic question about sexual orientation.

According to Ettelbrick, what to do about counting single gays is "a very good question" already being discussed for the 2010 census.

"A lot of us, over the next couple of years, want to come together and try to figure out what we would get out of adding a sexual orientation based question," she said. "The obvious reason is we want to be counted and deserve to be counted."

But census officials rejected a request three years ago to add sexual orientation to the survey, and cautioned that adding the

category would be a complicated process. All new questions must be approved by Congress, and the census only includes demographic categories that are needed for federal programs.

"Every question on the census is used to support some federal legislative or programmatic need, like the Voting Rights Act, or redistricting, or the allocation of various funding programs," said John Thompson, associate director for the decennial census.

The Census Bureau rejected many other suggested questions for this year's survey, including one about Internet usage, Thompson said.

Adding a simple "check your sexual orientation" box could also prove complicated because not everyone agrees on what those terms mean: Some people who participate in same-sex relationships don't identify themselves as gay, while some who do call themselves gay also have relationships with members of the opposite sex.

"I don't think it's the kind of question that can be handled in a mail-out, mail-back survey," Martin O'Connell, chief of the Census Bureau's fertility and family statistics branch, told the Associated Press. "The problem with asking the question is that it does not have a potential common ground of understanding."

"If there was a need to collect the information, we would embark on a program of testing and development to determine a way to ask the question," Thompson said.

In the absence of an official question about sexual orientation, some activists have suggested gay men and lesbians should simply write in "gay" on the form.



Data on gay couples from the census 'will be an absolute value to us, and the number one reason is simply because I am not making these numbers up,' said Paula Ettelbrick, of the NGLTF Policy Institute. 'This is our very own U.S. government.'

Thompson said the Census Bureau won't officially tally such answers, but Northrup said she still applauds the idea, although it isn't part of the IGLSS campaign.

"I'm all for direct action. They will notice, and I say, 'bravo,' do it."

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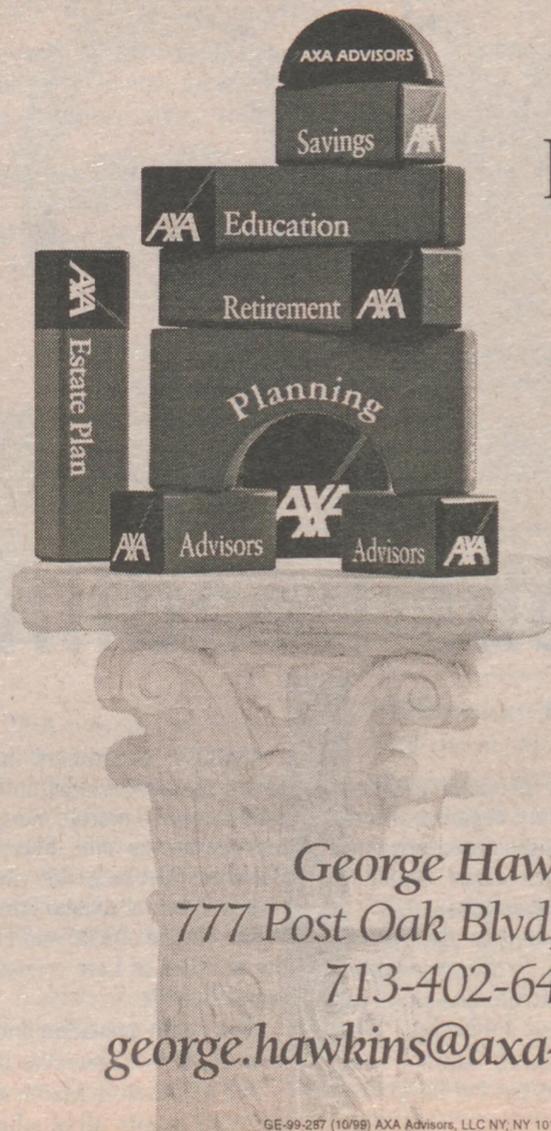
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Controversies continue as MMOW date nears

Gloves come off in debate over director's departure

by LAURA BROWN

From recent staff changes to persistent questions about the need for its very existence, the Millennium March on Washington has faced controversy since the day two years ago when it was first announced by the Human Rights Campaign and the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

This week, MMOW board member Michael Armentrout took off the gloves in the most recent debate: the departure of Malcolm Lazin as co-executive director of the march.

In initial press reports after Lazin left last month, MMOW leaders refused to comment on personnel matters and praised his efforts with the march.

Lazin also refused to comment on his departure, couched as a "resignation," but outlined a variety of concerns about financial and contractual issues at the march.

Lazin's continued criticism apparently prompted the MMOW to change its approach.

"Malcolm did not resign. We terminated Malcolm. We eliminated his position and offered him a position as a development consultant to the board, which he declined," Armentrout said this week.

"He essentially didn't do his job as a fund-raiser and he made decisions without the board giving him the authority to do so," Armentrout said.

Lazin could not be reached for comment on Armentrout's assertion by press time. Armentrout, meanwhile, said he felt the need to "set the record straight" after Lazin's comments, but he didn't want the debate to "muddy the waters" about the march.

Plagued by critics from the start

Still, Lazin's resignation is only the most recent of the controversies to shake the MMOW.

As soon as the event was announced, critics immediately blasted HRC and

MCC, two of the nation's largest gay rights groups, for announcing the march without the lengthy process of debate that has preceded prior gay rights marches.

Calling themselves the "Ad Hoc Committee for an Open Process," some activists continued to publicly challenge the need for the march, claiming the MMOW didn't represent grassroots organizers or people of color.

March organizers responded by setting up an independent board to run the MMOW—half of whom were people of color. The march board passed resolutions vowing to donate a portion of any profits to gay people of color groups and state and local level organizations. The MMOW also promised to help grassroots organizers by sharing name and mailing lists.

But MMOW organizers continued to be rocked by controversy—from inside the group as well as outside—as a series of high-profile resignations caused some to question whether the group is able to successfully plan the march.

First, Kerry Lobel, executive director of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, issued a very public resignation from the MMOW board.

Next, Robin Tyler, a lesbian comic and festival producer originally named the MMOW's executive director, resigned in October 1999 after questions from the MMOW board about some of her decisions.

Two board members, Dianne Hardy-Garcia and Lazin, were named co-executive directors, but Lazin resigned in February.

Board member Michael Williams also resigned last month, telling a Philadelphia magazine that the board "let me down as a new board member and a person of color."

Ex-director worried over money, not mission

Ad Hoc Committee members gleefully distributed information about the resignations, but Lazin said this week he does not

share their concerns about the march, and he in fact declined to be interviewed by the group.

"I am supportive of the March—I have concerns about it, but at least in terms of my experience, I didn't feel the Ad Hoc Committee was being constructive," Lazin said.

Lazin, an attorney and executive director of Philadelphia's PrideFest America, said he still plans to attend the march, and hopes many other people will, too.

"I chose to resign because my areas of responsibility were the rally, revenues and financial reporting, and I had significant concerns in each of those areas that were not being addressed by the executive committee," he said.

"I believe in the mission of the March, ... but where one is the responsible individual, you cannot lend your name to something where there are decisions being made you believe are inappropriate," he added.

Lazin said he feels the company hired to produce the rally does not have enough experience in planning such a large event; he was concerned about procedures for getting contracts from affiliated events that promised to give a portion of their proceeds to the MMOW; and he worried about some accounting procedures.

"I am not suggesting anyone is taking any money. ... What I am suggesting, however, is there is a way to financially report that businesses do it, that well-run non-profits do it, and the way that I want it to be done if my name is going to be associated with it," he said.

March officials have said they chose the production company, in part, because its proposal came within the budget allotted for producing the rally.

Armentrout, who serves as MMOW's treasurer, denied Lazin's allegations. He insisted accounting procedures were strong, and said all affiliated events will donate a portion of their proceeds.

Armentrout said Lazin disagreed with the board about three major affiliated events—HRC's Equality Rocks concert, a series of parties by Club Montage, and the Millennium Festival—that will donate by



MATTHEW A. HENNIE

Controversies over organizing aside, Dianne Hardy-Garcia, executive director of the Millennium March on Washington, says it's crucial for gays to 'keep their eyes on the prize.'

a different formula than others because they have committed to sponsorships "well into the six-figure range."

The individual formulas for the major events will yield more money for the MMOW than the general formula—15 percent of gross proceeds for for-profit groups and 10 percent for non-profits—used for other affiliated events, he said.

Past marches not without controversy

While controversies have dominated headlines about the Millennium March since it was first announced two years ago, the MMOW is by no means the first civil rights demonstration to face critics even within the group it is trying to represent, Hardy-Garcia, the executive director, points out.

After talking with organizers and participants of the gay rights marches in 1979, 1987 and 1993, "I'm taking a broad perspective," she said.

"Every single march and event like this is wrought with these kinds of controversies. It's sort of the nature of these events, because you're trying to pull together so many diverse people," she said. "It's really important to me to keep our eyes on the prize."

Gay celebs headline pre-March events

> Continued from Page 1

November elections.

Events affiliated with the MMOW will fill out the weekend.

The Millennium Festival—a separately organized event featuring food, entertainment and booths for community groups and vendors—will close down eight blocks of Pennsylvania Avenue on Saturday and Sunday.

On Saturday night, a concert sponsored by the Human Rights Campaign hopes to fill RFK Stadium. Dubbed "Equality Rocks," the event features a dream line-up of gay and gay-friendly entertainers: Melissa Etheridge, Ellen DeGeneres, Anne Heche, George Michael, Nathan Lane, k.d. lang, Garth Brooks, Queen Latifah, the Pet Shop Boys and Kristen Johnston.

MMOW organizers have already announced that Etheridge, DeGeneres and Heche will also appear at the rally after the march, along with comedian Margaret Cho; lesbian tennis star Martina Navratilova; Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), the first lesbian elected to Congress; transgender activists Jamison Green and Dana Rivers; White House official and HIV activist Daniel Montoya; and the families of hate crimes victims Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr.

Other rally speakers and performers will be announced later, MMOW organizers said.

The Millennium March web-site also lists dozens of other affiliated events, all of which will donate a portion of their

proceeds to pay for the march.

A glimpse at the schedule offers something for virtually everyone on the gay spectrum: dance parties, religious services, and conferences and events geared toward parents, children, gay youth, people of color, gay pilots, leather aficionados and even the "Millennium Medical Marijuana March."

Despite criticism that made headlines nationally and locally, controversy over the Millennium March never rose to much more than murmurs in several states, including Texas.

But 11 Illinois gay and trans groups, including Equality Illinois, the largest statewide group, announced last week they would boycott the MMOW.

"Participation in this march uncritically replicates the

Millennium March has a distinct Texas drawl

Three Texans, including a Houston activist, are among the behind-the-scenes organizers for next month's march on the nation's capital

by CHRIS LEEDS
Dallas Voice

Three Texans are in the nation's capital playing key roles in preparation for the Millennium March on Washington, the gay and lesbian rights event planned for April 30.

Leaving hearth and home for a northern winter, the three—including two lesbians from Austin and a gay man from Houston—say their down-home roots are a definite plus in preparing for the huge event, which lists grassroots organizing as a key goal.

March executive director Dianne Hardy-Garcia, the long-time leader of Lesbian Gay Rights Lobby of Texas, says her staff is focusing on three areas—political significance, movement building and personal growth—that will come from the presence of thousands of gay, lesbian and transgendered people crowding the Mall next month.

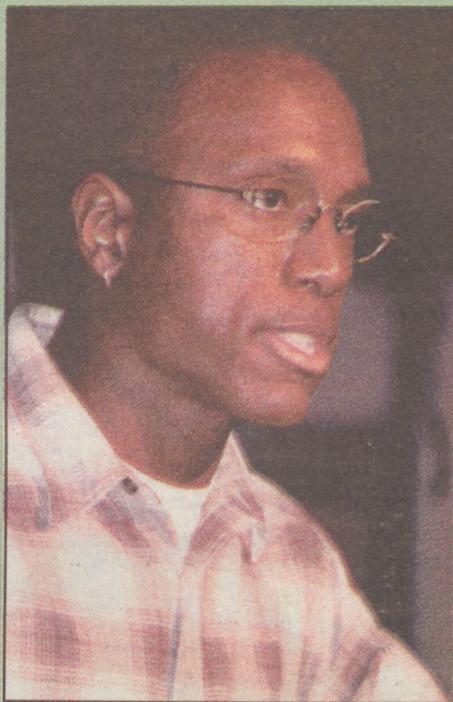
"I know what it's like for those of us from Lubbock and Amarillo and Abilene," Hardy-Garcia said. "I know what it's like to be on this Mall with hundreds of thousands of other gay people. We don't have that [in Texas]. New York City may have that, but we don't have that. And it's life transforming."

Fellow Austin resident Yolanda Reyes, a field coordinator in the March's national office, said the political climate in Texas inspired her to head to Washington in January.

"I have a real passion to see social justice done in a very broad sense," Reyes said.

Reyes said she was appalled last year when two conservative Texas legislators proposed measures that would bar gay men and lesbians from adopting children or serving as foster parents.

"It's the queer community that's really under attack. We came within a hair's breadth of getting an anti-adoption bill passed in Texas," Reyes said. "That's something I feel real close to now, because my sister is a single mother with a little boy that I'm extremely



Houstonian Michael Crawford is one of a handful of Texans who are key players in organizing the Millennium March on Washington.

close to. That really hurts me."

Fellow coordinator Michael Crawford, a gay man from Houston, says it's time for gay men and lesbians of all races and ages to unite. He's hoping the hundreds of thousands who attend the march will be inspired to activism, too.

"That's the real reason the March is so important," Crawford said. "It's not so much so we can provide pretty pictures for CNN (but) because it will enable us to get people excited about political activism. There are going to be so many people who are new to the gay community and activism that are going to be coming to this March."

When these mobilized masses return to their hometowns, the Texas trio hopes they will continue efforts to fight for gay causes.

Hardy-Garcia wants March participants to "take the moment and the syn-

ergy (they) feel from being around all these people, and go home and be hometown heroes.

"Take on the school board and get involved in your statewide group," she said. The three Texans understand the meaning of sacrifice, they say.

Hardy-Garcia and Reyes left behind partners in Texas for their months-long stint of March organizing.

"I've got to say, I feel really fortunate that I've got a partner that allows all this stuff to happen," said Hardy-Garcia, who spent most of last year lobbying at the state capitol. "(My partner) knows how important this stuff is politically, but it's been hard. It's been tough, and I miss her a lot."

For Reyes, her work means leaving behind a significant other who is "very supportive" about her involvement. And when Reyes returns from Washington, she said she'll be making another life change—from being a self-employed carpenter to an elementary bilingual teacher.

Crawford, who was waiting tables, predicts that he'll be facing a new career after the March is over. His plans place him in a leadership role in one of Washington's gay organizations, he said.

That means he'll be leaving behind a



Austin resident Yolanda Reyes left behind a partner and a job to join March organizers in Washington, D.C. earlier this year.

Houston-based group he founded, the Fabulous Boys Network, a community organization that focuses on men's health. It also means that Crawford will have to leave his "special someone" back home—his grandmother.

"She's excited about it, and my family totally understands why I came here and why this march is going to be so important for the LGBT movement," said Crawford, adding that two of his sisters will be at the March.

The trio expects to work long hours up until the day of the March.

"We're working day and night. I haven't let my staff off, and I hear about it all the time," Hardy-Garcia said. "What makes me keep doing it is when we hear from that 17-year-old from Ohio coming down with his busload of friends, or that 52-year-old woman who for the first time has the courage to march."

Crawford says the work is grueling, but he's glad for the opportunity. Contacting all the nation's deaf groups, leather communities and S/M organizations—just part of his outreach duties—means he's having to "live, eat, sleep and breathe GLBT people 24 hours a day, seven days a week," something he describes as "incredible."

A veteran of gay and lesbian organizing, Hardy-Garcia nonetheless said her current task is daunting.

"We've done marches in Austin but nothing on this scale," she said. "This is going to be huge, and sometimes I get big lump in my throat when I think about how massive this is."

On the other hand, Crawford, a former board member of the state's lesbian and gay lobby, boasted that with Hardy-Garcia's leadership and everyone's work so far, Texans are making their presence felt in the nation's capital. And he hopes a large group of Texans will participate in the Millennium March.

"Seeing as how everything in Texas is about size, we want to have the biggest contingent," Crawford said. "We want there to be a massive showing from Texas ... wearing their Texas paraphernalia—gaudy stuff that only we can have because we're from Texas—big Texas hair, big Texas earrings, big cowboy boots, big hats and Texas shirts."

facism, elitism and consumerism that need to be confronted if we are to achieve the justice our movement seeks. We urge our fellow LGBT brothers and sisters to sit this march out," read a letter signed by the Illinois groups.

The event has gained endorsements from several groups, including the Georgia Equality Project, a statewide gay political group.

Harry Knox, GEP's executive director, said he disagrees with MMOW critics, and he isn't worried controversy over the march could transfer over to his organization.

March organizers "have heard the criticism leveled at them with open hearts, and they have responded with real action to open up the process and invite people from every

part of the movement," Knox said. "But some people have been more interested in staying on their soapbox than getting involved, and we don't buy into that kind of behavior."

Overall, "there are tangible reasons for supporting the march, and intangible ones," Knox said. "Many of us got involved as one of our first activist efforts with previous marches, and we know the power being part of kind of event has for getting people excited about what they can do when they get back home."

Betty DeGeneres, mother of lesbian comic Ellen DeGeneres, and Candace Gingrich, Newt's gay sister, will be in Atlanta on Monday for the first stop in a six-city tour organized by the Human Rights Campaign to promote the march.

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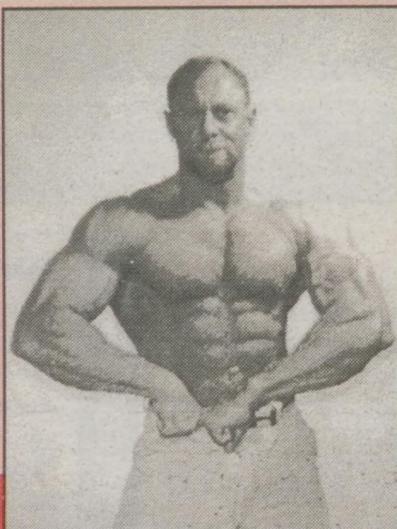


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A GUIDE FOR YOUR LEISURE TIME

Riding into the sunset

A documentary about Gene Mikulenkka changed the life of the gay cowboy; an upcoming film festival plans to re-screen the popular 'American Cowboy'

by D.L. GROOVER

It was a film that dramatically changed Gene Mikulenkka's life.

As the proud and feisty subject of Kyle Henry's 1997 award-winning documentary, "American Cowboy"—to be screened in the "Greatest Hits" series at Museum of Fine Arts, Houston—Mikulenkka's screen life had enough drama for a Hollywood feature.

"The film has dramatically changed my life. I can't even begin to tell you of all the things that have happened, both good and bad. My life changed dramatically," Mikulenkka said.

In the very fine film that follows Mikulenkka for four months, one of the first glimpses of him is a grainy home movie taken at a competition where the Brahma bull he's riding throws him to the ground, swings around and tramples him.

The amateur paramedics, fanning him with a

cowboy hat, urge him to walk. They think he's only pulled a muscle. 8-Ball had smashed up Mikulenkka's foot in two places, and broken both bones in his leg. He still wears a metal plate with pins.

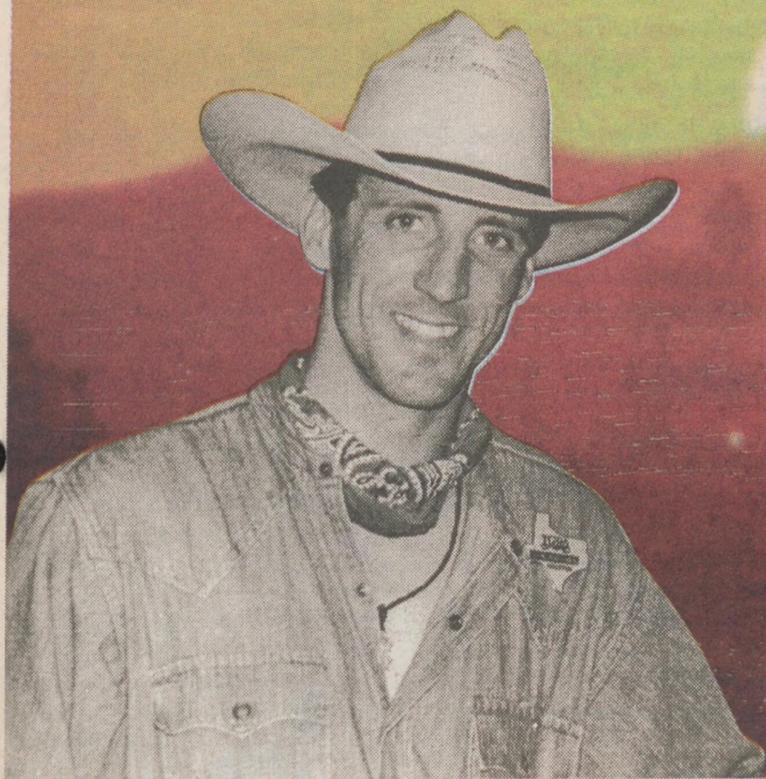
At 39, his winning career hit the dirt.

With a gritty toughness we all think befits a macho cowboy, Mikulenkka, during the course of the film, continues to compete wearing a cast on his leg, even bronc busting and pole bending.

His beloved quarterhorse, Marta, dies of colic; he argues with the director over set-ups and what he'll allow to be filmed, getting his way; he gives his boyfriend an engagement ring with the vow of "I want to spend the rest of my life with you"; he twists his already mending foot while riding; and yet manages to overcome the odds and wrack up an impressive \$1,000 purse at an event.

Oh, and the film was his coming out. Mikulenkka

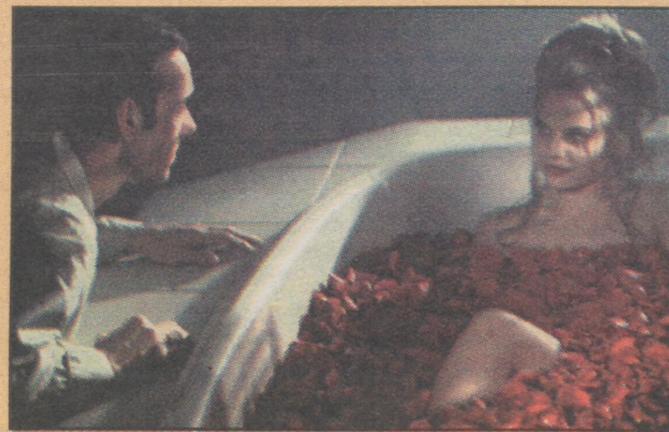
> Continued on page 21



A popular documentary about Gene Mikulenkka, an award-winning gay cowboy from Houston, will screen during an upcoming film festival.

OSCAR PREVIEW 2000

THE Beauty TO BEAT!



Kevin Spacey has been nominated for an Oscar for his role as an unhappy suburbanite in 'American Beauty.'

Will this year's Oscar race prove to be all-'American'?

by EARL DITTMAN

With the 72nd Academy Award ceremonies just days away, many of Hollywood's best soothsayers, psychics and industry analysts are still having a difficult time predicting who exactly will be taking home one of those highly-coveted Oscar statuettes on March 26.

With the Golden Globes, the Directors Guild of America and the Screen Actors Guild having already passed out their awards, one film is a heavy favorite. The evening will more than likely be dominated by "American Beauty," DGA-winning director Sam Mendes' cinematic glimpse at sexual obsession (both straight and gay) and familial dysfunction in suburbia.

But when it comes to who will win an Oscar from the Academy Of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, nothing is a sure thing until that little white envelope is opened and the term, "The award goes to..." is proclaimed by an industry peer. And while every single Academy Award night since 1927 has had its share of surprise winners, the 2000 edition of the Oscars promises to be the mother of them all.

It's a sentiment shared by everyone in Tinsel Town, including Academy Award Best Actor nominee Kevin Spacey, who walked home with a SAG Best Actor statue recently for his performance in "American Beauty."

"When it comes to acting or industry awards, there is no such

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BOOK NEWS

Lack of style makes it hardly a 'Winner'

by MICAH McCOIN

One would think that four published novels would be sufficient writing experience to develop an ease with dialogue, character and style. Randolph H. Deer, writer of three thrillers in the past 12 years, still has not mastered these elements with his fourth, **AND THE WINNER IS...**

An overblown setting, cartoonish characters and cereal-box platitudes litter this otherwise interesting, if poorly written, novel.

Deer's story, though unlikely, is creative. Secretly gay Hollywood hunk, the aging Craig Carlson, is the attempted victim of a hit orchestrated by his wife-of-convenience, film megastar Roz Marlowe.

She wants to collect the many anticipated proceeds of his death before he writes her out of his will in favor of his lover of 10 years, Alan Gavin.

The twist is that the man sent to kill Carlson is his stunt double whom Carlson offs.

The hero assumes the identity of his would-be assassin, thus becoming an instant, worldwide fugitive, and escaping the media hell of his former identity in the film industry.

The novel traces his international adventures and the criminal investigation he leaves in his wake. All of it rests on the

assumption that it was he, not the stunt double, who was murdered.

Don't worry about my giving away too much of the story; Deer makes the questionable choice of spilling all these secrets in the opening of the novel.

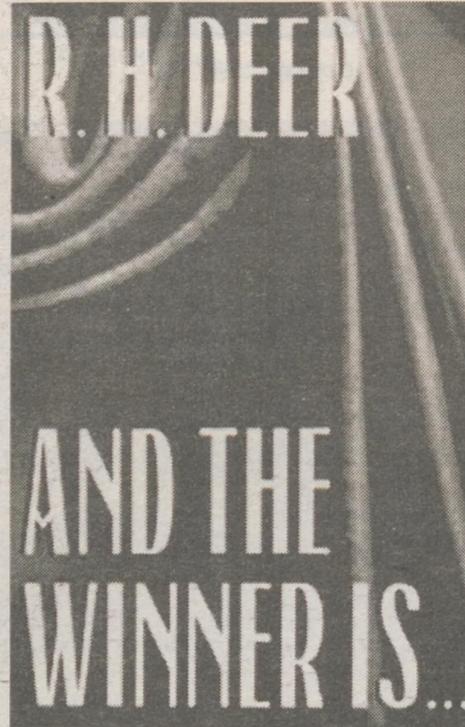
The only nugget of surprise withheld until the novel's end is a weak discovery of insurance fraud perpetrated by one of the novel's most uninteresting characters.

In short, this could have been a wonderful mystery story, except that Deer is a blabbermouth who insists on telling the story from an omniscient, strictly chronological and very judgmental point of view.

The narrative is a wonder of overexplanation and underdevelopment. Deer makes the fatal mistake of telling instead of showing, and even worse, showing and then telling, too.

He will quote a character and then explain what he or she meant, or detail an action and give its reason. The author leaves no interpretation to the reader, yet he fails to deepen any of his characters in the process.

The novel's most interesting character, the downright deplorable Roz, seethes with an evil borne of an attention-starved youth. She is so terrible, though, that she comes across as a caricature, and the other characters fare little better.



Moreover, the lack of depth extends to the half-hearted attempt at social relevance by Deer, who is gay.

The world of this story divides into characters who make uncharitable remarks about gays being executed in Nazi Germany, and those who accept Craig and Alan's relationship without missing a beat.

The tolerance among the good characters is simplistically portrayed, and only the bad guys are homophobes. The novel reads as if it were written by a well-intentioned, but naive straight man.

The other attempted social issue here is Hollywood excess, and Roz Marlowe represents the monsters capable of being created in such an environment.

No high-living rich-bitch stereotype is left unturned by Deer in his depiction of Roz. She is a cocaine-snorting alcoholic; a pill-popping, temper tantrum-prone, selfish, promiscuous vamp who prostitutes herself for everything she wants in life.

The commentary on the film industry and the media, like so much else in the novel, is rudimentary. The social critique here, on every front, is negligible.

Except as a quick read on the train, "And the Winner Is..." is itself of negligible value.

After wading through the awful writing of the opening chapters, its thrill-a-minute storyline takes charge and makes the book readable, if nothing else.

In better hands, a thriller with a set-up like this could prove compelling. As it stands, "Winner" only proves too well that Hollywood glamour and action can't save a bad screenplay.

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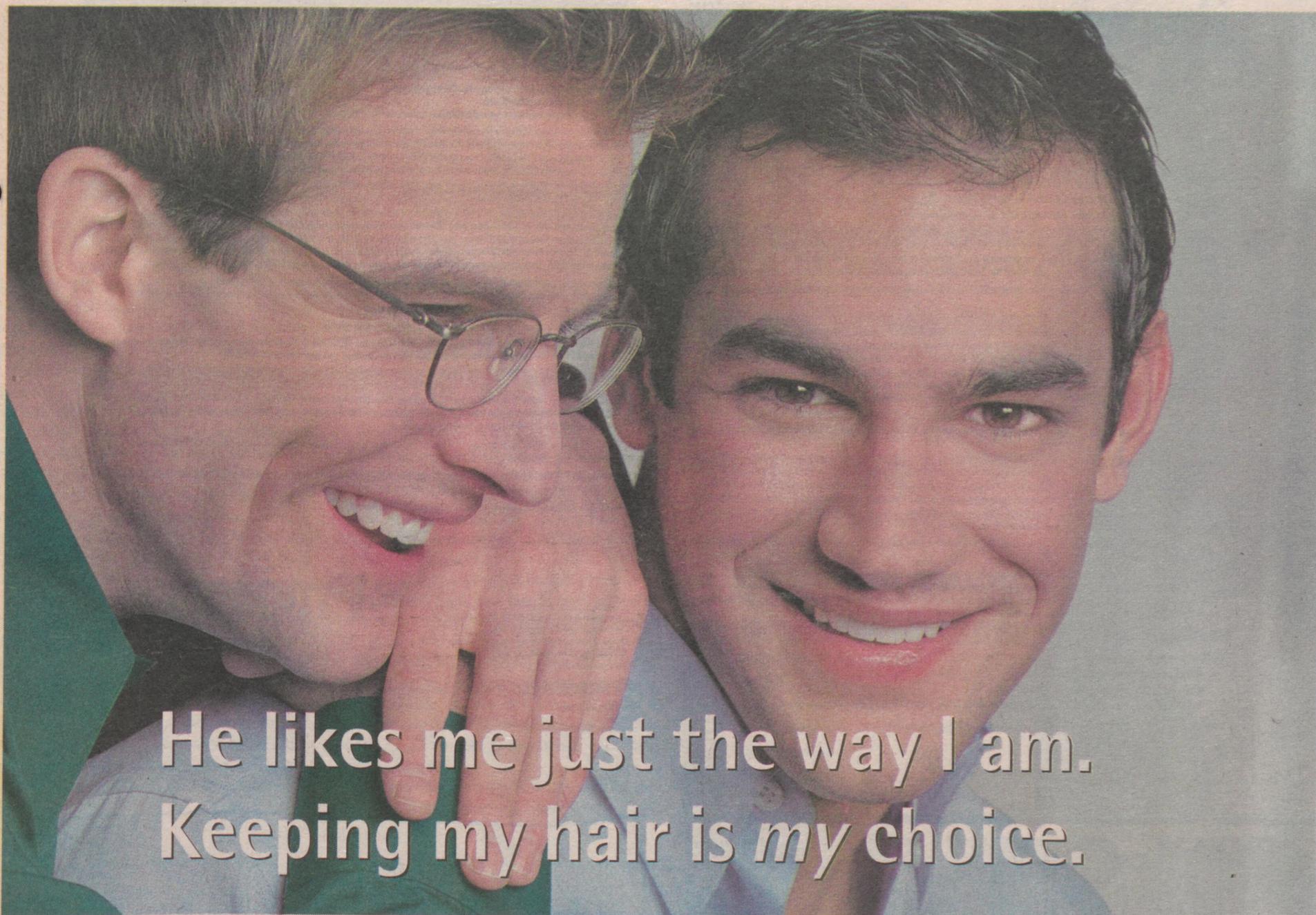
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INFO

And the Winner Is...

by R.H. Deer
Vantage Press, \$22.95



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PROPECIA is the first and only FDA-approved pill proven to treat male pattern hair loss on the vertex (top of the head) and anterior mid-scalp area in men.

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*Based on vertex studies at 2 years of men 18 to 41 with mild to moderate hair loss. There is not evidence that PROPECIA works for receding hairlines at the temples.

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Clinical tests showed PROPECIA was very well tolerated. Only a very small number of men had some sexual side effects, with each occurring in less than 2% of men. They included less desire for sex, difficulty in achieving an erection, and a decrease in the amount of semen. When the men who had these side effects stopped taking PROPECIA, the side effects went away.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION YOU SHOULD KNOW

PROPECIA is for men only. Women who are or may potentially be pregnant must not use PROPECIA because of the risk that the active ingredient may cause a specific kind of birth defect. (See accompanying Patient Product Information for details.) Likewise, they should avoid handling the tablets when they're crushed or broken. PROPECIA tablets are coated and will prevent contact with the active ingredient during normal handling.

WHEN YOU COULD SEE RESULTS

Take PROPECIA daily and you could see results in as little as three months. If you stop taking it, however, your results will gradually go away over twelve months. And if it hasn't worked in twelve months, it is unlikely to be of benefit.

For more information, call **1-888-806-3725** or visit our website at www.propecia.com/info.

PROPECIA is available by prescription only, **so the best thing to do is talk to your doctor.**

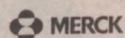
Know the facts. Many men do, which is probably why over 30,000 prescriptions for PROPECIA are filled each week.**

Please read the next page for additional information about PROPECIA.

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(finasteride)

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Patient Information about PROPECIA®
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PROPECIA is for use by MEN ONLY.**

Please read this leaflet before you start taking PROPECIA. Also, read the information included with PROPECIA each time you renew your prescription, just in case anything has changed. Remember, this leaflet does not take the place of careful discussions with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss PROPECIA when you start taking your medication and at regular checkups.

What is PROPECIA used for?

PROPECIA is used for the treatment of male pattern hair loss on the vertex and the anterior mid-scalp area. PROPECIA is for use by **MEN ONLY** and should **NOT** be used by women or children.

What is male pattern hair loss?

Male pattern hair loss is a common condition in which men experience thinning of the hair on the scalp. Often, this results in a receding hairline and/or balding on the top of the head. These changes typically begin gradually in men in their 20s. Doctors believe male pattern hair loss is due to heredity and is dependent on hormonal effects. Doctors refer to this type of hair loss as androgenetic alopecia.

Results of clinical studies:

For 12 months, doctors studied over 1800 men aged 18 to 41 with mild to moderate amounts of ongoing hair loss. All men, whether receiving PROPECIA or placebo (a pill containing no medication) were given a medicated shampoo (Neutrogena T/Gel**** Shampoo). Of these men, approximately 1200 with hair loss at the top of the head were studied for an additional 12 months. In general, men who took PROPECIA maintained or increased the number of visible scalp hairs and noticed improvement in their hair in the first year, with the effect maintained in the second year. Hair counts in men who did not take PROPECIA continued to decrease.

In one study, patients were questioned on the growth of body hair. PROPECIA did not appear to affect hair in places other than the scalp.

Will PROPECIA work for me?

For most men, PROPECIA increases the number of scalp hairs, helping to fill in thin or balding areas of the scalp. Men taking PROPECIA noted a slowing of hair loss during two years of use. Although results will vary, generally you will not be able to grow back all of the hair you have lost. There is not sufficient evidence that PROPECIA works in the treatment of receding hairline in the temporal area on both sides of the head.

Male pattern hair loss occurs gradually over time. On average, healthy hair grows only about half an inch each month. Therefore, it will take time to see any effect.

You may need to take PROPECIA daily for three months or more before you see a benefit from taking PROPECIA. PROPECIA can only work over the long term if you continue taking it. If the drug has not worked for you in twelve months, further treatment is unlikely to be of benefit. If you stop taking PROPECIA, you will likely lose the hair you have gained within 12 months of stopping treatment. You should discuss this with your doctor.

How should I take PROPECIA?

Follow your doctor's instructions.

- Take one tablet by mouth each day.
- You may take PROPECIA with or without food.
- If you forget to take PROPECIA, do **not** take an extra tablet. Just take the next tablet as usual.

PROPECIA will **not** work faster or better if you take it more than once a day.

Who should NOT take PROPECIA?

- PROPECIA is for the treatment of male pattern hair loss in **MEN ONLY** and should not be taken by women or children.
- Anyone allergic to any of the ingredients.

A warning about PROPECIA and pregnancy.

- Women who are or may potentially be pregnant:
 - must not use PROPECIA
 - should not handle crushed or broken tablets of PROPECIA.

If a woman who is pregnant with a male baby absorbs the active ingredient in PROPECIA, either by swallowing or through the skin, it may cause abnormalities of a male baby's sex organs. If a woman who is pregnant comes into contact with the active ingredient in PROPECIA, a doctor should be consulted. PROPECIA tablets are coated and will prevent contact with the active ingredient during normal handling, provided that the tablets are not broken or crushed.

What are the possible side effects of PROPECIA?

Like all prescription products, PROPECIA may cause side effects. In clinical studies, side effects from PROPECIA were uncommon and did not affect most men. A small number of men experienced certain sexual side effects. These men reported one or more of the following: less desire for sex; difficulty in achieving an erection; and, a decrease in the amount of semen. Each of these side effects occurred in less than 2% of men. These side effects went away in men who stopped taking PROPECIA. They also disappeared in most men who continued taking PROPECIA.

In general use, the following have been reported infrequently: allergic reactions including rash, itching, hives and swelling of the lips and face; problems with ejaculation; breast tenderness and enlargement; and testicular pain.

Tell your doctor promptly about these or any other unusual side effects.

- PROPECIA can affect a blood test called PSA (Prostate-Specific Antigen) for the screening of prostate cancer. If you have a PSA test done, you should tell your doctor that you are taking PROPECIA.

Storage and handling.

Keep PROPECIA in the original container and keep the container closed. Store it in a dry place at room temperature. PROPECIA tablets are coated and will prevent contact with the active ingredient during normal handling, provided that the tablets are not broken or crushed.

Do not give your PROPECIA tablets to anyone else. It has been prescribed only for you. Keep PROPECIA and all medications out of the reach of children.

THIS LEAFLET PROVIDES A SUMMARY OF INFORMATION ABOUT PROPECIA. IF AFTER READING THIS LEAFLET YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR ARE NOT SURE ABOUT ANYTHING, ASK YOUR DOCTOR.

1-800-830-7375, Monday through Friday, 8:30 A.M. TO 7:00 P.M. (ET).

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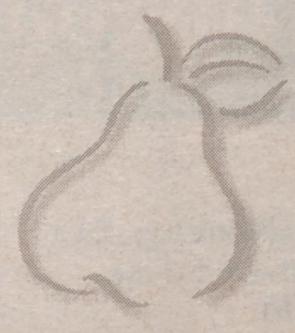
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Riding into the sunset

> Continued from page 17

a gay cowboy.

"I came out totally as a result of this film. I feel as if the weight of the world has been lifted off my shoulders. I don't have to make excuses anymore, or put on any facades for my family. I love myself openly, genuinely, completely, the way all gays and lesbians should feel about themselves. I think my only regret is that I didn't come out sooner. I kind of cheated my family out of some good years out of my life, but I'm a lot closer to my family as a result of this," Mikulenska said.

The rodeo circuit is hard on anybody, and things change, even for the gay competitors. Mikulenska's life has always centered around the ranch and the rodeo, but his varied jobs have included a lucrative modeling career, a spokesman for horse care products and the owner of a successful interior landscaping company in Houston.

Soon after the film premiered, Mikulenska broke up with his partner, and he politely, yet firmly, suggests that it's a subject he doesn't want to broach.

"I knew when I went into it [the movie] there would be a lot of pluses ... and minuses," he says in his soft south Texas drawl. "Maybe I wasn't quite prepared for all the publicity. I went through a lot after that situation. We've moved on, and I wish him well. Life goes on."

What hasn't changed for Mikulenska is his love and devotion to competition. He has enough ribbons, bowls and winning buckles to fill a Wells Fargo wagon. Because of his injury, he's given up riding "rough stock" (bulls and bareback), but still competes in the speed events, like pole bending, which he won this year at the prestigious Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

"I think some people thought from the film that I had retired totally, but only from the rough stock. I can't suffer another broken leg. I still have a plate with four pins in my leg that I'm having taken out this year," he said.

"American Cowboy" has been a success, but all the unexpected publicity and attention started to chafe. Performing at a rodeo in front of hundreds is part of the fun for most cowboys, and showing off is a ritual that Mikulenska always revels in, but after a while it got to be too much.

"I think I stayed in shock for a couple of years. I don't think that any of us involved in the film expected it to be as widely received. I was blown away," he said.

Mikulenska has since bought a ranch north of Houston, as much for seclusion as refuge.

"I love my privacy out here. It's great. I have an arena and barn and big ol' cat fish pond. And I've got all my horses and farm animals," he said.

"I'm enjoying a very private life now for the first time. I used to enjoy being in the lime-

light, but my direction has changed on that. I just do my horse shows and rodeos on weekends. I don't go out that much in the gay community. My life centers around my rodeo-in'. That's really the love of my life. I know my horses better than I do my lovers. No sequel here," Mikulenska said.

He rides in as many heterosexual rodeos and horse shows as gay ones, and has never experienced any adverse reactions. But it probably helps that he's a constant winner and mighty fine cowboy.

"I don't ever see myself getting out of this business. Sometimes I have to work a little harder at gaining people's respect, because for a lot of those people I'm the only openly gay person they may come in contact with. I've got to make a good impression," Mikulenska said.

But he's proud of his accomplishments, something that easily comes across in talking to him.

"One thing I've learned: if you act ashamed of who you are, and you're hiding with your hands over your eyes, people are going to treat you that way. And I just don't do it. I love my business, I love what I do, and right now life couldn't be better for me," Mikulenska said.



American Cowboy

April 7

7:30 p.m. and 8:45 p.m.

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

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INFO

Film fest offers eclectic take on the movies

by D.L. GROOVER

It's an eclectic mix the Museum of Fine Arts has gathered to screen under its "Greatest Hits" series. One or more of these just may be a favorite. All films are shown in the Caroline Wiess Law building, 1001 Bissonnet. What's included:

Blade Runner, March 24, 9:30 p.m. It's an ironic euphemism when "director's cut" means adding more footage. Here, Ridley Scott ("Alien") has had the gall to expand his sci-fi mess from 1982, when the kindest thing would have been to cut great swaths out of it. This film noir futuristic blood bath has all his cinematic trademarks: smoke, water cascading down walls and strobe lights. It also boasts a jaw-dropping awful performance by Harrison Ford, who sleepwalks through the rubble like one of the replicants he's trying to rub out; a raccoon-eyed Daryl Hannah performing gymnastic feats like Mary Lou Retton on uppers; and Rutger Hauer, a true replicant of an actor, who inexplicably takes off his clothes while chasing Ford, only to die holding a dove. Yet, it's a cult classic.

Gabbeh, March 25, 7:30 p.m. One of the truly gorgeous works of cinematography, Mohsen Makhmalbaf's Iranian fantasy is full of magic realism and ravishing color images. It tells the daily existence of nomadic tribes on the plains of Asia, which happens to

be the story woven into the rug that a bickering married couple wash by the stream. It's a mesmerizing combo of documentary life of Iranian sheep herders overlaid with surreal cinematic poetry in the telling of its story.

Flamenco, March 25, 9:30 p.m. This is probably the purest music video you're ever likely to see: a variety show of the best flamenco artists, old pros and rising artists, who perform their selections for us as if at a very fashionable soiree. Bathed and composed in the burnished lighting of Vittorio Storaro, who holds the patent on soft side light, the artists do their Andalusian numbers with raw intensity and deeply felt emotion. It's too bad we can't understand what they're keening about since there are no subtitles.

Visions of Light: The Art of Cinematography, March 31, 7:30 p.m. In the cinema, surely the most collaborative of the fine arts, if there's no light, there's no movie. Oftentimes, how these master magicians paint with light is more interesting and dramatic than the high jinks of the actors and directors trying to tell the story. This hodgepodge compilation manages to select the briefest and wrong clips from the wrong films to showcase the marvelous art of the lighting cameraman. It's a poor tribute. When "Jaws" is included as an example of the best in Hollywood photography, surely the compiler has stared too long into the klieg lights.

Picnic at Hanging Rock, March 31, 9:30 p.m. This

1979 film by Peter Weir did more to usher in the international resurgence of Australian cinema than any other down-under movie. It deserves the acclaim. A contingent of girls at a turn-of-the-century boarding school take a day-long picnic in the country out to the mysterious Hanging Rock. While there, watches stop at noon, strange noises are heard and three of the adolescents and one mathematics instructor vanish at the top of the crag. While a fascinating ghost story all on its own, the movie has subtle, and not too subtle, hints of sexual and societal repression, conformity, and propriety. It's beautifully crafted.

The Wages of Fear, April 1, 9:30 p.m. The first shots of scurrying cockroaches, a vulture, and a naked native boy playing amid the squalor of an unnamed South American town lets you know immediately that you're in for something different. Henri-Georges Clouzot, the French Hitchcock, made one of the most original suspense thrillers with this 1953 classic tale of down-on-their-luck bums whose only chance to escape their fate is to drive trucks of nitroglycerin to an oil refinery for the money to get out of town. With an electrifying star performance by a youthful Yves Montand, the two trucks start off on a perilous journey over useless roads, hair-pin turns on rickety bridges, an oil spilled crater, and other black-comedy obstacles. Meticulously shot and edited, the film will have you biting off your fingernails.

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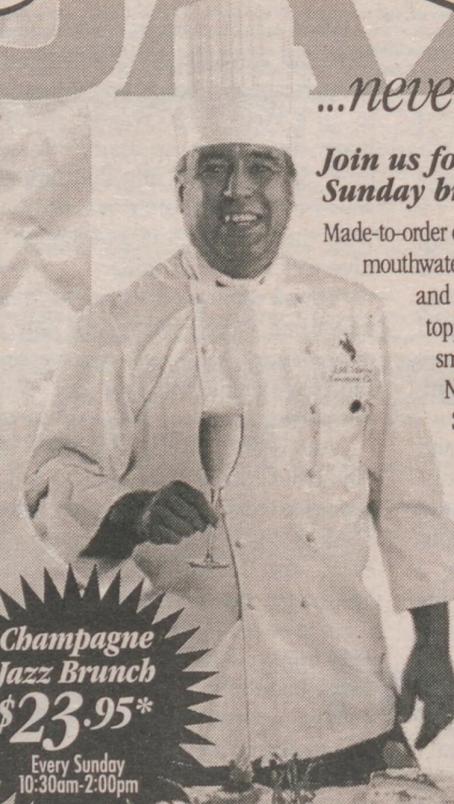
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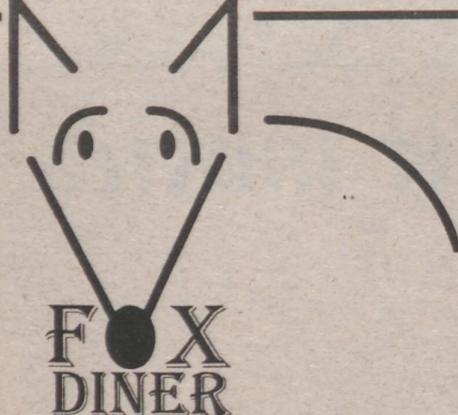
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| Friday, March 31 Morning Prayer 10am | Friday, April 7 Morning Prayer 10am | Friday, April 7 Morning Prayer 10am |
| | Saturday, April 8 Kolbe Breakfast Club 9:30am | Saturday, April 8 Kolbe Breakfast Club 9:30am |
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Eating Out

RESTAURANT REVIEWS

Foiled by the neon

by KATHREEN LEE

Houston's eateries tend to retire at night earlier than a seven-year-old, making a late-night meal a sometimes difficult item to come by. Fortunately, on just such an occasion, we stumbled across BIRRA-PORETTI'S and were relieved to see their small neon "Open Late" sign.

Awash in dark crimson furnishings and décor, along with an expansive bar section stretching across the length of one wall, Birraporetti's seems like an upscale sports bar. Touting itself as "A great Italian Restaurant" and "A heck of an Irish bar," Birraporetti's attempts to offer its customers a combination of culinary delights and good drinks. Unfortunately, the cuisine did not come anywhere near deserving its self-imposed "great" motto.

We started with an appetizer, the Birra's Seafood Sampler (\$7.95), served with gulf shrimp, crab cakes and fried Calamari. It arrives with both tomato based sauce and tartar sauce.

The greasy crab cakes crumbled easily and lacked flavor. The burnt batter on the Calamari clumped, leaving entire sections of the Calamari composed of nothing but the batter. The shrimp were large and meaty, but the platter was small and not worthwhile.

Another appetizer we tasted was the Italian Quesadilla (\$4.95), which is a grilled tortilla filled with Italian sausage, cheese

My friend ordered the chowder out of a desire for a creamy soup thick enough to chew. But the questionable 'chowder' had the consistency of dish water and the flavor of butter.

and green peppers, and served with grilled corn relish. The quesadillas were too cheesy, lacked an adequate amount of sausages and tasted like a shoddy sausage pan pizza.

And the grilled corn relish was really nothing more than common salsa mixed in with bits of corn.

My friend also ordered the Grilled Corn Chowder (\$2.95) out of a desire for a creamy soup thick enough to chew. But the questionable "chowder" had the consistency of dish water and the flavor of butter.

We were afraid to move onto the entrees after such an unfortunate start.

I ordered the Blackened Chicken Penne Pasta (\$9.95), served with sweet peppers, Andouille sausage and scallions in a tomato based sauce. While the helpings of chicken and sausage were plentiful, the majority of the sausage pieces were chunks of fat with some lean meat scattered about. The sauce was rather plain, making it an amateurish attempt at a commonly served Italian pasta dish.

My friend ordered the Grilled Atlantic Salmon Fillet (\$13.95), which is served with garlic whipped potatoes, sautéed green beans and basil glazed carrots. After the bad start with the appetizers, she was pleasantly surprised by the well balanced seasoning between the garlic and butter of the whipped potatoes, and praised it for its soft texture. But the salmon was dry and flaky.

Like some of the food, the service could also use an overhaul. Once seated, we waited about 20 minutes before our drink order had been taken. In a busy restaurant, you'd be more understanding. But on this visit, we were part of a sparse crowd.

If it wasn't so late at night and we had other restaurant options, Birraporetti's poor service combined with its mediocre cuisine would have prompted us to seek a meal elsewhere. But that's not a luxury you can enjoy at a late hour.



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THE Beauty TO BEAT!

> Continued from page 17

thing as a 'sure bet,'" said Spacey, already a proud owner of a Best Supporting Actor Oscar for his turn in "The Usual Suspects." "Even if you win every award before the Oscars, there's no guarantee you're a 'shoo-in.'"

Spacey is not just being modest. Almost as soon as he won the SAG award for Best Actor, reports began popping up on the Internet that he won the honor by the narrowest of margins. How true these rumors are is anyone's guess, but most industry insiders agree that Denzel Washington's portrayal as former boxer Ruben Carter in "The Hurricane" and Russell Crowe's turn as the real-life tobacco industry whistle blower in "The Insider" are proving to be Spacey's toughest competition.

Washington's and Crowe's critically-acclaimed performances may not be the only things going against Spacey this year. The scuttlebutt among the gay acting community is that his chances of repeating his win may be handicapped by the hoopla raised in the press last year over his sexual orientation.

"Even though these awards should be given to the person who did the best job, a lot of gay and lesbian actors are a little angry over his 'don't ask/don't tell' approach to admit-

ting whether he is gay or not," a gay Academy Award-voting member said.

It's a well-known fact that the majority of Academy members are also a conservative lot and have a tendency to vote that way. Films with gay themes or gay characters in lead roles haven't always fared well with the Academy.

This may explain why the dazzling "The Talented Mr. Ripley" secured only two nominations in the top categories. And this less-than-politically-correct attitude could definitely hurt Hilary Swank's (Best Actress) and Chloe Sevigny's (Best Supporting Actress) chances of winning for their flawless performances in "Boys Don't Cry," the big screen telling of the true life and death of Brandon Teena.

Swank's loss to Annette Bening ("American Beauty") and Sevigny to "Girl, Interrupted's" Angelina Jolie at the SAG awards surprised a lot of people, particularly "Boys Don't Cry" director Kimberly Pierce.

"I think most of us were shocked when Hilary and Chloe lost," said Pierce, who is openly gay. "They were, hands down, absolute favorites. I just hope that the SAG awards were a fluke and that they'll do well at the Oscars. But I don't know how much of that is just wishful thinking on my part."

Since the recipients of the Screen Actors Guild awards are selected by some of the same actors and actresses who are registered AMPAS voters, SAG winners usually end up taking home the Oscar, too. The SAG awards are a fairly accurate barometer for what might happen on March 26, but not entirely reliable. So Swank and Sevigny still having a fighting chance.

"I'm just happy that I was nominated—winning isn't everything," Swank said gra-



Jude Law (center) would like to take home an Oscar for his role in 'The Talented Mr. Ripley' with Matt Damon (left).

ciously. "'Boys Don't Cry' was such a small film and it's been an uphill battle since it was released to just have people go out and see it. The fact that we are even getting nominations means that people have begun to take notice of it, which is great."

Best Supporting Actor nominee Jude Law ("The Talented Mr. Ripley") isn't quite as diplomatic.

"I don't know about everyone else, but I'd like to win an Oscar, and I'm not ashamed to say it," Law said jokingly. "I mean, I think we'd all love to win one. Yeah, it's cool to be nominated, but it has to be a blast to actually say, 'Hi, I'm Jude Law, Academy Award-winner.' That has a nice ring to it, don't you think?"

Although the Screen Actors Guild awarded the Best Supporting Actor award to veteran Michael Caine ("The Cider House Rules"), Oscar watchers are predicting the real race is between Law and Tom Cruise for his unforgettable performance in "Magnolia."

Though "American Beauty" has chalked up eight nominations, it is not what most would call a typical Academy pick for Best Picture—it's not a costume drama or a period epic—but it's not too quirky or off-beat to snag the award.

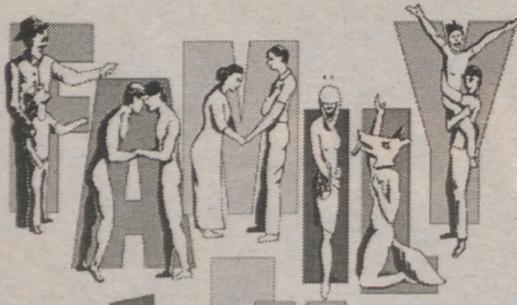
But challenger Miramax, the studio behind "The Cider House Rules," has been heavily promoting the film in the hopes of pulling off another upset victory like last year, when "Shakespeare In Love" knocked "Saving Private Ryan" out of the winner's circle.

Still, it's all speculation.

As Oscar-winner Christopher Walken once said, "Trying to predict who'll win a Academy Award is like trying to determine the exact day and time you're going to die—only one person really knows. But, you know, when it comes to the Oscars, I don't even know if He is privy to who the winners are before they are announced."

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Spring Fling hopes to raise \$50,000 for teen scholarships

by ROBERT B. HENDERSON

Gay-friendly state Rep. Harryette Ehrhardt will be the keynote speaker at an event organizers hope will help raise \$50,000 to support a scholarship program for gay and lesbian teens heading to college.

Spring Fling 2000, set for March 31, also includes a social hour, dinner and silent auction to raise funds for the PFLAG-H.A.T.C.H. Youth Scholarship Foundation, a two-year-old effort that has already granted \$85,000 in scholarships.

Proceeds of the silent auction go directly to a collaborative foundation between the two groups to fund the scholarships. Costs of the event have been underwritten, and items in the silent auction include tickets for arts events and restaurant packages.

During the event, entertainment may be provided by previous scholarship recipients, said Kevin Davidson, president of the board of H.A.T.C.H. and secretary of the scholarship foundation.

Ehrhardt, a state representative from Dallas, has introduced legislation to protect gay youth from harassment in schools and may offer similar bills when the Legislature convenes next year.

Spring Fling 2000 is the result of PFLAG

and the Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals joining together two years ago to raise funds for scholarships. PFLAG had awarded \$4,000 a year in scholarships, but H.A.T.C.H. also wanted to start a similar effort, but didn't want to duplicate what was already in place, Davidson said.

"Two years ago, we at H.A.T.C.H. thought having a scholarship would be a good idea," Davidson said. "We felt like there was no point in re-inventing the wheel, so we asked PFLAG to do a joint venture in creating a separate foundation."

"With the collaborative efforts between the two organizations in beginning this new foundation, we were then able to put our efforts toward fundraising and now put on this second annual fund-raiser," Davidson said.

The first year of the collaboration raised \$35,000 for scholarships; last year, \$50,000 in scholarships were awarded, Davidson said. Organizers hope to grant \$50,000 in awards this year.

In addition to Spring Fling 2000, Davidson said the foundation also wants to establish an endowment to sustain the scholarship program. Several contributors have already pledged large amounts from their life insurance policies, Davidson said.

Scholarships from the foundation are

geared toward gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth between the ages of 17 and 26, Davidson said. The maximum scholarship is \$2,500 per year.

The scholarships are based on "need, performance, contribution to the community—we look at all those things," he said.

"Some of (the applicants) don't understand. They expect it to be just for college. We are looking at anything. We will look if they have a seminar or session that helps skill-building. If they want to go to a trade school, we're looking at those sorts of things. We will fund those things. It's not just for four-year college. We want to look at all educational pursuits," Davidson said.

On March 30, a fund-raising reception will be held. For more information, call 713-523-1762. Admission is \$50.



State Rep. Harryette Ehrhardt will lead a March 31 event to raise funds for a local scholarship fund for gay and lesbian youth.

INFO

Spring Fling 2000

Dinner and silent auction

March 31, 7 p.m.

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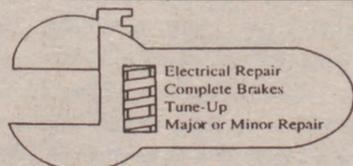


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community calendar

saturday, march 25

After Hours. KPFT 90.1 FM. 12 a.m. to 3 a.m. 713-526-5738.
Q-Patrol walks the streets 8:45 p.m. 713-528-SAFE.
Visual Arts Alliance. 10 a.m. 281-583-8408.
Dignity mass. 7:30 p.m. for Gay Catholics. 713-880-2872.
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Rosary 8 a.m. 1805 W. Alabama. 713-528-6665.
Houston Chain Gang Bicycle Club. 713-863-1860.
Rainbow Fishing Club. 713-526-7070.
Houston Lesbian and Gay drop-in hours from noon to 4 p.m. 713-524-3818. Montrose Writer's Project. 3 to 4:30 p.m. 803 Hawthorne. 713-956-1866.
First Art Festival of the New Millennium. 800-670-8183.
"The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe," fund-raiser performance for Camp Hope at 1:30 p.m. AD Players. 713-524-0199.

sunday, march 26

New Hope Christian Center Worship Service. 11 a.m. 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.
Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals meets. 713-942-7002.
Rainbow Riders. A bicycle club for women. 713-869-1686.
Church of the XII Apostles Anglican Rite Old Catholic Church. Holy Communion 10:30 a.m. 239 Westheimer. 713/665-7903.
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Holy Rite Eucharist I 7:45 a.m.; Holy Rite Eucharist II 8:55 a.m.; Education hour 10 a.m.; Choral Eucharist 11 a.m. 1805 W. Alabama. 713-528-6665.
Maranatha Fellowship Metropolitan Church. "Preaching the Gospel" Bible study 9:30 p.m. 713-528-6756.
Resurrection MCC. Services. 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. 713-861-9149.
Grace Lutheran Church. Sunday school for all ages 9:30 a.m. Service 10:30 a.m. 713-528-3269.
First Unitarian Universalist Church. Services 9:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Community Gospel. Service at 11 a.m.; 7 p.m. Sunday School for children. 4305 Lillian. 713-880-9235 or www.communitygospel.org.
Houston Mission Church. Service 10:30 a.m. 713-529-8225.
Covenant Baptist Church. Service 1:30 p.m.; education hour 3 p.m. 713-668-8830.
Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. Services at 8:30 a.m., 10:50 a.m. Sunday school 9:40 a.m. 713-526-1017.
Resurrection MCC Handbell Choir rehearsal 1:30 p.m. 713-861-9149.
The Women's Group. 10:45 a.m. 713-529-8571.
Unitarian Fellowship of Galveston County. 402 Church St. in Galveston. Service 10:30 a.m. 409-765-8330.
Faith and Hope Fellowship. Service at 11 a.m. 713-520-7847.
First Congregational Church (Memorial). Service at 11 a.m. 713-468-9543 or fcc-houston.org.
Church of Kindred Spirits (Beaumont). Service 7 p.m. 409-835-4765.

Unitarian Fellowship of Houston. Adult forum 10 a.m. Service 11 a.m. and noon. Open Circle Family Support 12:30 p.m. 1504 Wirt. 713-686-5876.
Interfaith Worship Celebration. 7 p.m. 2515 Waugh Dr. 713-528-3601.
Thoreau Unitarian Universalist Congregation: Adult discussion 9:45 a.m.; service 11 a.m. 3945 Greenbriar. Stafford. 281-277-8882. www.tuuc.org.
Houston Tennis Club. 9 a.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. 713-868-5039.
Montrose Ice Picks. Galleria. 5 p.m. 713-629-1432.
Lenten Scripture Study Kolbe Project. 6 p.m. 713-861-1800.
Bears on the Bayou go gambling. 9 a.m. www.bearsonthebayou.com.
Oscar Party of Montrose. Academy Awards Party. 6:30 P.M. 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

monday, march 27

Gay Fathers/Fathers First support group, 8 p.m. 713-861-6181.
Calendar/Computer workshop for Pride Week. 7 p.m. 713-529-1223.
Bering Support Network. Grief and Divorce Groups 7 p.m. 713-526-1017.
Frost Eye Clinic. Free eye exams for people with HIV. 713-830-3000.
AIDS Caregivers' Support Group. 6 p.m. 713-732-4300.
HIV testing. Free from AVE5 from 1 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. 713-626-2837.
FrontRunners. 6:30 p.m. 713-522-8021.
Kolbe Project. Eucharist 7:30 p.m. 713-861-1800.
Integrity Houston. For gay and lesbian Episcopalians. 7:30 p.m., Autry House, 6265 Main.
More Light Presbyterians. Meeting. 1110 Lovett. 9:30 p.m. 281-444-8861 X309.
AIDS Foundation Houston Creative Writing Class. 3 p.m. 713-623-6996.
gayDAR. Wellness community. 7 p.m. 713-526-1017 X211.
Black Lesbian and Gay Coalition's weekly meeting 7 p.m.
Houston Lesbian and Gay Community drop-in hours from 6 to 9 p.m. 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.
Gay & Lesbian Readers Group. 7 p.m. Barnes & Noble. 713-349-0050.
Stonewall Democrats. 7 p.m. 608 West Gray. www.stonewall-houston@hotmail.com.

tuesday, march 28

Helping Cross Dressers Anonymous. 7 p.m. 239 Westheimer. 713-495-8009.
Gay Men HIV+ Psychotherapy. Montrose Counseling Center. 4:30 p.m. 713-529-0037.
Youth-Rap. 6:30 p.m. 713-822-8511.
Aftercare Group Treatment. Montrose Counseling Center 6 p.m. 713-529-0037.

AIDS Alliance of the Bay Area. 7 p.m. 713-488-4492.
PROTECT. An HIV-negative support group 7 p.m. 713-526-1017.
Women Survivors of Childhood Abuse. Montrose Counseling Center 6:30 p.m. 713-529-0037.
Bering Support Network. Lunch Bunch Gang 11 a.m. 713-526-1017.
Gay Men's Process Group. 7 p.m. 3316 Mt. Vernon. 713-526-8390.
Men's Network. Discussion group for social, educational development of gay and bisexual men. 7 p.m. Montrose Counseling Center. 713-529-0037.
More on Relationships. Discussion group. 7 p.m. 415 W. Gray. 713-861-9149.
Lambda Skating Club skates at 8 p.m. Tradewinds. 713-523-9620.
Gay & Bi Male Support Group support group forming. Sponsored by AVE5. 713-626-2837.
Houston Lesbian and Gay Community Center drop-in hours 6 to 9 p.m. Lesbian Coming Out Group meets 7 p.m. Lesbians Island Young Women's Group meets 7 p.m. Community Center monthly board meeting. 7 p.m. 803 Hawthorne. 713-528-3818.
Book of the Month Discussion. 7 p.m. Kolbe Project. 713-861-1800.

wednesday, march 29

Free HIV Testing. Thomas Street Clinic. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. 2015 Thomas Street 713-793-4026.
BiNet Houston. 7:30 p.m. Social meeting. 713-467-4380
Women's Network. 7 p.m. Montrose Counseling Center, 701 Richmond. 713-529-0037.
HIV survivor support group. 7 p.m. 713-782-4050.
Mind/Body Connection: Alternative Approaches. 7 p.m. 1475 W. Gray. 713-524-2374.
Project: Caesar. 7 p.m. AFH. 3203 Wesleyan. 713-623-6796.
Out Skate Rollerskating Club. 8 to 10 p.m. 8075 Cook Road. 281-933-5818.
HAMS Motorcycle Club meets for coffee. 713-688-1300 or hams1999@yahoo.com
Rainbow Ringers free C&W dance lessons. Brazos River Bottom. 7 p.m. 713-880-0670.
Houston Pride Band. All skill levels. 7:15 p.m. 713-522-4282 or www.houstonprideband.org.
Hospital Volunteer Training. Kolbe Project. 1 to 4 p.m. 713-861-1800.
Free HIV testing by the Montrose Clinic 6 to 9 p.m. Houston Lesbian and Gay Community Center drop-in hours 6 to 9 p.m. 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.
Houston Gay & Lesbian Parents. Mail out. 7 p.m. www.gredworth@analysts.com.

thursday, march 30

Art Labs. The Art League. 1 p.m. 713-225-9411.
Gay Men's Chorus of Houston. Open rehearsal. 7 p.m. 713-521-7464.
HIV+ Men Psychotherapy. Montrose Counseling Center. 1:15

p.m. 713-529-0037.
Relapse Prevention. Montrose Counseling Center. 2 p.m. 713-529-0037.
Aftercare Group Treatment. Montrose Counseling Center. 6 p.m. 713-529-0037.
Women's Therapy Group. Montrose Counseling Center. 5:30 p.m. 713-529-0037.
Center for the Healing of Racism. 7:30 p.m. 713-738-RACE.
FrontRunners. 6:30 p.m. 713-522-8021.
HIV Art Course Program. 1 to 4 p.m. Patrick Palmer 713-526-1118.
Women's Clinic. Montrose Clinic. 713-830-3000.
Faith and Hope Fellowship. Bible study. 7 p.m. 713-520-7847.
Twenty Something Rap Session. 7:30 p.m. 713-315-6786.
Open Mike Night. Cafe Artist. 8 p.m. 713-528-3704.
Community Gospel. Service. 7:30 p.m. 713-880-9235 or www.communitygospel.org.
HIV/AIDS Support Group. 2:30. Family Service Center. 713-861-4849.
Women's HIV/AIDS Support Group. 4:30 p.m. Family Service Center. 713-247-3810.
HIV/AIDS Support Group. 7 p.m. Family Service Center. 888-247-3810.
Yoga at Body Positive. 6:30 p.m. \$5. 713-524-2374.
Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Alliance at the University of Houston (GLOBAL) meets at 4 p.m. 713-743-7539.
Houston Lesbian and Gay Community Center drop-in hours 6 to 9 p.m. 713-524-3818.
EC Houston. Pro-Gay. Pro-Christian Bible Study. 7:30 p.m. 800-310-6718, Box 24253.

friday, march 31

Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals (H.A.T.C.H.) meets. 713-942-7002.
Aftercare Group Treatment. Montrose Counseling Center. 6 p.m. 713-529-0037.
Frost Eye Clinic. Free eye exams for people with HIV. 713-830-3000.
Q-Patrol walks the streets. 8:45 p.m. 713-528-SAFE.
Kolbe Project. Morning Prayer. 10 a.m. Park Plaza Hospital visitation. at 7 p.m. 713-861-1800.
Positive Art Workshop. 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Patrick Palmer. 713-526-1118.
Lesbian and Gay Voices. KPFT 90.1 FM. 7 p.m. 713-526-5738.
Life Begins at 40. Discussion. 8 p.m. 1440 Harold. 713-526-1017.
Mishpachah Alizim Shabbat Services. 8 p.m. 713-748-7079.
Co-dependents Anonymous. 7:30 p.m. MCCR. 713-861-9149.
Men's Coming Out Group. 7 p.m. 713-524-3818.
Houston Lesbian and Gay Community Center drop-in hours 6 to 9 p.m. 713-524-3818.
Healing Eucharist. Christ Church Cathedral. 7 p.m. 1117 Texas. 713-222-2593.

To list an event, call Carolyn Roberts at 713-529-8490, fax at 713-529-9531, or e-mail editor@houstonvoice.com. Deadline is Friday at 5 p.m.

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Occasions

Birthdays

Belated birthday cheers to Val Rodelo of Guava Lamp.
Ken L. celebrates his birthday in style on March 24.
Jim Halbert has a crowning birthday on March 24.
Charles, the fabu Dad and old barkeep of Bacchus, has a birthday on March 25.
Singing sensation and song writer Andrew Flores hits a high note on his birthday on March 25.
Steve Wincheski, called Hazel by his friends, blows out his birthday candles on March 27.
Sweet Mama Cotton belts out another birthday on March 28.
Sweet, lovable, warm and fuzzy Bear gives big bear hugs for his birthday on March 29.



Local frenchman Philippe Le Sager is keeping his age 'top secret' on his upcoming birthday on March 30.



Gibson, a striped orange Tabby, is 9-weeks old. He's friendly like his brother and extremely curious. Contact the Houston Humane Society at 713-434-5555 or pr@houstonhumane.org.

The Houston Voice welcomes your special occasions. Send e-mail to croberts@houstonvoice.com. Fax: 713-529-9531. Mail: Occasions, Houston Voice, 500 Lovett Blvd., Suite 200, Houston, Texas 77006. Please include a telephone number so occasions can be verified and considered for publication.



Past Out

GAY AND
LESBIAN HISTORY

by DAVID BIANCO

The throne's closet doors

Who were the gay kings and queens of England?

There have been many "queens" in British history and culture, like Oscar Wilde and Noel Coward. But there have also been several British monarchs whose lives gay historians now read as queer.

Both Renaissance playwright Christopher Marlowe and 20th-century filmmaker Derek Jarman produced artistic works that explored the queerness of King Edward II. Born in 1284, Edward was tall and handsome, but also notoriously lazy and weak.

He had a favorite, Piers Gaveston, a knight from Gascony in France who came to court while Edward was still Prince of Wales. The two young men became so close that Edward was said to love Gaveston "beyond measure and reason." Edward's father expelled Gaveston from court because of their "excessive" and "inordinate" attachment to each other. But when Edward assumed the throne in 1307, he brought Gaveston back as his trusted adviser.

As king, Edward relied on Gaveston more heavily than he did on British lords, even allowing Gaveston to rule in his place during one of his excursions abroad. This over-reliance on a foreigner angered many British nobles.

A cadre of nobles twice forced Edward to expel Gaveston, but each time, the king managed to bring his favorite back. In 1312, a group of lords kidnapped Gaveston, beheaded him and ran a sword through his body. Though Edward ruled another 15 years, he was eventually deposed by Parliament and later brutally murdered.

Two centuries later, in 1566, Mary, Queen of Scots gave birth to her only child, James. When Protestant Scottish lords forced the Roman Catholic Mary from the throne, James succeeded her as king of Scotland at the age of 13 months. In 1603, when Queen Elizabeth I, a close relation, died childless, he became king of England, too, as James I. He later gave his name to the official translation of the Bible known as the "King James Version."

Though he married and fathered seven children, James's deepest affections were reserved for a succession of handsome male favorites. The first was Esme Stuart, a cousin, who arrived at court in 1579 and captured the teenage king's heart. James gave Stuart, who was in his 30s, money, land, and a series of impressive titles.

Stuart was viewed by Elizabeth and by many Scottish lords with suspicion because he was both French and Catholic. In 1582, a group of powerful nobles held James a virtual captive at a northern castle until the 16-year-old agreed to dismiss Lennox, which he did. But throughout his reign, James continued to find favorites on whom to lavish titles and privilege.

George Villiers was one of the favorites of the latter part of James's rule. When Villiers came to court as a 23-year-old in 1614, one



King Edward I and Queen Anne were two English monarchs who enjoyed the intimate company of same-sex friends.

contemporary source called him "the handsomest-bodied man of England; his limbs so well compacted and his conversation so pleasing and of so sweet a disposition."

Villiers' nice legs reportedly caught James's eye, too. Created the Duke of Buckingham by the king, Villiers held a series of powerful posts at court, including "Gentleman of the Bedchamber," which required his close attendance on James.

Other nobles hated Buckingham for his ability to control the king and influence decisions. More than just a pretty face, Buckingham was a powerful figure who brought many of his friends and family members into positions at court.

Queens, too, could have their favorites. Anne, the great-granddaughter of James I, was born in 1665. She and her older sister Mary, who were Protestant, acquiesced in the deposing of their Catholic father, James II, in the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688.

From childhood, Anne had a passionate friendship with Sarah Jennings. Despite the fact that both young women married—Anne to Prince George of Denmark, with whom she had 17 children, and Sarah to John Churchill, a forebear of Winston—Anne displayed a fierce devotion to Sarah that bordered on obsession.

During Mary's reign, John Churchill was accused of treason for corresponding with the deposed King James, and he and Sarah were expelled from court, despite Anne's feverish protests to her sister. When Anne succeeded Mary to the throne in 1702, she quickly brought the Churchills back from exile as her advisers.

All three of these monarchs lived long before there was a conscious gay identity. But their passionate and single-minded devotion to favorites of their own gender—devotion that even in their own eras was perceived as odd—makes them stand out as queer ancestors.

David Bianco is the author of "Gay Essentials," a collection of his history columns. He can be reached at DaveBianco@aol.com.

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Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center

is seeking volunteers to staff the facility in more extended hours. If organizations and individuals are interested, please contact Kevin Davidson at 713.524.3818 to discuss how you can help.

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is a non-profit organization that seeks to empower those with HIV infection, through nutrition chiropractic services, yoga, and peer counseling. If you are interested in participation or volunteering, we want to speak with you! Visit our website at www.bodypositive.org or call 713.524.2374.

RYAN WHITE PLANNING COUNCIL

is looking for volunteers to serve on the council. The primary responsibility of the council is to determine what services are most needed. Last year's Council received over \$17 million from the federal government for use in the greater Houston area. Your participation DOES make a difference. Contact Tori Williams at 713.572.3724 or email www.rwpc.org.

The PFLAG/HATCH Scholarship Foundation's dinner and celebration will be held on Friday, March 31 at the Warwick Hotel. The evening will include a social hour with a silent auction, followed by dinner and presentations by some of the scholarship recipients. The fund raising goal for the millennium year is \$100,000. For more information about the Foundation and the scholarship program see www.pflaghouston.org/scholarship.htm.

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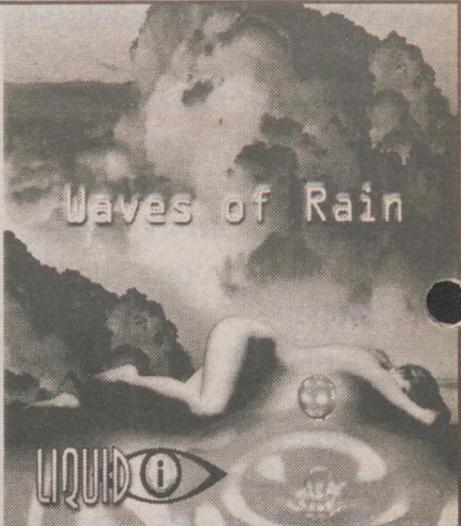
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March 24 - 30

ARIES (MARCH 21 - APRIL 20)

You and a business associate could go head-to-head in late March. Don't back down; you've worked too hard to get where you are. This is a time to live life to the fullest. So please, no emotional (or financial) withholding. A Taurus needs plenty of reassurance.

TAURUS (APRIL 21 - MAY 21)

Your family might try to push your buttons in late March, but don't let them. Show nothing. Instead, work out your demons with a qualified shrink, sexologist or both. Try to get in touch with your old longings: they'll lead you to your lover. A Capricorn will listen to whatever you have to say.

GEMINI (MAY 22 - JUNE 21)

You're on a real roll, honey. Your friends have hooked you up with the right connections; now it's up to you to follow through. You really can improve both your community and your career if you pick battles you believe in. An Aquarius wants to throw a victory party for you. Do something to earn it.

CANCER (JUNE 22 - JULY 23)

Mars is nuzzling up to Jupiter in your friendship house, so don't be afraid of one of those "sex-friendly" relationships you usually abhor. An old lover could actually be of some use to you (for once) with a career connection that proves helpful. A Scorpio is threatened by your emotional baggage, but enamored of the rest of you.

LEO (JULY 24 - AUG. 23)

You can change the way you do business socially by mixing business and pleasure more often. You need to get feistier and more physical: be sure you don't lose your life force. You could find the meaning of life when you ride a Taurus (no, not the car).

VIRGO (AUG. 24 - SEPT. 23)

Get ready for some bizarre surprises in your love life as April Fool's Day approaches. You need to face a demon from your past and finally feel unafraid. But first put some energy into a romantic relationship (especially with a Cancer) that has "future" written all over it.

LIBRA (SEPT. 24 - OCT. 23)

The emotional moon meets imaginative Neptune in your house of creativity on March 30—a good time to work through a powerful insecurity you've felt for years. If you do what you most deeply desire, you could achieve major success and happiness. A Gemini is fighting for you, not against you.

SCORPIO (OCT. 24 - NOV. 22)

Life is full of many decisions during late March. You'll make the right ones, but get some realistic feedback from a couple of your more sane friends. Sexy Mars in your house of love is giving you that old burning feeling, especially when a Pisces is within 20 feet.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 23 - DEC. 22)

You have every right to feel secure about what you have, no right to play mind games with the people who are most loyal. Kids and teens are unusually lucky for you now. Maybe you need to work with them more, or maybe start a family. A Capricorn may have long-term plans for the both of you.

CAPRICORN (DEC. 23 - JAN. 20)

Late March is all about prioritizing. What's really important to you? Where do you want to live? Who do you want to sleep with—for life? (A Leo might be a good answer to that last question.) Forgive someone who's dissed you, especially if it's a family member; you're all grown up now.

AQUARIUS (JAN. 21 - Feb. 19)

You are in a highly creative and original cycle, so please do something with those great ideas. Collaborating with a Libra brings out the best in you. You have more going on upstairs than most people could even wish. But downstairs, you need to give your libido the attention it's craving.

PISCES (FEB. 20 - MARCH 20)

You may not actually be ready for intimacy and commitment just yet; first try on a few different lovers for size. In your work life, you'd do well to play the role of the strong, silent type. Gather as much information as you can before making a move. (Then make a move on an Aries.)

Jill Dearman is the author of "Queer Astrology for Men" and "Queer Astrology for Women." For information on charts and consultations, call 212-841-0177 or e-mail QScopes@aol.com.

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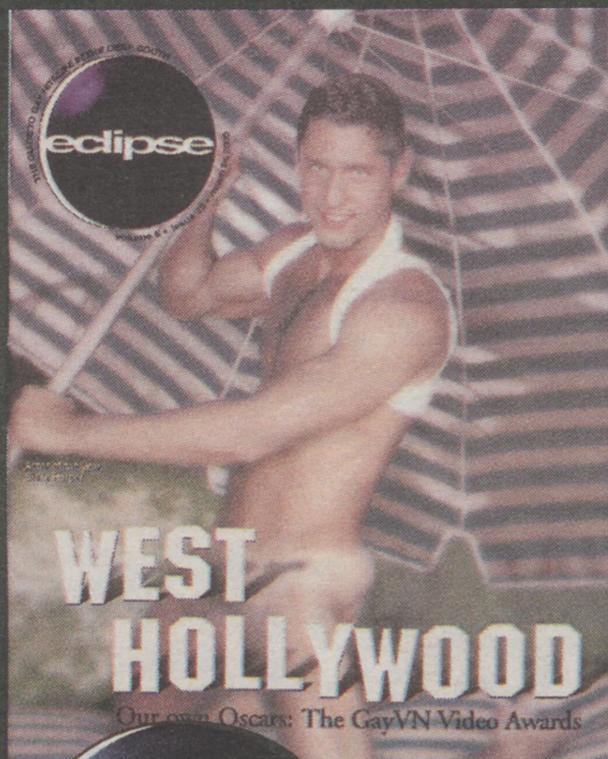
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Ordinary people, not athletes, doing the AIDS Ride? Impossible.

In fact, most have never done anything like this in their lives. Many don't even own bikes when they register. It's not a race. It's not competitive. It's cooperative.

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Since 1994, Tanqueray's AIDS Rides USA have sent over \$62 million directly back to AIDS charities. The money you raise in 2000 will benefit AIDS service organizations throughout the Lone Star State. You will be funding hotlines, outreach, caring counselors, educational programs, and life-sustaining HIV medications. You will be making life possible again for so many people.

Me, living in a tent, roughing it, in the great outdoors? Impossible.

Wait'll you see our spectacular Mobile CitySM, the place you call home. We haul your luggage, provide your tent, and supply everything from hot showers, volunteer massage and chiropractic services to delicious breakfasts and dinner. And we help you get through each day—with roving bike techs at pit stops, where water, snacks, and lunch also await. People have consistently said that the AIDS Ride is the best-organized event they've ever been part of.

I don't think I could even ride 25 miles. 325 miles? Impossible.

The Ride's not easy. You'll have to train. But we'll help you with that. And the fact that the Ride is tough and challenging is where most people find the meaning in it.

Sounds impossible. I'll have to think about it...

The decision will never get easier. Nothing's going to change three days from now. Come on, don't you want to be out there on a training ride? One phone call, one visit to our website, opens up a whole new chapter in your life. And the life of someone living with AIDS.

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