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Time it was
Time to remember the
first-ever gay protest
outside the Whitehouse
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APRIL 8, 2005

MARRIAGE BILL: It now
bans civil unions. Page 3



LOSS IN KANSAS: Muller,
gays lose in Kansas. Page 5



AWARD FOR DEAN: Some
question his stance. Page 6



Mixed emotions for gay Catholics

Millions mourn pope who opposed gay rights

By EARTHA MELZER

Many gay Catholics are reflecting with mixed emotions this week on the life and legacy of Pope John Paul II, uplifted by his dedication to world peace yet disappointed by his staunch opposition to gay rights and same-sex marriage.

John Paul II, who died on April 2, led the Catholic Church for 26 years and was the longest reigning pope in recent history.

Some observers believe that the pope's strict traditionalist views had to do with his experience leading a church within a communist state — he was a cardinal in communist Poland. As such, he was isolated from the liberalizing forces that were impacting the Catholic Church in other countries.

"He has set us back to the early '60s," said Daniel Helminiak, a former Roman Catholic priest and author of "What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality."

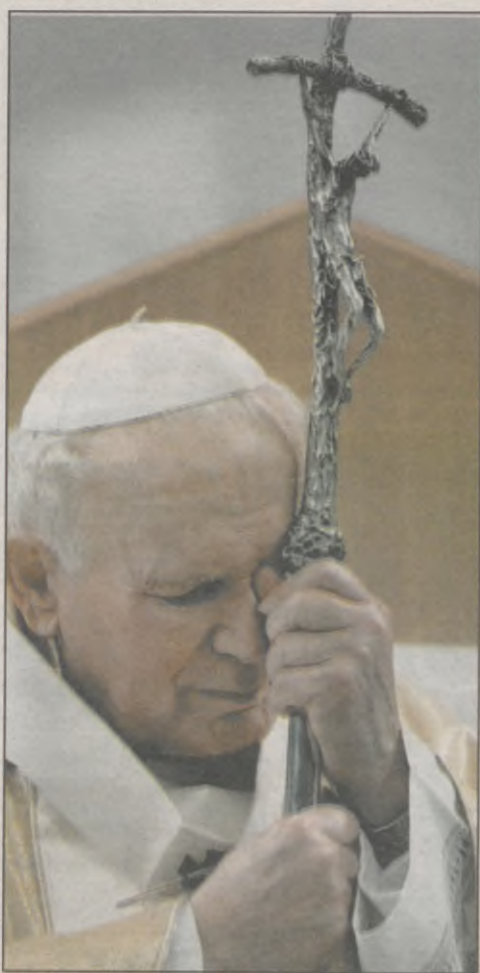
Helminiak, who is gay, is now a psychology professor at the State University of West Georgia. He left the priesthood after 28 years in part because of the church's teachings on sexuality.

John Paul II "institutionalized all of the restrictions very solidly. They can be changed but it'll take some doing," Helminiak said. "And eventually they will be changed, I'm absolutely convinced, because they're totally foolish, totally off base. But he's set the process back decades."

While the pope spoke out for peace in the Middle East and apologized for some past mistakes of the Catholic Church, he rigidly upheld the church position that sex was for procreation only.

The pope called homosexuality "evil," and used his position as head of the Catholic Church to oppose the use of condoms as birth control or to curtail the spread of AIDS. Especially the latter years of his papacy, John Paul exerted significant political pressure against gay rights and any form of secular recognition of gay relationships, from domestic partnerships to civil unions and marriage.

Please see **POPE** on Page 7



During his 26-year reign, Pope John Paul II wrote a letter calling homosexuality evil and fought the use of condoms in curtailing the spread of HIV and AIDS. (Photo by Domenico Stinellis/AP)



Award-winning basketball coach Merry Stephens faced harassment in the Bloomberg School District because she is a lesbian.

Award winning lesbian coach settles discrimination case

Basketball coach Merry Stephens was subjected to harassment at school because she is a lesbian

By BINNIE FISHER

Merry Stephens was named Teacher of the Year in Bloomberg, Tex in 2004 and Coach of the Year in three out of five years in her tenure as head coach of the Lady Wildcats basketball team, but suddenly all that no longer mattered.

There came a point about two years ago when her work wasn't good enough, and the Bloomberg School District began proceedings to terminate her employment.

What had gone wrong?

Shannon Minter, legal director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), said there was an explanation. Stephens

Please see **COACH** on Page 4



local life
When Equality Knocks,
supporters of equal rights for
gays and lesbians are often found.
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dish
The Village Voice dumped a
load of gay gossip but left
readers to name the suspects.
PAGE 19





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local news briefs



Auctioneer Renee Jones Introligator, Master of Ceremonies and Channel 2 Chief Meteorologist Frank Billingsley, actress Sharon Gless and Maria Todd from KRBE all posed for a photo when the program concluded at the HRC Gala.

HRC Gala goes down as group's most successful

The annual gala staged Saturday night by the Human Rights Campaign's Houston chapter will go down as the most successful yet, according to the three chairpersons for the event. In addition to drawing more than 1,000 guests, the event grossed more than \$220,000, with \$93,000 of that coming from the silent and live auctions. The theme for the 2005 gala, held at the downtown Hilton Americas Hotel, was "Masquerade." The featured guest was actress Sharon Gless, who plays Debbie Novotny on Showtime's 'Queer as Folk.' Gless, who was presented with the Humanitarian Award, chatted with guests and posed for photographs prior to the start of the dinner.

'The After Party' is seeking audience members each week

"The After Party," the new Houston PBS arts and entertainment talk show is looking for people to make up the audience each week. Hosted by Ernie Manouse, the show airs at 11 p.m. Wednesdays. Each week, the audience is made up of 20 people who come in a group. Drama clubs, arts groups and other community groups are encouraged to participate. Groups must consist of 20 persons. Audience members are expected to show up at Houston PBS on the University of Houston campus no later than 1:30 p.m. Wednesdays (1 p.m. if they wish to tour the studios before taping begins.) Taping is completed by 2:45 p.m. To book a group, e-mail Manouse at Ernie@HoustonPBS.org and include the name of the person making the request, name of the group, contact information and available dates.

Montrose Counseling Center assists victims of crimes

The week of April 10 has been designated Crime Victims' Rights Week, and the Montrose Counseling Center wants to make Houstonians aware that it has programs to assist victims of violent crime. The center's Anti-Violence Program helps victims of violent crimes including sexual assault, domestic violence and hate crimes file for Crime Victims Compensation through the Texas Attorney General's Office. The State of Texas provides up to \$50,000 for individuals who qualify, but the crime must be reported to police as quickly as possible, preferably within 72 hours. In addition to its other services, Montrose Counseling Center provides counseling and case management services to

victims of violent crime. Information regarding crime victim's assistance is available at www.oag.state.tx.us/victims. Further information on services offered through the center's Anti-Violence Program is available at 713-529-0037.

Banned in Singapore but not in Houston

The gay singing duo of Jason and deMarco, recently banned from performing in Singapore, will perform at 7 p.m. April 17 during Bering Memorial United Methodist Church's annual AprilFest. AprilFest at the church, 1440 Harold St., kicks off with the annual 2nd Blessings Rummage Sale from 7 a.m.-2 p.m. this Friday and Saturday. Church members have brought household goods, furniture, clothes and more to help raise funds for the church. AprilFest closes with a Carnival and Pancake Breakfast from 7:30-Noon April 30. Cost for the event is \$6 for adults and \$4 for children 5-12. Admission to the Jason and deMarco concert is \$10. The government of Singapore denied a request for the pair to sing at a concert to raise money for AIDS charities because they celebrate a "gay lifestyle." www.jasonanddemarco.com.

Sir Elton helps HGO celebrate its 50th

Elton John, Renee Fleming and lesbian soprano Patricia Racette will be among the celebrities to help Houston Grand Opera celebrate its 50th birthday April 30. The party gets underway at 8 p.m. at Wortham Center. Individual tickets are \$250 and \$500. www.houstongrandopera.org.

From staff and wire reports

local news

Committee is still considering proposed marriage amendment

HJR-6 now contains language that would also ban civil unions

By JIM NULL

The Texas House Committee on State Affairs is expected to vote as early as Monday on House Joint Resolution 6, a bill that would not only ban same-sex marriage in Texas but would also outlaw "contractual agreements" designed to afford legal protections to unmarried couples.

The committee last Monday conducted a public hearing on the resolution introduced by State Rep. Warren Chisum (R-Pampa).

Although Chisum initially proposed a constitutional amendment that would define marriage as being between one man and one woman, he later amended it to include the "contractual agreements" wording.

The hearing began at 2 p.m. Monday and ran well into the evening as mainly opponents of the amendment showed up to testify.

The 100-seat capacity chamber was filled to overflowing as Chisum read his proposed amendment. To a comment by Rep. Jessica Farrar (D-Houston) that the amendment would write discrimination into the constitution, Chisum said, "This doesn't discriminate against anyone. It discriminates against a practice, not a people."

Randall Ellis, executive director of the Lesbian and Gay Rights Lobby of Texas, argued that the additional wording would have many "unfortunate unintended consequences."

Kelly Shackelford, president of the Free Market Foundation and a supporter of the proposed amendment, argued gay couples would still be able achieve certain rights by having attorneys draw up agreements for various issues, but it would be wrong for the state to give them marriage rights as a package.

"This is clearly something that we can't put our heads in the sand about," he said. "Marriage between one man and one woman does things that no other relationship can do."

Virtually all who testified were either PFLAG parents, representatives of organizations or gays speaking against the proposed amendment. Their testimony was often emotional and included personal stories about themselves and their children.

Dick and Jimmie Sue Francis, Austin parents of two gay children, pleaded with the legislators, saying, "This will harm you, particularly when you learn you have a gay child or grandchild. Someday you may have the opportunity to explain to them why you voted in 2005 to support discrimination against them."



Dick and Jimmie Sue Francis of Austin were among those who testified in opposition to a proposed constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. (Photo by Jim Null)

Marriage has changed over the years

April Ayers of Houston noted that marriage has changed significantly over the years and that some states once prohibited interracial marriage. She asked committee members, "Twenty years from now, will we - society as a whole - be ashamed of our decision to discriminate against the GLBT population as we are now ashamed of discriminating against interracial marriage?"

Contacted late Thursday, Farrar said, she hopes the language limiting civil agreements will be removed from the proposed amendment before the committee votes next week.

"One Republican member of the committee approached me and said he was really moved by the stories," she said.

The Committee on State Affairs will decide whether to send the proposed amendment to the full House. Farrar said, some legislators who don't favor amending the constitution are still likely to vote in favor of the resolution.

"That's the political climate we're in," she said. "If the situation is that it's OK to hate gays, then that's the political climate."

Once the bill goes to the house, it will need to be approved by a two-thirds majority before being sent to the Senate, where it will need another two-thirds majority before being placed on the statewide November ballot.

Ellis said LGRL is bracing for an ugly fight.

Another Houston legislator sits on the Committee on State Affairs, Rep. Martha Wong, a Republican. She could not be reached for comment regarding the proposed amendment.

MORE INFO

Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas
www.lgrl.org

local news

Case of Merry Stephens is one of "mob mentality"

COACH, continued from Page 1

is a lesbian, and school district officials decided she needed to go.

NCLR and attorney Michael Shirk from the National Education Association/Texas State Teacher's Association earlier this week negotiated a settlement agreement on behalf of Stephens.

Under the agreement, Minter said, the school district agreed to pay Stephens for the last two years of her contract.

"This wasn't about trying to get a lot of money," Minter said.

Instead, he said, the settlement was about Stephens and all the other lesbian and gay teachers who have been fired because of their sexual orientation.

"This has been going on for a long time," Minter said. "Lesbian teachers and coaches have had their careers destroyed by insidious campaigns like this."

In Stephens' case, Minter said, not only had she been honored numerous times, but she had led her team to district, regional and semi-state championships, breaking school and district coaching



Shannon Minter, legal director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights, said the case of Merry Stephens was settled without going to court because someone did the right thing.

records in the process. All along the way, she received excellent evaluations.

Then, Minter said, leadership of the district changed and Stephens found herself fighting for her job.

Stephens said she was suddenly subjected to intense harassment by superiors. On Dec. 14, 2004, the Bloomberg School Board began termination proceedings.

"Merry Stephens is an extraordinary coach whose leadership and teaching skills were highly respected on the basketball court and in the classroom," Minter said. "This settlement agreement sends a powerful message that discrimination will not be tolerated. The days when schools could discriminate with impunity against lesbian and gay teachers and coaches are past."

Minter said the settlement came days before a scheduled administrative hearing, after School Board President Derous Byers testified under oath in a deposition that the Board's decision to terminate Stephens was based on the personal anti-gay animosity of several school board members.

Byers also testified that several school board members publicly disparaged Coach Stephens because of her sexual orientation, including stating that she "did not deserve to work" in the district because she is a lesbian, Minter said.

'Mob mentality'

He describes what happened to Stephens as "mob mentality. You have a group of people who because of their own bias decide to ruin a teacher's life."

Had it not been for Byers, Minter said, the case likely would have gone to court.

"What was so unique to this case was to have that unequivocal testimony," Minter said. "Usually these things happen in silence and behind closed doors. Mr. Byers

is just a good man who thought he ought to tell the truth."

TSTA attorney Shirk noted, "In my 15 years of representing workers throughout Texas, rarely have I seen such bigotry and flagrant discrimination."

He added, "I hope this settlement will teach the board members who set this in motion a lesson they should have learned a long time ago - that God's grace and the laws of this State protect everyone equally."

Stephens, who does not plan to ask for her job back in Bloomberg, said she hopes that by standing up, she will give courage to others.

"My focus has always been to be the best coach and teacher I can be," she said. "No one should have to endure hostility and prejudice. I hope that by speaking out, I will give others the courage to stand up for their rights."

Helen Carroll, Sports Project Coordinator for the National Center for Lesbian Rights, applauded the settlement. "Coach Stephens' courage in refusing to silently endure this blatant discrimination is an inspiration to the many others in her position; she is a pioneer in changing hearts and minds."

Minter said the outcome is bittersweet because, "Part of the sad thing about all this is that she really loves this town."

Officials of the Bloomberg School District could not be reached for comment.

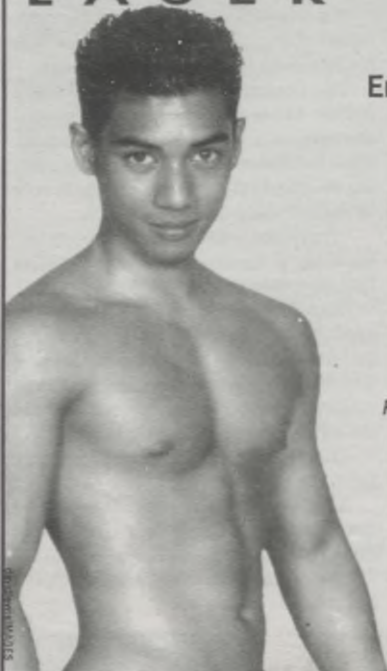
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national news briefs

Kansas voters approve constitutional ban on gay marriage

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Voters in Kansas yesterday overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex couples from marrying or entering into civil unions. With more than half of the precincts reporting, 276,876 votes, or 69 percent, were cast in favor of a constitutional amendment, with 121,836 votes, or 31 percent, opposed. Gay marriage is already banned under Kansas law, and the law is not being challenged. But supporters of the ballot measure said the ban must be in the Kansas Constitution to insulate it from legal challenge. "The marriage amendment is an unfortunate, necessary reaction to activist courts," said Republican state Attorney General Phill Kline. Among the opponents was Democratic Governor Kathleen Sebelius. Kansas became the 18th state to put a prohibition against same-sex marriage in its constitution, and the 14th to pass such an amendment since the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court decision in 2003 that legalized same-sex marriage in that state. Lesbian Tiffany Muller lost her seat on the Topeka City Council to lawyer Richard Harmon, who captured 64 percent of the vote.



Lesbian Tiffany Muller earned only 36 percent of the vote and lost her seat on the Topeka, Kan. City Council on Tuesday. (File photo)

Couple's effort to annul Conn. same-sex union rejected

STAMFORD, Conn. (AP) — A same-sex couple married in Massachusetts cannot get an annulment in Connecticut because the state does not recognize such marriages, a judge has ruled. The ruling was the first to address an attempt by an out-of-state gay couple to dissolve their Massachusetts marriage, according to Mathew Staver, president and general counsel for Liberty Counsel, a conservative group that opposes gay marriage. Granting the dissolution would have recognized the validity of the marriage in another state, he said. Hartford Superior Court Judge Linda Pearce Prestley, in a March 18 ruling announced last week by Liberty Counsel, rejected an attempt by two women who live in Connecticut to annul their marriage. The women had filed a notice of intention to marry in Provincetown, Mass., but said they were unaware that the Massachusetts law excluded nonresidents. Prestley said the marriage was invalid because it violated Massachusetts law, so Connecticut had nothing to dissolve.

N.Y. high court declines to hear gay marriage lawsuits

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — The state's highest court last week declined to hear two cases contesting the state law that bars same-sex couples from getting married. The Court of Appeals ruled it does not have the jurisdiction to hear the cases before they first go to a lower appellate court. In February, state Supreme Court Justice Doris Ling-Cohan ruled the state law is unconstitutional, finding in favor of five same-sex couples who had been denied marriage licenses by New York City. The judge said the city clerk may not deny a license to any couple solely because the two are of the same sex. The city is appealing the judge's ruling.

ACLU wants former students in religious group's Ky. suit

ASHLAND, Ky. (AP) — The American Civil Liberties Union has asked a federal court to let five former students and a parent join an eastern Kentucky school district in a lawsuit filed by a religious foundation over anti-harassment training. The suit, filed by the Alliance Defense Fund on behalf of a student and parents at Boyd County High School, alleges that anti-harassment training violates the student's first amendment rights of free speech and religion. The training is part of a settlement of a previous lawsuit by the Gay-Straight Alliance, a gay-rights club that had sought the right to meet on school grounds. The five students asking to get involved in the new case were plaintiffs in the earlier suit. The settlement mandates that the anti-harassment training emphasize sexual orientation.

Gay Foreign Service officer wins ruling in bias case

WASHINGTON — A U.S. District Court judge in February ordered a State Department review panel to reconsider whether two U.S. consular officials in Brazil gave a gay foreign service officer a less than favorable job performance review in 1994 based on alleged anti-gay bias. Judge Gladys Kessler ordered the Foreign Service Grievance Board to disregard an earlier decision to dismiss a complaint by Karl Olson, who charged that his two supervisors gave him a negative performance review for his duties as Chief of the Non-Immigrant Visa Section at the U.S. Consulate General's Office in Rio de Janeiro. He served in that post from 1993 to 1996. The supervisors, David Zweifel and Edwin Boffel, denied they had an anti-gay bias and claimed they gave a favorable review to another gay official at the U.S. consular post in Rio de Janeiro. Zweifel and Boffel said their review praised Olson for his work but said he was overly "officious" and too demanding.

From staff and wire reports

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national news

NLGTF honors Dean's record

By LOU CHIBBARO JR.

WASHINGTON — The National Gay & Lesbian Task Force has been among the gay community's strongest advocates for legalizing same-sex marriage. So its decision to present its annual Lifetime Achievement Award this week to a same-sex marriage opponent drew attention to what many activists consider a vexing and complex issue that must be addressed cautiously and creatively.

The Task Force was scheduled to present its Lifetime Achievement Award to former Vermont Governor and Democratic Party Chair Howard Dean on Thursday at a fundraising ceremony at the Omni Shoreham Hotel here. Kate Michelman, former president of NARAL-Pro-Choice America, and Adam Ebbin, an openly gay member of the Virginia House of Delegates, were scheduled to join NLGTF Executive Director Matt Foreman in presenting the award to Dean. The event was expected to attract about 400 people and raise more than \$75,000 for NLGTF.

Dean emerged as one of the nation's most gay-supportive politicians in 2000 when, as governor, he played a key role in shepherding through the Vermont legislature the nation's first bill to legalize same-sex civil unions.

While remaining popular among gay activists, Dean disappointed many in the gay community during his 2004 campaign for president when he said he opposed same-sex

marriage because he believes, on religious grounds, that marriage should remain an institution only between a man and a woman. He said full equal rights and benefits for same-sex couples should be pursued through federal recognition of civil unions.

Josh Earnest, a spokesperson for the DNC, said Dean fully supports the Democratic Party platform planks on gay rights. He said that in his role as DNC chair, Dean would not be speaking on specific policy issues but would instead concentrate on building the party's infrastructure and financial support.

Foreman said NLGTF selected Dean for its Lifetime Achievement Award because of Dean's "extraordinary" support for both gay civil rights and non-gay progressive causes. "Dr. Dean has been an ally for the gay community for decades," Foreman said. "He also has advocated other causes that the Task Force holds dear."

Although he opposed same-sex marriage, Dean's decision to make his overall support for gay rights a central part of his presidential campaign "moved" the other Democratic presidential contenders to a more supportive position on gay rights, Foreman said. Foreman noted that Dean also spoke out against a proposed constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage.

Robin Tyler, co-founder of the national group DontAmend.com, disagrees with the selection of Dean for the award. "What civil rights movement has ever given an award to

someone who doesn't believe in total civil rights for that movement?" Tyler asked.

Tyler noted that Dean's push for civil unions in Vermont came after the Vermont Supreme Court ordered the state to adopt either a civil union or gay marriage bill. Although some gay activists wanted the legislature to pass a marriage bill, Dean and state legislators chose the civil unions option at a time when opposition to both was fierce among many Vermont voters.

"OK, that was years ago," Tyler said. "However, he keeps saying over and over that he still believes that marriage is between a man and a woman. In other words, he still believes in 'separate and unequal' or marriage segregation," Tyler said.

Added Tyler, "NLGTF should have given this award to a courageous, outstanding Democrat who is an absolute friend of the LGBT community — San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsome. Instead, like abused children, we continue to grovel at the feet of those who continue to reject full equal rights for us."

Eric Stern, the DNC's former outreach director for the gay community and current executive director of National Stonewall Democrats, said Dean's record in support of gay rights offsets his position on gay marriage. "We must push for full GLBT marriage equality," Stern said. "But we would not move as fast in our efforts if we did not have someone as boldly progressive as Howard Dean."

Stern said Dean mentioned gay issues in



Howard Dean, the chairperson of the Democratic National Committee, was scheduled to be honored on Thursday by the Task Force despite his opposition to gay marriage. (Photo by Rudy K. Lawidjaja)

his campaign speeches last year and continues to raise gay rights issues in his appearances across the country as DNC chair, including his appearances in conservative Republican or "red" states. "Having someone like Dean go to red states to address our issues is a big advantage for us," Stern said.

Jeff Soref, chair of the DNC's Gay & Lesbian Americans Caucus, said Dean has yet to name a replacement for Stern as the DNC's new gay outreach director, but he expects Dean to fill the position. The gay caucus issued a statement at the DNC's winter meeting in February calling for the post to be filled.

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arts cover story

Pope opposed recognition of gay couples, condom use

POPE, continued from Page 1

He also attempted to scapegoat homosexual priests for the church sex abuse scandals, according to Sam Sinnett, president of Dignity USA, a group for gay Catholics.

Different time for gay Catholics

During the 1970s, ministries were developed for gay men and lesbians within the Catholic Church.

"When polls have been done among various religious groups, Catholics come out among the highest in supporting gay and lesbian rights. This could be because Catholic teaching is more complicated than some think, it does not condemn homosexual orientation," said Francis DeBernardo of New Ways Ministry, a 28-year-old ministry that seeks to build bridges between gay Catholics and the broader Catholic community.

Despite a broadening sense of acceptance of gays within the Catholic Church, in 1986 Pope John Paul II issued a "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons." The letter, which was written in English and was seen as aimed at American Catholics, called same-sex attraction an "objective disorder" and "intrinsically evil."

"I think it was obviously on his watch and his approval that we got the 1986 letter on homosexuality as a problem," said Mark Jordan, a religion professor at Atlanta's Emory University whose books include "The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism."

"The view of that letter is now part of the official catechism of the Catholic Church and also been written into a number of other official documents, so it would be very hard to reverse," said Jordan, a gay Catholic.

Dignity USA, founded in 1969, had been holding meetings in Catholic churches at that time. In response to the pope's 1986 let-



The Vatican conducted an 11-year investigation into Sister Jeannine Gramick's ministry to gay Catholics before admonishing her in 1999. (Blade file photo)

ter, Dignity chapters nationwide voted to no longer meet at Catholic churches.

"This was quite traumatic," Sinnett said. "People are hurt by the church's language. We exist to support people who are integrating spirituality and sexuality."

Dignity now has 3,500 to 4,000 members, Sinnett said, and has about 50 chapters.

"There is an ultra-orthodox belief that the church is the people of God," Sinnett said. "The bishops may have shut out gays and lesbians, but gay and lesbian Catholics are still able to practice."

Sinnett said that he attends a Roman Catholic mass with his Dignity chapter in St. Louis and the service is held in an Episcopal church. Why did some gay men and lesbians go to such lengths to stay close to a religion that had rejected them?

"During the Vietnam era, conservatives used to say to protesters 'Love it or leave it' — they didn't understand the concept of loyal protest," Sinnett said.

"Faith is a lot more [than the church's

statements on homosexuality] we can dissent faithfully."

Grassroots change

In 1987, moral theologian Charles Curran was fired from his position at Catholic University because he refused to follow the Vatican line on homosexuality and birth control.

Sister Jeannine Gramick began pastoral work with gay men and lesbians in 1971 as a nun with the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Baltimore. Gramick said she was encouraged and supported in this work by her church leaders at the time.

"Gays and lesbians felt so abandoned, some hadn't been to church in 10 or 20 years and felt there was no place for them," Gramick said. "I told them every baptized person has a place in the church, it belongs to you as much as it belongs to straight people."

Despite the support for her work, the Vatican conducted an 11-year investigation into what she was doing and in 1999 issued an order forbidding her to speak about homosexuality or about the church investigation of her ministry.

"During [John Paul's] papacy, the movement for gay and lesbian rights at the higher level of the church deteriorated," Gramick told the Blade this week. "But the movement of middle management in the church in the U.S. progressed due to advocacy by gays and lesbians and their families."

"The pope's pronouncements became much more repressive than pastoral. The documents produced by U.S. bishops show the contrast between what we see on the Vatican level and on the national level," Gramick said.

Gramick said that the movement toward acceptance of gays within the Catholic Church will continue no matter what negative pronouncements come from the Vatican.

Pope and politics

Van Gower contributed to this report.

State-by-state roundup of legislation

MINNESOTA

ST. PAUL (AP) — After a passionate debate last week that stretched over three hours, the Minnesota House voted 77-56 to put a gay marriage ban before voters next year. The bill would ask voters to amend the state constitution to define marriage exclusively as a union between a man and a woman. Supporters of the constitutional amendment said it would prevent courts from allowing same-sex marriages, even though state law already prohibits them. "The only way to ensure that activist judges don't circumvent the will of the people is by allowing the people of Minnesota to have their voices heard," said Rep. Dan Severson (R-Sauk Rapids), the bill's sponsor. "That definition may stand in our books." Democrats who opposed the ban said it would trample the civil rights of a minority without helping troubled heterosexual couples. "What single heterosexual marriage that exists today will be

saved by the passage of this amendment?" said Rep. Keith Ellison (D-L Minneapolis). "Nobody thinking about getting divorced today will change their mind based on this amendment."

MAINE

AUGUSTA (AP) — Gov. John Baldacci last week signed legislation that protects gays and lesbians from discrimination. Within hours, a religious group launched a campaign to overturn the new law. "This act not only offers essential civil rights, but serves as a welcome," the Democratic governor told supporters who packed the State House Cabinet Room. "Our doors are open to all people. This is a proud day for Maine." The law, which received final House and Senate passage the night before the governor signed it, takes effect in late June. The measure amends the Maine Human Rights Act by making discrimination illegal in employment, housing, credit, public accommodations and education based on sexual orientation or gender. Maine

law now prohibits discrimination based on race, color, sex, disability, religion, ancestry and national origin. The new law will exempt religious organizations that do not receive public funds. It also makes clear the law does not condone or authorize gay marriages.

COLORADO

DENVER (AP) — A Republican-led news conference last week calling for a voter-approved ban on gay marriage included a sharp exchange after a state lawmaker brought up bestiality as he said the issue needed to be addressed. Rep. Jim Welker (R-Loveland) said voters need to draw the line on what marriage is and noted a woman in India had married her dog a year and a half ago. Democratic Rep. Angie Paccione (D-Fort Collins) confronted Welker. "Come on, Jim. It's not the same — it's not the same to have someone marry a dog than it is to have two loving people get married," she said. Paccione said the "moderate majority" that elected

The Catholic Church, under John Paul II, argued not only that homosexuality is against natural law, but that gays should have no protections under civil law either.

In 1992 the Vatican issued a letter to bishops urging them to oppose gay rights initiatives.

The pope pressured the Italian government to withdraw support for the World Pride Celebration in Rome in 2000.

The pope also supported the Federal Marriage Amendment to the U.S. Constitution to limit marriage to opposite-sex couples and asked bishops in America to become involved in campaigns against same-sex marriage.

When the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S. became embroiled in the scandal involving priests sexually abusing teenagers, usually males, the Vatican suggested that gays should be excluded from seminaries. Sinnett, of Dignity USA, said John Paul II attempted to scapegoat gay priests during the scandal.

In November 2002 the church released a letter entitled, "Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life" which stated that Catholic politicians should advance Catholic teachings in their work.

AIDS activists say that by traveling to Africa and speaking against the use of birth control and condoms, the pope set back efforts to curb spread of the disease and that many have died because of the pope's theological rigidity and opposition to condom use.

While many gay advocates expressed hope that the next pope will develop more progressive positions on sexuality, 114 of the 117 Cardinals who will decide on a replacement were appointed by John Paul II, and many doubt that any major doctrinal changes are on the horizon.

Democrats to power at the Capitol last fall wants lawmakers to focus on "kitchen table" issues like jobs, education and health care and not gay marriage. The child of a biracial couple, she also bristled at denying citizens rights because of their sexual orientation, saying it was once illegal for blacks and whites to marry.

TENNESSEE

NASHVILLE (AP) — A freshman Republican thinks his Web log is refreshing, but other lawmakers are offended. They say Stacey Campfield's blog is unfair and violates decorum. Campfield, who represents Knoxville, calls gay adoption and abortion "the new face of the Democrat Party." Under the title, "15 Ways to know if you are a Democrat in the Tennessee Legislature," Campfield offers such quips as "You believe that the gender roles are artificial but being homosexual is natural."

From staff and wire reports

Local Life

HOUSTON VOICE

APRIL 8, 2005

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When Equality Knocks, gays find supporters

In just over a year, Equality Knocks has found more than 9,000 Houston voters who say they will vote in support of gay rights

By DAWN RORIE

Anyone who questions whether one person can really make a difference may find the answer by looking at the leadership of Equality Knocks.

Tammi Wallace had no idea what lay in store for her a little over a year ago when she sent an e-mail to the Lesbian Gay Rights Lobby of Texas, asking how she could get involved. When LGRL expressed interest in starting a project in Houston that would identify voters who would be likely to support gay issues in the voting booth, Wallace agreed to lead the effort.

With that, Equality Knocks was born. At first, the project consisted only of Wallace, her partner, Beth Tudor, and a small group of dedicated volunteers. The group worked out of the couple's home.

"My dining room was basically consumed with Equality Knocks stuff," Wallace remembers.

Within a month, fifty people had signed on to help with exit polling in the 2004 primary election. Seeking to identify people who would vote in favor of gay civil rights issues such as marriage equality, volunteers organized block walks, staffed phone banks, and set up tables at various gay events.

By the end of last year, Equality Knocks had identified 9,000 voters who said they would support equal rights for gays and lesbians.

At the beginning of this year, Christina Gomez stepped into the role of project director for Equality Knocks. Citing a proposed federal constitutional amendment that would ban same-sex marriage as the catalyst for her initial volunteer work for the project, Gomez decided to take on a leadership role within the group after seeing the devastating losses in the 2004 election.

"That was the push I needed," says



When Tammi Wallace asked, "What can I do to help," she found herself leading Equality Knocks. (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

Gomez. Refusing to accept defeat, she realized that "this is our chance to do something about it. We are going to take hold of this and we are not going to let go."

While identifying fair-minded voters is an important part of the project, Equality Knocks also works to fight for gay civil rights and educate citizens about the importance of those rights.

Over the past year, the hot-button issue on the Equality Knocks agenda has been gay marriage. Many citizens, Wallace says, are not aware of the more than one thousand rights provided by a civil marriage, including the right to visit a sick partner in the hospital.

"Whether you agree or disagree with gay marriage," she says, "denying people basic rights and responsibilities to protect their families is wrong."

Pushing for job equality

Equality Knocks has also been pushing for employment non-discrimination protections for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered persons, as well as safe

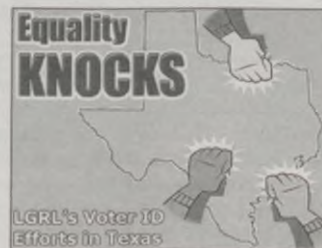
school environments for gay students.

This year is shaping up to be an especially busy one for Equality Knocks. The group has recently been working to educate voters about House Joint Resolution 6, the proposed marriage amendment to the Texas Constitution. State Representatives Martha Wong (R-Houston) and Jessica Farrar (D-Houston) are on the committee that has been considering the amendment.

Since Wong has not demonstrated support for gay and lesbian equality issues, volunteers worked tirelessly to encourage her constituents to contact her and encourage her to vote against the discriminatory amendment. It meant walking from door to door, talking to voters one-on-one.

"It's important that we put a face on the issue," explains Gomez. Volunteers are encouraged to share personal stories to inform voters of the dangers that such legislation poses to families and children.

In addition to fighting discrimination, the members of Equality Knocks have been working on restructuring the organ-



Equality Knocks

Founded: 2004

Founded by: Lesbian Gay Rights Lobby of Texas and the Houston Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus (PAC)

Address: 1302 Waugh Drive, PMB 536, Houston TX 77019-3908

Web site: www.lgrrl.org/equalityknocks

Phone: 713-521-1000, ext. 2

ization itself. Originating as a result of a coalition between LGRL and the Houston Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus (PAC), Equality Knocks has been growing at such a pace that the leadership has decided to create Equality Houston, a stand-alone organization that will house the project and continue its work.

Wallace, who is currently serving on the board of HGLPC, will serve as president of Equality Houston. The challenge, she says, lies within the need for resources: dollars, supplies, and most importantly, volunteers.

"Volunteers are needed in all areas," Gomez explains. Every person can add something to the group, no matter what their skills or level of involvement.

It was because of the need to reach out to the community, other organizations, and potential volunteers that the Community Work Day was born. Group leaders and volunteers gather to work on projects and to meet people and talk one-on-one with them to find out how they can get involved.

Gomez stresses that equality will only be won by people making a personal decision to help bring about change. "Every voice counts," she insists.

Besides being a positive way to get involved, volunteering for Equality Knocks is a good way to make friends. "You meet so many people doing this," she adds.

On Saturday, Equality Knocks and the Houston Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus will conduct a Community Work Day from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Houston GLBT Community Center at 3400 Montrose. Anyone interested in learning more about the work of Equality Knocks is encouraged to attend.

MORE INFO

Community Work Day
10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday
Houston GLBT Community Center
3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 227

out in houston

(Photos by Dalton DeHart)



At the Human Rights Campaign Gala last Saturday, actress Sharon Gless, who plays Debbie Novotny on Showtime's 'Queer as Folk' talked with attorneys John Nechman, who received an award from HRC, and Mitchell Katine, an attorney who worked on the landmark case that struck down the Texas sodomy law.



Actress Sharon Gless (right) received the Humanitarian Award from Maria Todd of 104-FM KRBE during the HRC Gala.



The co-chairs for the 2005 Human Rights Campaign Gala are (from left) Alton LaDay, Tom Downing and Amy Blumrosen.



Pranksters in Pumps, a fundraiser for the Montrose Softball League, was a rousing success last weekend.



Houston City Council Member Gordon Quan threw out the first pitch at last weekend's season opener for the Montrose Softball League, and observers reported it sailed directly over home plate.



Randall Ellis (center), executive director of the Lesbian Gay Rights Lobby of Texas and Sue Lovell (right), who is running for At-large Position 2 on the Houston City Council, joined Houston City Controller Annise Parker (left) at the kickoff of her next re-election campaign.



Kim Padgett (far left), owner of The Padgett Group, welcomed (from left) Monterey County vintners representative Rhonda Motil, Ramon Ontiveros, Krystal Peoples and Jennifer Eberhard to a wine tasting event hosted by the Monterey County Vintners and Growers Association.



The Gay Men's Chorus of Houston performed its spring concert, titled 'Mid-Night Serenade,' last weekend at the Wortham Center.

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Rivendell Media • 212-242-6863



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Established 1974 as the *Montrose Star*.

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Forum

editorial

A papal smear

Against the torrent of media coverage of the pope as much-beloved, we should not forget the human cost of his policies on gays and condom use.

By CHRIS CRAIN

IT WAS LIKE RONALD Reagan all over again. For the second time in less than a year, we have witnessed a tremendous outpouring of grief and love for a major historical figure whose record on HIV/AIDS and the treatment of gay people was disturbing, at best.

Except this time the mourning masses and fawning media coverage has been worldwide, not nationwide, and the historical record is downright pernicious, rather than unforgivably neglectful.

We all knew Ronald Reagan, even if he wasn't a friend of ours, and Pope John Paul II was no Ronald Reagan.

Where the former president responded in an irresponsibly slow manner in the early years of HIV/AIDS, the former pope actively blocked HIV prevention in an unconscionable fashion. Where President Reagan largely ignored early attempts to enact gay rights legislation, Pope John Paul heartlessly campaigned against gays and their families.

The laudable role played by the Polish pope in bringing down the totalitarian communist states of Eastern Europe has been told and retold countless times since his death. But as was the case in the days following the death of the former president, the media has reduced to passing mention — or ignored entirely — the former pope's controversial record on the issues of particular importance to gays.

THERE ARE VARIOUS THEORIES about why this pope was so aggressively regressive in his views about sex in general, and homosexuality in particular.

Some say he had been sheltered in Poland by the Iron Curtain from the growing scientific, psychological and social understanding of homosexuality and the aspirations of gay people. Others argue that he was more concerned about re-establishing authoritarian order in a church whose believers had largely rejected Vatican teaching on sex. Like all priests and nuns who take a vow of chastity, he was uniquely unequipped to plumb the complex depths of human sexuality in any meaningful fashion.

Whatever his reasons, his record is

clear. John Paul II inherited Roman Catholic doctrine that viewed "homosexual acts" as "intrinsically disordered," and he quickly expanded that insulting label to mere "homosexual attraction" as well.

In the face of a universally recognized population explosion of crisis proportions, and the global pandemic of AIDS that was killing millions and orphaning tens of millions, this pope adhered to traditional Catholic dogma that the use of condoms is a sin.

And more than that, he used the influence of the church, especially as it grew in the Third World countries of Africa and elsewhere, to discourage condom use, and to block HIV prevention programs that dared to differ. The human cost of those choices will be tallied for generations, but it's already clear the body count for which John Paul bears responsibility is far larger than the several million who have flocked to Rome to pay him last respects.

IN THE LATTER YEARS OF HIS papacy, John Paul II aggressively breached the wall between church and state and lobbied Western governments against treating gays equally under civil law.

This campaign came even as a shocking scandal of sexual abuse by priests, facilitated by the active neglect of the Vatican, was proving once more that the Roman Catholic leadership lacked basic understanding of adult sexual behavior. Any non-religious institution facing such clear evidence of misguided thinking, negligent oversight and active cover-up would have been so thoroughly discredited that its views on anything related to human sexuality would be rejected out of hand.

But Pope John Paul II, after only addressing the issue directly a handful of times and acting in baby steps only after the outcry was impossible to ignore, was undaunted. Rather than retreat to reconsider whether centuries-old thinking about sexuality and celibacy caused or contributed to the crisis, the pope's spokesman joined a chorus of cardinals and bishops blaming the inexcusable sexual abuse of boys and teenage males on — you guessed it — gay priests and homosexuality.

If the pope were Jewish, such scapegoating might qualify aschutzpah of epic proportions. As he was not, the more Catholic description of "intrinsically dis-

ordered" or "evil" seems more apt.

Whether as a distraction or because the arrogance of papal "infallibility" knows no bounds, Pope John Paul continued until his dying months to attack any effort to lend civil legal recognition to gay couples, even though doing so would expand health insurance coverage and ensure a more stable home and protected future for children raised in gay families.

THE PRESS EVENTUALLY GOT AROUND to filling in the dark side of Ronald Reagan's legacy, and there's every reason to believe they'll do so with this pope as well, especially as the cardinals meet to choose his successor. Hopefully the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation and our other advocacy groups won't lose their voices for fear of offending "people of faith," everyone's favorite post-election focus group.

Don't expect the next Roman Catholic pontiff to hand down or even allow a more tolerant posture on gays or condoms, much less apologize for John Paul's shameful record. The Vatican waited until 1992 to finally apologize for forcing Galileo to recant his view that the earth revolved around the sun, and it was eight years later before John Paul apologized for two millennia of Catholic Church actions that mocked the teachings of Jesus Christ.

If we are to challenge religious tenets like those of the Roman Catholic Church, we should be direct and straightforward. So far, gay rights groups have joined Democrats in ceaseless talk about "having conversations" with people of faith, which comes off sounding like an especially meaningless episode of "Oprah."

Catholic and non-Catholic heterosexuals need to understand that the church's teaching on homosexual sex is essentially the same as their own sexual behavior: Every act is sinful unless specifically intended to pro-create; that means no marital sex for pleasure and no condoms or birth control. Because our homosexual behavior can never have that aim, and our "homosexual attraction" is recognized to be "innate," gays are to be entirely chaste: no love, no sex, no nothing. Even Catholic priests, who at least can marry the church, have proven incapable of living up to that restriction.

The Catholic doctrine on homosexuality is indefensible, and when it is fully explained, is completely out of step with accepted modern ideas about human sexuality. Sometimes it takes a few good funerals for real progress, but don't expect the burial of Pope John Paul II help the blind men in charge at the Vatican to finally see.

@ Chris CRAIN is executive editor of the *Houston Voice* and can be reached at ccrain@houstonvoice.com.



viewpoint RICHARD J. ROSENDALL



John Paul II was an eloquent defender of human rights, yet objected bitterly to inclusion of gays and women.

A pope of contradictions

LIKE MANY FORMER Catholics, I have never lost my fascination for Holy Mother Church. When she gets you early, she never quite lets go.

I thought of this while the news stations were in deathwatch mode for Pope John Paul II, and as his death was reported I recalled his first visit to America.

I stood atop the steps of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., on October 7, 1979, listening via loudspeaker as Sister Theresa Kane, welcomed His Holiness on behalf of women clergy by urging him to accept women into all the ministries of the church.

As the polyglot pontiff understood, she meant women priests. It was an exhilarating moment, witnessing the speaking of truth to power.

Many of the women inside the shrine wore armbands, blue for the Blessed Virgin Mary, as an expression of solidarity with Kane's message: "It is appropriate that a woman's voice be heard in this shrine."

There was hesitation in the pope's voice as he responded, obviously appalled. He awkwardly urged the nuns to return to wearing traditional habits. A week later (speaking of troublesome modern developments), the first national gay march came to Washington, and I remember the street vendors along the march route still hawking papal memorabilia.

JOHN PAUL II WAS A POPE OF contradictions. He played a significant role in bringing down the Iron Curtain, yet he was one of the last authoritarian rulers in Europe. He was the first pope to recognize Israel, and initiated unprecedented ecumenical outreach to leaders of other churches, yet he aggressively suppressed heterodoxy within his own church.

He was an outspoken advocate for the poor, yet he opposed the Marxist-inspired liberation theologians of South America, even though the leading oppressors on that continent were the oligarchs whom the leftist theologians were resisting.

He was an eloquent defender of human rights, yet he objected bitterly to civil authorities granting a permit for a gay rights march in Rome.

Three years before John Paul's ascension to the Chair of Saint Peter, the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered."

Deciding this was insufficient, the new pope's chief doctrinal enforcer, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, issued a pastoral letter in 1986 stating that "the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder."

Ironically for an organization that purported to defend families against a demonized minority, John Paul's church was



Pope John Paul II is seen at the center of the judges of the Roman Rota, the Vatican tribunal that can grant marriage annulments, at the Vatican Thursday Feb. 1, 2001. The pontiff said there was no possibility for marriage to be re-defined according to different cultural models, stressing again the Vatican's opposition to gay unions. Marriage is not just any old union between human persons, susceptible to being configured according to a plurality of cultural models, the pontiff said. (AP Photo/Arturo Mari)

excruciatingly slow to respond to revelations that it had acted in effect as an organized crime network facilitating the sexual abuse of children by priests. Indeed, its first instinct was to stonewall and hire aggressive attorneys.

In this scandal the church's insular and unaccountable men's club demonstrated in the clearest manner its feet of clay. Boston's Bernard Cardinal Law was rewarded with the highly prized post in Rome.

Thus the idea that the church's ruler is divinely ordained and answerable only to God, long outdated in the secular realm, is extended by the Vatican even to criminal matters.

ULTIMATELY, HOWEVER, IT IS NOT John Paul II's shortcomings or blind spots, but his many good works that point to the greater tragedy of this man and the world-

wide church he led so firmly for so long.

Anyone who claims special access to divine wisdom, and leads a large organization dedicated to promulgating it, is bound to find himself, however good his intentions, at odds with what Thomas Jefferson called "the illimitable freedom of the human mind."

Each of us is born with a priceless gift, a brain. Surely that gift should not be dishonored by refusing to think for ourselves.

As the world mourns this contradictory man, this authoritarian freedom fighter whose pastoral journeys took him from Auschwitz to Jerusalem, my heretical brain cries out amidst the hymns and eulogies: No one has a monopoly on the truth.

@ Richard J. Rosendall is a Washington-based writer and activist and can be reached at rrosendall@starpower.net.

THE

A resolution to create a dedicated gay and lesbian business district may be proposed at the upcoming conference on the future. What are your thoughts?



I think it is a great idea. Many of our community have moved out of Montrose. A GLBT business district with a good business mix targeted to our market could be an attraction to bring people back into Montrose.

RICK TAYLOR, 51
Houston
Business owner



We have reached an era of GLBT buying power. If we work together, we can make changes in the GLBT community. "Knowledge is power."

JOE REYES, 42
Houston
Sole proprietor, 10 Inches To Go



I think we should not segregate GLBT businesses into one district, but integrate all GLBT businesses into the Houston business community.

JO CASADY, 40
Houston
Management



I think it will be a wonderful idea to create this business district in Houston. It'll show the rest of the nation and the GLBT communities how strong our community really is.

ABEL RODRIGUEZ, 46
Houston
Funeral director/embalmer



It's time for the community to band together and show a united front.

STEPHEN DU BAY, 48
Houston
Sales Rep., First American Title

Sound off about what's happening in your world at www.houstonvoice.com/soundoff.

Interviews and photos by Dalton DeHart



pivotal protest

APRIL 17 MARKS THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF HISTORIC, PRE-STONEWALL DEMONSTRATION

By BRIAN MOYLAN



FORTY YEARS AGO, JACK NICHOLS and his partner, Elijah Clarke, sat on the floor of their home in D.C. making signs for a gay civil rights protest.

Nichols' friend and gay roommate said, "You guys are crazy. People are going to attack you."

"No they aren't," Nichols replied. "They're just going to stand there and ooh and ah, just like you are now."

Nichols was right. On April 17, 1965, he and nine other protesters — including gay civil rights pioneers Frank Kameny and Lilli Vincenz — held a gay civil rights protest in front of the White House for two hours, and no one was attacked.

To honor the anniversary of this pivotal protest, the Rainbow History Project, a group dedicated to preserving Washington, D.C.'s gay history, has posted information about these early gay civil rights advocates on the group's Web site at www.rainbowhistory.org/pickets.htm.

"With the possible exception of a picket in New York, this was the first public demonstration by gay men and lesbians," says David K. Johnson, author of "The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government" and a history professor at the University of South Florida in Tampa. "This was the beginning of a whole series of organized demonstrations."

The previous protest in New York was a spontaneous event led by six civil rights activists in New York City who publicly voiced their objection, in front of the Whitehall Induction Center, to the military's anti-gay policies.

That first demonstration in D.C. was arranged overnight, but it was a long time coming.

It all began in 1961, when Kameny founded a D.C. chapter of the Mattachine Society, a social and political group for gays that started in Los Angeles in 1950.

In April 1965, Nichols and Clarke heard reports that Fidel Castro was putting gay people into work camps in Cuba, and they decided this would be the perfect reason for a picket. They called Kameny, who eventually agreed that the time was right for a demonstration.

"I always felt that we would [picket] some day and soon," Nichols, 27 at the time, says. "But nothing ever seemed to be so significant that it required that we do it. But putting people away [in camps] filled the bill."

The two men started calling up friends and fellow activists to try to round up a group for the next day; Nichols made the signs.

"Except for Lilli Vincenz's," he says. "She made her own. She was always very independent."

Vincenz, 27, says that she got a call from Nichols and agreed to attend, even though she was to take the two-part test for Mensa (the "high IQ" club) the next day.

"I was [at the test] with my shopping bag and my



A group of protesters picketing for gay civil rights in 1965 in front of the Pentagon. This was part of a series of actions that year after the initial demonstration in front of the White House on April 17. (Photo by Kay Tobin Lahusen)

sign," she recalls. "But the picket was at a certain time, so I didn't have time to take the second test."

Twenty-two then, Paul Kuntzler, a Mattachine member says he got a call from Kameny and agreed to attend.

Nichols also recruited Gail Green, who also was 22 at the time and married to her first husband.

The other five protesters who attended that day were Gene Kleeberg, bisexual Judith "J.D." Kuch, Perrin Shaffer, Jon Swanson, and Otto Ulrich. Shaffer and Ulrich are now deceased.

GREEN, WHO RECALLS THE EVENT AS "EXCITING," said she was a bit afraid.

"We were more or less afraid we would lose our jobs," she says.

Nichols says he wouldn't let Clarke attend the protest because he worked in the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and would likely lose his job.

Vincenz, who was expelled from the military in 1963 for being a lesbian, was working as a waitress at the time.

"I was between careers, and I could afford to do it," she

says. "We all could afford to do it or could take the risk."

Vincenz eventually became a psychoanalyst.

The news media were not notified before the event so that no one could prevent the demonstration or investigate the people who were there. The picket was covered briefly in the Washington Afro-American.

The protest took place without a hitch and bolstered everyone's spirits. Shaffer and Ulrich wore sunglasses during the event to partially hide their identities.

"On a deep level, I had the feeling that we were doing something important by helping our society," Green says.

Vincenz echoed Green.

"Next to my wedding ... that was the most important day of my life," she says.

Both Vincenz, 67, and Kameny say that the direct action their group took put them at odds with many gay people at the time, who would have preferred to stay in the closet.

"There were people who disapproved on a variety of levels, saying that this was undignified," Kameny says.

Nichols had other feelings about the protest.

"I was certainly glad that we had the gumption to do what we did, but I wasn't patting myself on the back," he says. There were more protests to come.

FIRST, IT WAS BACK AT the White House on May 29, then in front of the U.S. Civil Service Commission on June 26, next at the Pentagon on July 31, on to the U.S. State Department on Aug. 28, and finally back at the White House on Oct. 23. The final White House picket had a contingent from the newly formed Chicago Mattachine Society, bolstering the numbers to 65.

By then, the Mattachine Society had a system for notifying the media before and after each protest to gain attention and coverage. News organizations like Reuters, magazines like Confidential, and even CBS News covered the protests, organizers said.

Certain guidelines were established for protests that included men wearing suits and ties and women wearing dresses. The idea was to give homosexuality the best image possible for the public, organizers said.

Also that year, Mattachine joined the Philadelphia chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis, a lesbian group, and began holding an annual protest on July 4 in front of Philadelphia's historic Independence Hall. It took place every year through 1969, but was called off in 1970 in observance of Christopher Street Liberation Day, one of the nation's first Gay Pride events nation.

THIS YEAR, ON MAY 1, PENNSYLVANIA Gov. Edward Rendell, a Democrat, is scheduled to unveil a plaque in front of Independence Hall commemorating the protests.

"We were the fringe of the fringe of the outer fringe," Kameny says. "We've gone from the fringe to being remembered personages."

MOVIN' IN: A gay former Houstonian is back with the touring cast of the hit Broadway show, 'Movin' Out.' Page 15

MARTHA DOESN'T KNOW: Don't get your Houston gardening advice from Martha Stewart. Page 16



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theater JOHNNY HOOKS



Former Houstonian and gay dancer
Sean Kelly is back with the moves of
Twyla Tharp and the music of Billy Joel

Swingin' to Billy Joel

MANY PERFORMERS IN MUSICAL theater are required to learn one or two parts at best. However gay dancer and former Houstonian Sean Kelly must learn all the male parts as the dance captain/swing on the first national tour of the Billy Joel and Twyla Tharp Broadway musical 'Movin' Out'.

"It's funny, we have what we call 'swing moments' in rehearsal, where suddenly you find yourself on the wrong side of the stage, going into a different role than what you're rehearsing," he says.

Sean Kelly was born in San Raphael, in Marin County, California. There he trained at the Marin Ballet, under the direction of Maria Vegh. Though he refuses to give his age, "Are you kidding?" he laughs, he will admit to being in his late 30's.

Isn't that a bit old to be performing in a show that is nearly all dance? "Well, if I was still in performing classical ballet, then I would say yes," he says. "But this show is contemporary in every way."

Sean Kelly lived in Houston from 1985 through 2000. "It was nice to have a steady paycheck, and I loved living in Houston," he recalls. "The city really supports its arts community, and that is so refreshing."

Kelly was a member of the Houston Ballet and danced here for many seasons as a Principal Dancer, eventually becoming Ballet Master. He danced all of the company's full-length classics and many contemporary works by such choreographers as Ben Stevenson, George Balanchine, Glen Tetley, Christopher Bruce, Paul Taylor, Jiri Kylian and Stanton Welch, among others.

Kelly has been on the road for many years now. He is single and doesn't even have time for a pet. "I am just never home."

Previously he toured the US and Japan as Dance Supervisor with the musical 'Swing' and has been a guest artist with a variety of companies throughout the U.S. as well as abroad. Recently he staged Ben Stevenson's 'Cleopatra' for both the Boston Ballet and Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre.

Kelly is also a choreographer having created numerous works with the



Former Houstonian Sean Kelly is the dance captain/swing for the first national tour of 'Movin' Out'. (Photo by Joan Marcus)

Houston Ballet as well as Diablo Ballet, Lexington Ballet and Ballet Spartanburg. He has been invited to teach at the Houston Ballet Academy, the Beijing Dance Academy, the High School for Performing and Visual Artists and Tulsa Ballet Theatre's summer program.

Not happy to rest on his laurels, Kelly has participated in three international ballet competitions and was a member of the original Broadway cast of 'Movin' Out,' which won Tony awards in 2003 for Best Choreography and Best Orchestrations.

THE SHOW'S STORY FOLLOWS FIVE friends from their 1960's high school graduation to their reunion some years later. In between, everyone finds or loses love, the men go to Vietnam (where one perishes on the battlefield), and everyone must readjust to life after the war.

With no traditional dialogue, the story is told through more than two dozen or so well-known Joel songs like "New York State of Mind," "It's Still Rock and Roll to Me," "Angry Young Men," and "Uptown Girl," among others.

Tharp's delicious choreography tells the rest of the story. An exhilarating band is led by Darren Holden, who sings lead and plays piano.

Asked what he misses most about Houston, he says, "The people and my friends. Even though the early '80s were a tough time in Houston, I really liked it."

The last time Kelly was in town was a sad occasion, the funeral of his friend and local ballet star Mark Arvin.

This time, in addition to chowing down on Texas barbeque, he says, "I also can't wait to go to JR's and the Brazos River Bottom! There is nothing like line dancing with a cute cowboy."

MORE INFO

'Movin' Out'
April 12-24
Broadway in Houston
Hobby Center
800 Bagby
713-629-3700
www.BroadwayAcrossAmerica.com

HoustonGrandOpera

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www.HoustonGrandOpera.org

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home ELLA TYLER



Get your Houston gardening information from the gay garden club, Urban Harvest, the Texas Extension Service, from anybody but Martha

Don't listen to Martha

MARTHA STEWART MAY BE OUT OF prison and back to advising America about its recipes, crafts and gardens, but that doesn't mean that we Houstonians should listen, at least to her gardening pronouncements.

Her gardening advice is wrong, wrong, wrong for Houston. So, although her declaration that she would be out of prison in time to plant her spring garden showed me that she is a real gardener and doesn't just play one on TV, it is too late for us to PLANT a spring garden.

That does not mean that we cannot BUY a flower-filled, absolutely gorgeous spring garden. Nurseries all across the area have a mix of cool-weather and hot-weather bloomers now. The cool-weather bloomers - spring garden to Martha - are in full bloom.

Annuals such as petunias, snapdragons, stock, alyssum and primroses will probably not thrive past the beginning of June. Some references, even local ones, list marigolds as hot-weather plants, but they really are happier in cooler weather.

Annuals complete their life cycle - from seed to bloom to seed - in one growing season. Unless they reseed, they will not be back next year. Since there's not a lot of time for these plants to grow, buy big ones. Look for ones that have open flowers and lots of buds.

Perennials bloom for a short time once a year; then, with the right conditions, good care and luck, they bloom again in the following years. The conditions that cause problems for perennials are our summer heat and/or our lack of cold.

Some plants just need cold dormancy to bloom. Fuchsias, for example, don't make it through the summer; no matter how hard you try. Enjoy one, then send it to a friend who lives in a cool, moist climate.

Geraniums will stop blooming in the summer, but if you keep them in the shade and move them back to the sun when it cools down, they might bloom again.

It does not get cold enough here for

tulips to bloom again, but amaryllis and some kinds of daffodils and lilies will come back.

MOST BUSHES THAT ARE FLOWERING now will not flower again this year. To avoid transplant shock, which causes the flowers to fall off, dig a hole and put the pot in the hole. As soon as the flowers fade, take the plant out of the pot and plant it properly.

Some gardeners I know recommend cutting off the bottom of the pot, slitting the side half-way up, then putting the pot in the hole. After filling the hole half way with dirt, cut the rest of the way up the side and remove the pot. I am certain I would hurt myself, so I have never tried it and do not know if it works.

It is not too late to plant seeds for summer-flowering annuals. Cosmos, zinnias, celosia and sunflowers are really easy to grow from seed. Others, such as periwinkles and begonias are tricky, but are available now in small pots. The plants will get big soon enough if you feed and water them regularly.

You may plant gladioli, dahlia, ginger and caladium bulbs (or tubers) now. Gingers and caladiums prefer shade.

Many vegetables and herbs are decorative and edible. Lettuces do not like hot weather, so buy plants.

Tomatoes set fruit when nighttime temperatures are below 70 degrees, so grab some of the already potted plants of many varieties are available now. I bought one that has flowers already.

Peppers and okra are easy to grow from seed, as are melons, cucumbers and summer squash. They are so easy to grow, be prepared to deal with lots of whatever it is you are growing. There are varieties of watermelon that produce small fruit, but the plant is still big. Vegetables and herbs require a lot of sun.

The first rule of successful gardening is "choose the right plant for the right place." Add, "plant it at the right time" and most of the battle is won.

There is plenty of help for novices. Any good gardener in your neighborhood will be glad to give you advice, and the lesbian and gay gardening club (Garden and Yard Society) meets the second Friday of each month.

Urban Harvest hosts classes and gives great advice about gardening here.

Books are full of gardening information, but use a local one. When Martha starts her show up again, turn the TV off when she talks about gardening.



i MORE INFO

Garden and Yard Club
713-661-6378 or 713-863-1066
Urban Harvest
www.urbanharvest.org
Texas Extension Service
texasextension.tamu.edu/ag_nr.html

dining J.A. CHAPMAN

The ambience leaves something to be desired,
but exceptional cuisine with a South American flair
makes Meson del Sol an extraordinary find in Houston

South American flair

"I FEEL LIKE I'M AT A BANQUET hall," my dining companion remarked as we took our seats in the spacious dining room at Meson del Sol.

Simple white walls with innocuous decorations, a dance floor in the center of the room, industrial carpet, and ivy-topped Roman columns definitely leave the impression it's a reception hall. Which in fact, it is.

The owners rent out the space under the moniker of Hacienda del Sol for parties and corporate gatherings. And with a stunning view of the downtown skyline, and an outdoor deck, it's a great setting.

But the rest of the time it's a restaurant. And that's why we were here.

Meson del Sol specializes in South American cuisine, with nods to other gastronomic influences. Italian pastas make an appearance, as do Caribbean, Tex-Mex, Creole and Hawaiian dishes. There's something for everyone.

They start you off with chips and salsa. The chips are homemade from tortillas, and the salsa is chunky and full of flavor.

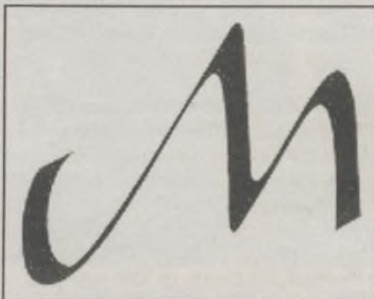
The appetizer menu is not your typical collection of starters. The patacones with cheese (\$2.99) are worth a try. Mashed green plantains are flattened into patties and then deep-fried and topped with shredded cheese. The patacones are thin, crispy and tasty, but the cheese adds little. I preferred mine plain with a little salsa for spice.

Be sure not to miss the excellent Peruvian ceviche (\$7.99) - tilapia lightly marinated in lime, red onion and cilantro. The fish is tender and perfectly done. It's served with avocado slices, mango salsa, and crackers. There's plenty to share with friends.

The tilapia in chipotle sauce (\$15.99) is one of the house specialties. The fish is lightly breaded, pan seared until just flaky, and served on a creamy, spicy chipotle sauce. It's simple, but well executed. The pollo de la casa (\$12.99) is also worth a try. Grilled chicken breast is topped with a creamy spinach and mushroom sauce that's full of flavor. The chicken is fork-tender, and the sauce is packed with spinach - no skimping here.

The Caribbean shrimp (\$15.99), done in a creamy tomato based Creole sauce, were a touch overcooked, but still tasty. And the Serrano's rib eye steak (\$16.99), a generous cut of black-angus beef, was cooked exactly to order.

MAIN DISHES COME WITH STIR-FRIED vegetables, which were spicy on one visit, bland on another, but always tender crisp. Also on the side, the fried sweet plantains are not to be missed. Tender, very sweet and crispy on the edges, they are quite



simply some of the best I've ever had.

Because of its proximity to a school, Meson del Sol is BYOB. If you bring your own wine, they'll open it for you and provide glasses. They'll even keep your bottle of white cool and top off your glass.

Just because alcohol isn't served does not mean drinks aren't available. The homemade fruit juices are among the hidden gems at Meson del Sol. A wide variety of fruits is used, from the familiar strawberry to the more tropical passion fruit. Made either with water (\$2.49) or milk (\$2.99), they're cool, refreshing and filled with flavor. The milk version is almost like a dessert smoothie, and indeed is a perfect way to round off your meal.

The service at Meson del Sol is efficient, but the wait staff isn't always well informed on the menu. They are friendly and helpful, however, and will do their best to find an answer if they don't know it offhand.

The food at Meson del Sol is excellent. Fresh ingredients expertly prepared make it worth a visit. But the ambience leaves something to be desired. The room seems quite empty when only a few tables are filled, and the linens, silverware, and china seem more typical of a catered event than a fine restaurant. It's an odd juxtaposition.

Even with the banquet hall feel, Meson del Sol is worth a visit. A restaurant of this quality where you can bring your own alcohol is an unusual find.



Meson del Sol

1220 Taft St.
713-529-6255
www.mesonfelsol.com

Food: 10/10/10/10

Service: 10/10/10

Value: 10/10/10

Scene: 10/10/1/2

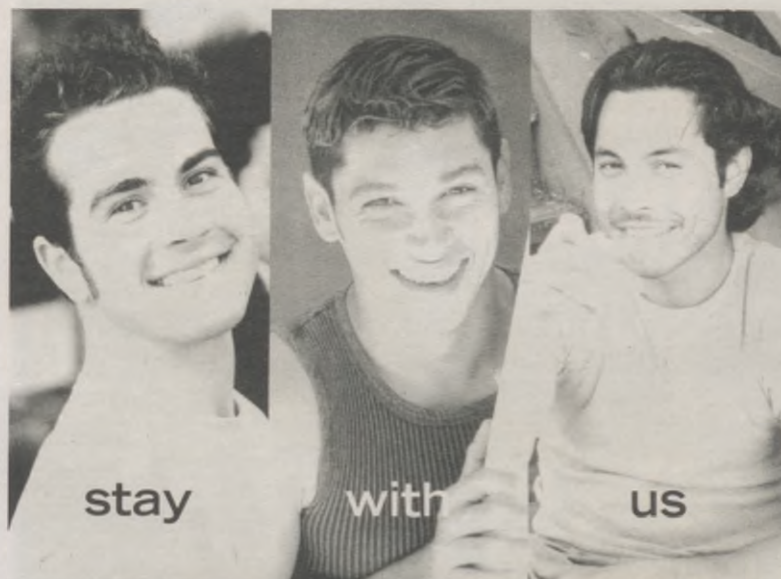
☛ = Stay home and eat cereal

10/10 = Well, if you really must

10/10/10 = Fine for all but the finicky

10/10/10/10 = Worth more than a 20-minute drive

10/10/10/10/10 = As good as you'll find in this city



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Two new restaurants are opening, there's
a new wrinkle at the Community Center,
and 'The Art of Living Together'

Opening in Montrose

IT'S TIME TO GET OUT AND ON THE
Go-Go with your only weekly column on
all things queer in the Bayou City.

FIRST THOUGH A BIG CONGRATULATIONS
to Amanda Carmichael who was the
lucky winner at Club Eve of two killer
seats to last week's Margaret Cho perform-
ance! You go girl!

WELL IN LIGHT OF ALL THE CLOSINGS
in the hood, it's nice to be able to talk
about some openings. The space that
once housed Café Noche at 2409
Montrose is being retooled as Señor
Rita's! Already the building has a fresh
coat of saffron-colored paint and four
very "Christo-esque" triangular sails
have been installed on the patio. Back in
the day, the Señor Rita's in the Village
was the place to be après brunch. Patios
packed, disco blaring, boys and girls
everywhere.

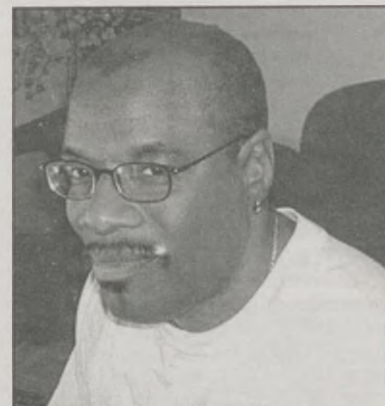
ALSO NEW AND OF NOTE IN THE
Montrose is Aladdin, a new restaurant
at Montrose and Westheimer. Word is
that the new owners have invested big
money on the décor inside; the transfor-
mation on the outside is obvious for all to
see. HotGG's only question is this. Where
are all the patrons going to park? Even
with running valets, the streets in the
area are filled with Pacific Street revelers
every night. Will be interesting to see
how this shakes out.

WHILE OUT AND ABOUT THIS
weekend, take time to see "Coexistence-
The Art of Living Together" on view
at Hermann Square, 901 Smith, in
front of City Hall. This traveling exhibit
is brought to you by the Holocaust
Museum of Houston and the City of
Houston. Free and open to the public
daily, this exhibit teaches tolerance and
diversity through art, film and dance.
Something we could all use more of in
this day and age... Ciao Karol! 713-942-
8800 for more info or visit www.hmh.org.

GET YOUR DIRTY CAR WASHED AND
help the Lambda Center this weekend.

The Lambda Center is holding a
fundraiser Car Wash, Saturday from 8
a.m. to 1 p.m. at 1201 W. Clay, between
Montrose and Waugh. It's for a good
cause so please stop by. With all the
pollen on cars, HotGG can't see your
rainbow flags!

THE HOUSTON GLBT COMMUNITY
Center debuts a new performance night,
called "Featured at the Center" this
Friday. Poet and singer Aaron Coleman



Aaron Coleman hosts "Featured at the Center" this
weekend at the Houston GLBT Community Center.

hosts "Featured" where talented commu-
nity members can present music, dance,
poetry and other spoken-word perform-
ance, stand-up comedy, film or display
works of art. "Featured" takes place on
the second Friday of every month at the
Community Center, 3400 Montrose,
suite 207. There is no admission charge,
however donations to the Community
Center are welcome always! Performers
and artists interested in participating in
any "Featured" program should contact
Coleman in advance at 713-522-0712 or
aaronssongs@yahoo.com.

MR. DON GILL HAS TURNED THE
reigns of the Mr. Prime Choice event
this year, over to Mr. Robert Harwood
of Key's West. Mr. Prime Choice weekend
still remains at The Ripcord, and this
year we have two handsome men compet-
ing for the title:

Mr. Laurence Van Valkenburg, from
Galveston and Mr. Greg Misakyan.
While there is no talent portion per se,
the filmed fantasies are not to be missed.
Mr. Prime Choice is crowned this
Saturday night at the Ripcord, 715
Fairview.

FINALLY DARLINGS, KEY'S WEST
WILL be the sight of memorial show for
Russell Box, called "Ima
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Friends, the evening benefits People with
AIDS Holiday Charities and gets under-
way at 7 p.m. at Key's West, 817 West
Dallas. 713-571-7870 for more information.

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dish

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

'Idol' gossip

Anwar Robinson gets gayed, Oscar winners get defensive and Michael Musto gets cryptic on us

Those damn bloggers are just bound and determined to have a gay contestant on this year's "American Idol," the super popular glorified karaoke contest on Fox.

The latest target of Internet rumors is **ANWAR ROBINSON**. The 25-year-old New Jersey singer, who auditioned in D.C., has been pseudo outed on gay entertainment information Web site www.afterelton.com, the brother to lesbian site www.afterellen.com.

The site has posted a personals profile found in the men-seeking-men section of www.BlackPlanet.com. Of course, it could be a fake.

"BlackPlanet.com indicates that Robinson's last login was Jan. 1, 2005, before the contestants for the fourth season of ['Idol'] were made public," afterelton.com reads. "No one knew at the time that [Robinson] would become one of the finalists ... which makes it unlikely to be a fake profile ... It also raises questions around why Robinson did not remove his profile once he was selected to be on the show."

John Chiklis, the writer of the story, concludes that Fox doesn't want the contestants to be out while on the show and claims to have "sources" who say that Robinson has been out since high school.

First season finalist **JIM VERRAROS** is the only openly gay contestant in the show's history, and he came out after the series ended.



Jim Verraros

For those of you who forgot about Verraros, his second album of pop tunes, "Rollercoaster" is set to hit stores April 26. He also stars in "Eating Out," a gay comedy that screened in D.C. last June and is being released in select cities April 8.

While the bloggers obsess over rumors about the next gay idol, it looks like Verraros has been busy getting to work.

Get shorty

It looks like the winner of this year's Oscar for best short subject documentary may also have a short fuse.

Last week, Steve Kalafer, the producer of nominated short "Sister Rose's Passion," sent a letter to the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts & Sciences claiming that life partners **ROBERT HUDSON** and **BOBBY HOUSTON** unfairly used reenactments in their award-winning



'American Idol' finalist Anwar Robinson is the latest of the show's singers to encounter gay rumors.

movie "Mighty Times: The Children's March," the Associated Press reports.

In his letter, Kalafer says the film fails to disclose which scenes are reenactments of events from the black civil rights movement, Hudson & Houston's subject. Dale Olson, a publicist for "Passion" told AP that "Mighty Times" is "an intentional deception to the Academy."



Bobby Houston

Hudson had a bitchy retort for the Los Angeles Times, saying, "The pain you feel inside after losing can make anyone spin out of control."

Ouch.

Musto be true

Village Voice gossip columnist (and Dish's arch nemesis) **MICHAEL MUSTO** purged himself of a whole lot of gay gossip in his column on March 29. Unluckily for his humble readers, he took all of the names out, so we have to guess for ourselves.

"Which swiveling pop star has been known to pick up guys in the steam room at a Miami hotel gym — a lot?" Musto queer-ies.

"What handsome ex-series star (a Golden Globe winner) once flirted with a guy across the aisle on a plane and even tried to follow him into the bathroom, to the consternation of the actor's young male 'assistant'?"

"What marriage between a gay and a gal was partly done for the gay to get press and the gal to get a green card?"

"What two young hunks (one a faded star of an Oscar-winning flick and the other a broken-up boyfriend) may well have commingled several years ago when they were both more famous?"

These are a couple Dish figured out, let's see if you're as good.



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OBITUARIES

BERTRAM W. CLAPP, 66, of Houston passed away peacefully at Park Plaza Hospital March 31 at 8:15pm from complications caused by diabetes. He was born in Cape Cod, Mass. on December 30, 1938. He was preceded in death by his parents, Bertram W. Clapp & Jane B. Clapp; his grandparents, Richard A. Jennings & Marion E. Jennings, & Edith B. Clapp. He is survived by his sisters, Marion E. Coleman of Houston & Amy F. Rose of Harwich (Cape Cod), Mass.; nephews Larry Greeley & Stephen Rose; niece Rebecca McMahon, several great nieces & nephews, & many loving & loved friends & his two beloved cats, Missy Moo & Missy Girl. He was employed for the past 35 years by House of Coleman, where he served as Bindery Foreman. He enjoyed photography, was known for his talent for holiday decorations & pen & ink drawings, & was a Civil War buff. He also was a member of the "Nite Caps". His family would like to thank his primary physician, Dr. Gary W. Brewton, & Dr. Edward W. Stool, Dr. Joseph Gathe, Jr., Dr. Gary L. Hagstrom, Dr. Victor Cumagun, & the staff & nurses at Park Plaza Hospital for their wonderful care & support. For those desiring memorial contributions may be made to SNAP, P.O. Box 70286, Houston, Texas 77270, or Kindred Spirits Celebration, 901 W. Alabama, Houston, Texas 77006 per Bert's wishes. A celebration of life is being planned. Call (713) 523-2521 for details, location & time.

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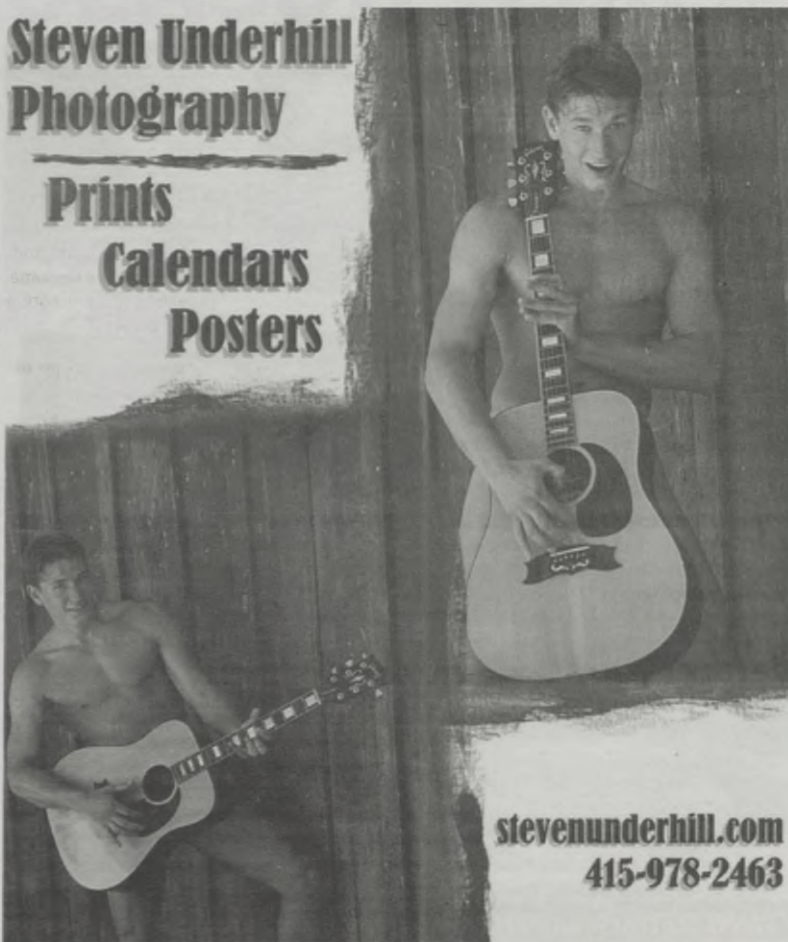
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...SO THANKS FOR COMING TO MY PARTY AND FOR MAKING A DONATION TO MOWEN PAC INSTEAD OF PRESENTS.
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IT WAS RAFFI'S IDEA, I THINK IT'S GREAT.
JEEZ, MO! I'M DELIGHTED TO GIVE MONEY. DEMOCRACY ITSELF IS AT STAKE.
BUT THAT'S JUST IT! IT'S NOT DEMOCRACY IF YOU HAVE TO BUY IT! I RESENT BEING MADE COMPLICIT IN THE... THE CORRUPT PUTRESCENCE THAT IS OUR ELECTORAL SYSTEM.
HAVE YOU SEEN TONI?
HUH. NOT IN A WHILE.
HEY, ARE YOU HIDING?
OH, HI, GLORIA. I'M JUST TAKING A LITTLE BREAK.
THIS WAS A GREAT IDEA. IT'S NICE TO SEE CLARICE SO UPBEAT ABOUT THE ELECTION. WHATEVER ANTI-DEPRESSANT SHE'S ON, I COULD USE SOME.
EVEN IF IT MEANT NOT HAVING SEX SINCE THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION?
UH...AND RAFFI'S QUITE THE INSPIRED ORGANIZER.
YEAH, HE AND CLARICE ARE REALLY BONDING AROUND ALL THIS. IT'S NICE, BUT A LITTLE LONELY. I MISS THE SPECIAL CONNECTION WE USED TO HAVE.
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bitch session

HOW IS IT THAT THE SAME ESCORTS have been advertising in the local gay rags since the early '90s and yet the age listed in their ads never changes?

TO THE GUY WHO QUESTIONED HIV-positive men in adult bookstores having sex with others all day and not telling them: If you're in adult bookstores having unprotected sex, you're a moron.

TO THE GUY WHO WANTS THOSE HE tells his problems to to "stop laughing": You get what you pay for; I'm not your damn shrink!

WORKING IN A GAY BAR DOESN'T make you gay. Reading a gay magazine and being bitter enough to submit a post to it, well that's pretty suspect.

IF WE WANT "NORMAL" AMERICA TO

love us, we have to stop making fools of ourselves and practicing lewd and crude behavior — like dancing naked and groping each other — in the streets at Pride events and other gay venues.

THE GUY ONLINE ASKED TO BUY tina from you not because you are black, but because so many guys online do crystal meth. Everything is not about being black or white.

IT'S LAUGHABLE TO HEAR YOU so-called bears ranting at each other over how you must behave in order to be one. It just goes to prove the folly of succumbing to labels to define who you are in the first place!

SPEAKING OF THE SEARS CATALOG, I can remember one time years ago it was recalled because it was thought that a model's

All men are gay,
but most are still
in the closet.

penis was sticking through his pajamas!

GAYS ARE "IN YOUR FACE" AND "shoving gay rights down everyone's throats"? Nothing is worse than the incessant bullshit from anti-gay activists who make up lies about us to deny us our rights. If they got anymore "in your face" with their self-righteous "Bible-based" persecution we'd be having intercourse!

TO THE OLDER GUY WITH THE HOT Latino boyfriend: Enjoy him now because soon enough "ugly" won't be in style, and I'll be able to get on that!

TO THE BLACK MEN WHO GO TO primarily white gay bars and roll your eyes at the sight of another black man: What's that about?

THE INTERNET HAS SPOILED THE gay world for me. I used to like the surprise that came with meeting someone in the real world, rather than recognizing them from their online ad. What's the point if I already know who they are?

MATURE MEN WITH NO HAIR ARE much hotter than young men with attitude. And no, bitch, I'm neither.

WHY DOES MY BOYFRIEND INSIST on watching me take a dump? He even likes to look over the bathroom stalls in public places while I do it. It's embarrassing and weird.

I LOVE "AMAZING RACE" AND AM happy to see a gay couple on it again. I hope they win. My only gripe is that Lynn and Alex are such nelly queens. Why do some gay people have to make such a stereotypical spectacle of themselves on TV?

YEAH, I HAVE BACK HAIR. I HATE IT, too, but do you know how hard it is to shave it by yourself? Cut me some slack; we all have imperfections.

I'M A STRIPPER, AND I'M SINGLE BUT dating right now, and I have a message for you bastards who want a relationship with me: Don't ever fucking try to get me to stop. If you met me while I was stripping, then you shouldn't ask me to stop. **BITCH BOY RESPONDS:** If they met you with attitude, they shouldn't ask you out!

THERE ARE TRUE GENETIC heterosexuals, but the vast majority are just too brainwashed and conformist to consider any alternative.

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



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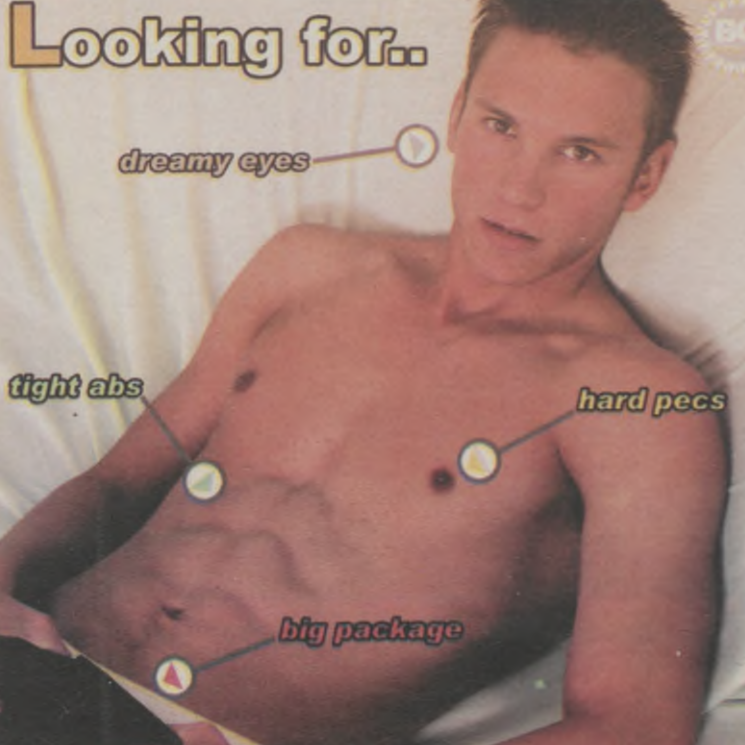
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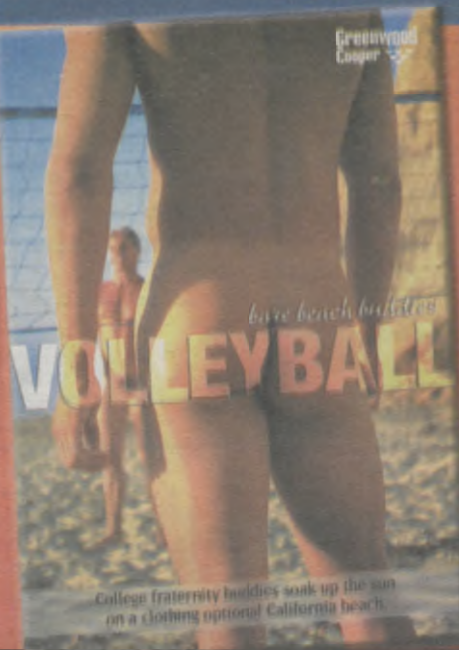
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