

Surviving

Diagnosed with HIV nearly two decades ago, Joel Martinez put his energies into educating himself and others about the disease.

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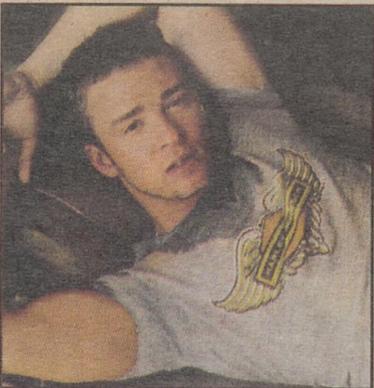


INSIDE



Anti-gay Rev. Fred Phelps plans protests in Houston, and the Houston GLBT Community Center turns the events into a fund-raiser.

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Dishy Justin Timberlake takes a guest role on the very gay 'Will & Grace.'

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The Breakfast Klub offers dishes delicious enough to encourage any patron to 'join the Klub.'

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Klein officials allow GSA



Houston attorney David George and his client, Klein High School student Marla Dukler, talk to reporters Wednesday. George, an ACLU of Texas cooperating attorney, said Klein officials have agreed to allow students who want to form a Gay-Straight Alliance to begin meeting. The ACLU had sued the district over the issue. (Penny Weaver photo)

District, ACLU reach agreement in lawsuit filed on behalf of lesbian teen

By PENNY WEAVER

Teens at a suburban Houston high school can get a proposed Gay-Straight Alliance off the ground now that school officials have agreed to allow the group to meet.

Both sides made announcements Wednesday after Klein Independent School District officials reached a settlement agreement on a lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of KISD student Marla Dukler.

"Klein High School now knows what schools everywhere need to know — that they can't use delay tactics to get away with trampling students' rights and violating federal law," said David George, an ACLU of Texas cooperating attorney of Edwards & George, LLP, of Houston. "We applaud

these students for standing up for their rights and demanding equal treatment."

Liz Johnson, assistant superintendent for community relations at KISD, said school officials are happy to resolve the suit.

"We're pleased in that as far as we know we may be the only district who has negotiated successfully for restrictions [on a Gay-Straight Alliance]," Johnson said.

According to Johnson, it was important to school officials to address parental concerns about a club for gay teens and their supporters.

"There is much concern among the community about the kinds of discussions that would go on in the club and that the club...would bring discussions past the stated goal of tolerance," Johnson said. "We feel that [the new rules] will force the club to stay on their stated goal of tolerance, and that the club's purpose cannot go beyond that limitation."

Dukler, a junior at Klein High School who led the students in the fight to form

Please see **GSA ALLOWED** on Page 3

Staph may be spreading through drug use

Houston health officials say increase of infections is not unique to gay men

By JENNIFER J. SMITH, LOU CHIBBARO JR., & PENNY WEAVER

As Washington D.C. clinic officials this week warned that an antibiotic-resistant skin infection may be transmitted through drug apparatus used to inhale drugs, Houston health leaders cautioned that an increase in cases of the infection is not unique to gay men.

"We have been tracking increases [in staph infections], but we cannot identify it as being associated with gays," said Kathy Barton, chief of public affairs for the Houston Health Department. "What we have most notably found is an increase in school settings. This particular infection is one we mostly thought was associated with hospitals."

The skin infection is resistant to commonly prescribed antibiotics and began surfacing late last year among gay men in San Francisco and Los Angeles. The skin condition, known as Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus, or MRSA, also has been reported on the rise among gay men in Washington D.C. and Atlanta.

In Houston, the health department has tracked an increase in cases of MRSA for about two years.

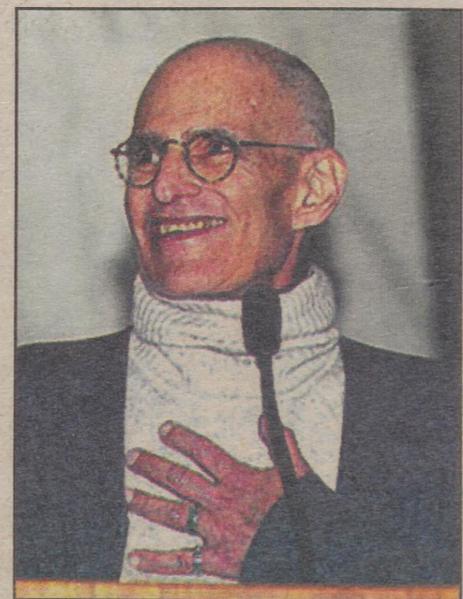
"It is a reportable infection," Barton noted. "We tend to get involved when it becomes a cluster or group."

Since the infection resists some antibiotics, it can be more difficult to treat.

"When you have those kinds of situations, it's much harder to keep it under control," Barton said.

Mark Sanders, director of clinic services for Montrose Clinic, said health workers at that facility have seen a large number of staph infections among gay men in recent months. But he noted that the clinic's primary patient population is gay

Please see **STAPH INFECTIONS** on Page 4



"Too many gay men are once again acting totally irresponsibly, and hideous diseases and physical manifestations are once again appearing," said long-time AIDS activist Larry Kramer, about the conduct that apparently is resulting in the mysterious spread of drug-resistant staph infections among gay men.

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local news

'God Hates Fags' preacher comes to Houston

GLBT Community Center turns Phelps's weekend protests into fund-raiser

By PENNY WEAVER

Nationally known anti-gay Kansas Rev. Fred Phelps plans a series of protests in the Houston area this weekend, and gay activists have turned the "God Hates Fags" preacher's visit into a fund-raiser.

Described on its Web site (www.godhatesfags.com) as an "old school Baptist Church," Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kansas, is led by Phelps and

i MORE INFO

Houston GLBT Community Center
3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 207
713-524-3818
www.houstonglbtcenter.org
e-mail: info@houstonglbtcenter.org

Rev. Fred Phelps
Westboro Baptist Church • 3701 W. 12th St.
Topeka, KS • www.godhatesfags.com

known for its "God Hates Fags" mantra.

Phelps, who has been pastor at WBC since 1955, and supporters plan demonstrations at various times from Friday through Sunday in Houston and Kingwood, located on the northeast side of Houston.

The group is protesting Kingwood College's production of the "The Laramie Project" by Moises Kaufman, a play based on the 1998 murder of gay college student Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyo. Church leaders call the production a "sodomite propaganda play," according to the Web site. They say the picketing is "in religious protest and warning: 'God is not mocked! God Hates Fags! & Fag-Enablers! Ergo, God hates Kingwood College administration, faculty, staff and student body!'" the Web site states.

The group routinely pickets under similar statements to protest gay-friendly groups or events.

Leaders at the Houston GLBT Community Center have created a fund-raiser in conjunction with the Phelps protests. For every minute that Phelps and supporters picket in the Houston metropolitan area, the community center encourages individuals or groups to pledge any amount of their choice to the non-profit organization, according to a center press release.



Rev. Fred Phelps, leader of Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kan., which powers the Web site "www.godhatesfags.com," plans a series of protests in Houston this weekend.

Since the center is a main resource for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Houstonians, leaders at the facility say donations to its projects help counteract Phelps's anti-gay efforts.

"The owners of Autbar in Ann Arbor first devised the idea for this wonderful fund-raiser when Phelps visited their town in 2001," said Clarence Burton Bagby, community center president. "Since then, groups in other cities have mounted similar drives and raised a

great deal of money for GLBT organizations.

"The fact that Phelps is unintentionally serving our causes is tremendous," he added. "This is both a fund-raiser and a protest action against his beliefs."

Bagby said Thursday the center already had raised \$500 with the effort.

Individuals or groups may pledge any amount per minute. The center will base the total amount of Phelps protest time based on his published schedule and on observations at the Houston-area sites.

According to his Web site, this is Phelps' Houston itinerary:

Friday, March 7
1-2 p.m. • NASA • Clear Lake City
7:30-8 p.m. • Kingwood College

Saturday, March 8
5-5:30 p.m. • Saint John Vianney Catholic Church
West Houston
7:30-8 p.m. • Kingwood College

Sunday, March 9
In Kingwood:
7:50-8:20 a.m. • Christ the King Lutheran Church
9-9:40 a.m. • First Presbyterian Church
9:45-10:15 a.m. • Good Shepherd Episcopal Church
10:20-11 a.m. • Kingwood United Methodist Church

Long battle wins place for Gay-Straight Alliance

GSA ALLOWED, continued from Page 1

the GSA, said school officials' concerns that the group might facilitate "provocative discussions" are unfounded.

"I think that many people hear the word 'gay' and they think about sexual activity, and that is their own fantasy," Dukler said. "The club is going to be in place to speak about tolerance. That's not anything that is provocative."

Months-long battle

Along with Dukler, 17, who is openly lesbian, more than a dozen students at KHS submitted an application to form a GSA at the high school last September. The ACLU alleges that school officials changed the requirements for student clubs in an attempt to keep the GSA from forming.

Students resubmitted their application following the new rules, but months passed with no response from the school.

The ACLU on Jan. 22 filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Houston against the school district and two school officials, alleging that the district is biased because it had not approved the application for a GSA.

Klein school officials, however, said the lawsuit was premature and that the application still was under consideration along with several other student proposals for in-school groups.

The lawsuit alleged that the decision not to approve the club application "violates the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and the Equal Access Act because their prohibition of the club is based on the content and the viewpoint of



Malcolm and Holly Dukler, parents of Klein student Marla Dukler, have supported their daughter in her quest to form a Gay-Straight Alliance at Klein High School. (Photo by Penny Weaver)

the speech of the clubs and its members."

On Wednesday, school officials and attorneys for the ACLU announced the settlement agreement.

Under its new rules, the district requires written parental permission for students to participate in any club or organization, including the GSA.

"Klein believes this agreement may very well serve as a precedent for other districts, and that it will protect the rights of students and parents," district officials said in a press release. "The Klein ISD will hold all clubs to compliance with the law and with school district policy."

Also under the KISD new policies for school groups, non-school personnel cannot "direct, control, conduct or regularly

attend activities of the club," according to Johnson. Also, any school club, "by its purpose, goals or activities, cannot promote, encourage or condone, directly or indirectly, participation in any conduct by students that is classified as unlawful."

Johnson said any KISD club may not support behavior that "poses a risk to the health, safety or welfare [of students], including but not limited to sex activity by minors."

Widespread support

Some 17 students signed the original petition to form the GSA, and most of them are heterosexual, according to Dukler. All have their parents' permission to join the club.

The students hope to have their first meeting in two weeks, after the school's

spring break.

"We're very happy. The students can begin to meet immediately," George said. "Under the law and under the agreement, the students have the same rights as any other student group, and the ACLU will be monitoring this closely to make sure that the district is not discriminating against the Gay-Straight Alliance in any way."

Dukler said the struggle to form the GSA was worth it, and she is ready to begin meetings of the club.

"I'm really happy. Now my school is going to be a whole lot safer because of it," Dukler said. "We're going to be able to meet; we're going to be able to work toward better tolerance around the school."

"Hopefully other school districts will understand that if they don't approve the club, then they're going to have to encounter someone like David here in federal court," she added.

The teenager said that in the wake of the filing of the lawsuit, she received support from people across the city, state and nation.

"They were my backbone," Dukler said. She hopes that she and her classmates can get the Klein GSA on strong footing during her last year and a half of high school.

"I think that, in the long run, by educating the students and by educating the faculty, it will be a whole lot easier for me to walk the hallways and for the students who come up after me to walk the hallways," Dukler said.

"This is a safe place for students to meet," George noted. "This is a place to promote tolerance and just for students to get together and talk about issues. There's nothing improper about that."

national news

Critics demand better staph infection tracking

STAPH INFECTIONS, continued from Page 1

men, making it difficult for Sanders and his colleagues to gauge if the general population also has seen a rise in MRSA cases.

Barton noted that the increase in staph infections has been seen in the general public, as well as among gays. She said school populations have seen a particular rise in cases of MRSA.

Although MRSA is treatable, health workers note that it also is easily spread through casual contact.

Recreational drug use a danger

The Whitman-Walker Clinic has warned Washington D.C.-area doctors that MRSA could be transmitted, among other ways, through sharing drug paraphernalia used to inhale drugs through the nose.

In a Feb. 28 e-mail alert sent to doctors who treat gay men in D.C. and the surrounding suburbs, Whitman-Walker noted that MRSA is frequently found in the noses of large numbers of people in a non-infective state. The Whitman-Walker alert noted that the MRSA bacteria could be spread among people who share drug paraphernalia such as spoons, straws, or other devices used to inhale drugs such as cocaine or crystal methamphetamine ("Tina").

Gay men who use recreational drugs also routinely share "bumpers," small plastic devices through which they inhale recreational drugs like ketamine ("Special K") and cocaine.

Although MRSA and other forms of staph bacteria usually remain dormant in the nose, the bacteria could be spread from the nose to other parts of the body through poor hygiene, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Doctors who treat gay men in the District said last week that they diagnosed MRSA in at least seven gay men during the past few weeks.

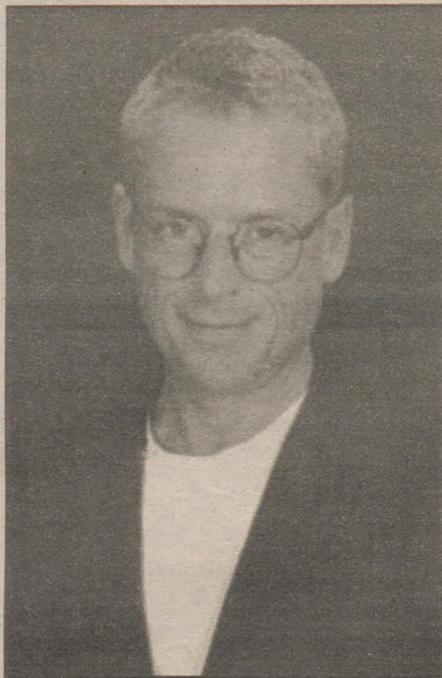
"When we first learned about this, we called our colleagues in the gay health clinics to discuss how we should address this," said Michael Cover, Whitman-Walker communications director.

Cover said the e-mail alert released by the clinic last week included a fact sheet describing the staph infection outbreak among gay men. He said it also urged area doctors to inform their patients about the condition and ways to avoid it as the patients appear for routine visits.

A spokesperson for the D.C. Department of Health said the department had not learned of MRSA infections appearing in D.C. until the Washington Blade, sister paper to the Houston Voice, contacted the department last week. Dr. Karyn Berry, a communicable disease specialist with the department in charge of monitoring developments such as an MRSA outbreak, did not return a call by press time.

Activists demand response

After confirmation of staph infections among gay men in at least half a dozen U.S.



Cleve Jones, founder of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, cautioned against comparing a mysterious outbreak of resistant staph infections among gay men too closely to the early days of the HIV epidemic. (File photo by Clint Steib)

cities in recent weeks, gay health activists are calling for an orchestrated acknowledgement and response from public health officials.

"No one is officially doing MRSA tracking, and that's a real problem," said Dr. Ken Harrel, president of the Gay & Lesbian Medical Association. "This is a large, emerging problem that no one seems to have a handle on."

The infections manifest themselves as boils and abscesses on various parts of sufferers' bodies, including rectal and groin infections. Public health officials in several cities said the infections appear to be spread from skin to skin contact, including sexual contact and public spaces like gyms and bathhouses.

Doctors confirmed cases among gays in Atlanta, Houston, Washington, D.C., Boston and New York City last week.

Until the late 1990s, the skin infection was confined mostly to elderly patients in hospitals and nursing homes, according to the CDC. But since 1997, non-hospital population groups such as prison inmates, members of athletic teams and Native Americans have reported the drug-resistant staph infections.

But CDC epidemiologists have said new cases outside San Francisco and Los Angeles appear to confirm earlier findings by CDC researchers that a new, undetermined factor is causing drug-resistant staph to flourish in a wider group of people that now includes gay men.

No deaths have been recorded from the staph cases reported in gay men, but some patients have been hospitalized. Physicians monitoring the infections say they could produce life-threatening complications if not treated promptly.

Solid information on patterns of infec-

tion and the national scope of the disease isn't available, according to health care providers, because MRSA is not widely "reportable" under current data gathering processes. Reporting MRSA diagnoses is not required to state health departments or the CDC like other diseases that could be a public threat.

CDC does have one "surveillance program" involving four states that voluntarily report MRSA findings, according to officials.

Scott Fridkin, a CDC medical epidemiologist and MRSA expert, said lack of reporting "isn't really the issue. It's the clinic recognition we're after, recognizing the need to do an appropriate test, the appropriate therapy and to have close follow-up with patients."

Learning from AIDS

Some gay health advocates compared the mysterious emergence of the cyst-like boils and abscesses on gay men to the early days of the AIDS epidemic.

"When I first heard about the staph infections among gay men, it reminded me of the first stories in the early '80s about a 'new cancer' appearing among gay men," Chris Parsons, director of advocacy and community relations for AID Atlanta, Atlanta's oldest and largest HIV/AIDS agency, said last week.

The type of conduct that apparently spreads the new staph infections among gay men parallels the risky behavior enjoyed by some before HIV, according to Larry Kramer, the nationally recognized writer who co-founded Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York and ACT UP, the AIDS advocacy and protest organization.

"Too many gay men are once again acting totally irresponsibly, and hideous diseases and physical manifestations are once again appearing," Kramer said.

But such comparisons could contribute to public hysteria about staph, said Cleve Jones, founder of the NAMES Project and the AIDS Memorial Quilt.

"It's certainly worrisome, but I would be cautious drawing parallels between this and HIV," Jones said. "This resistance has been well documented for decades, and we know this is an issue facing medical professionals, which is very different than at the beginning of the HIV pandemic where we knew nothing."

The lack of coordinated public health response is both telling and predictable, said Eric Rofes, author of "Reviving the Tribe: Regenerating Gay Men's Sexuality and Culture in the Ongoing Epidemic," and an organizer of last year's GLBT Health Summit.

"I think that what this story reveals that is most interesting is the consequences of not having a specific entity that feels knowledgeable and responsible for gay men's health," he said. "Whose job is it in the national and even on a local and state context to provide oversight, planning and responsiveness for gay men?"

"Is it the traditional public health system, which has traditionally been homophobic and has not prioritized this com-

munity?" he asked. "Is it the GLBT system, which has not been as organized and networked as they could be?"

Call for reporting

Some private physicians have called for quick action on the part of the public health care system.

"This is the time to jump on it and get out in front of it," said Douglas Ward, a Washington, D.C., physician whose office has treated at least three gay men for drug-resistant staph infections since late last year. "The sort of study that needs to be done doesn't go real quickly anyway, so the sooner the better."

"It's also going to be a lot tougher down the road to study thousands and thousands of cases and cross-analyze contacts and places of origin compared to doing it now, when maybe there is only a couple of hundred," Ward said.

Ward talked to his local health department officials who said they will "fully investigate" the cases, he said.

Public health epidemiologists working for state agencies have also joined in the call for mandatory reporting.

One public health official urged state agencies to become more involved in the push to make staph infections a reportable medical condition.

"What is the dimension of the problem? We don't know," said Matthew Boulton, the state epidemiologist for Michigan. "What populations are we seeing it occur in? We don't know. What are the risk factors? We don't know."

Boulton spearheaded the move to make MRSA reportable by drafting a resolution for the Council for State & Territorial Epidemiologists. CSTE maintains the list of reportable diseases in the U.S. and works as an advisory body to the CDC.

The resolution, which Boulton has not publicly released, was turned in to CSTE last month, he said. It is scheduled to be voted on in June, and if passed could go to the CDC as early as this fall. CDC could send new reportable lists including MRSA to states early next year, he said.

CSTE officials declined an interview to confirm the resolution through CDC spokesperson Nicole Coffin-Ott.

With national reporting, the CDC or another agency could begin the kind of in-depth study gay health activists seek.

"I don't know of anybody who is doing MRSA contact tracing, and I think it would be a fantastic study," said Harrel of the GLMA. "The really important work is to compare the strains from city to city and see if they're the same. Right now we don't do any of that."

MORE INFO

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
1600 Clifton Rd.
Atlanta, GA 30333
404-639-3311
www.cdc.gov

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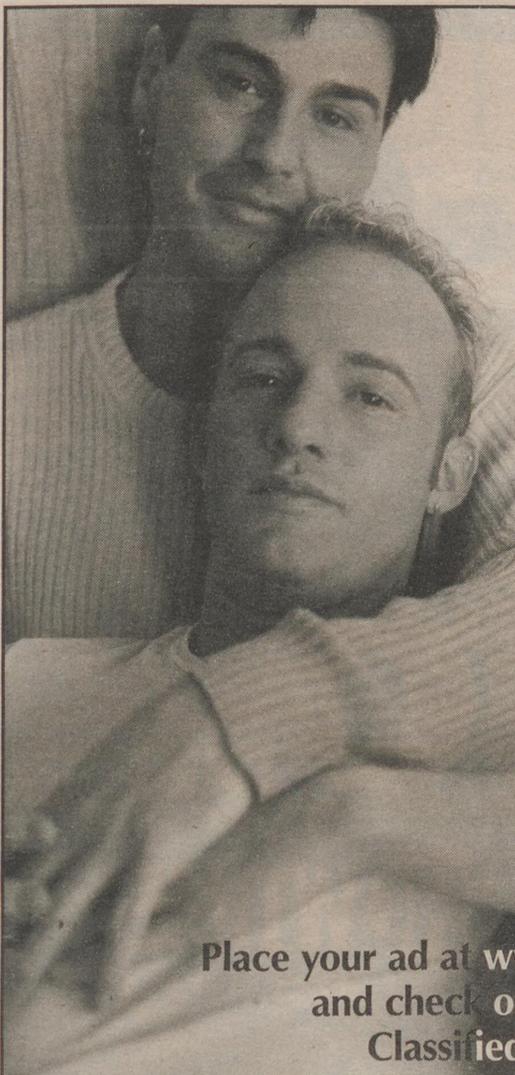
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local news

Emerich is new Voice general manager

Experienced publisher plans to focus on customer needs, community service

Daniel Emerich, a native of Dayton, Ohio, and a longtime newspaper publisher, has joined the Houston Voice staff as general manager.

His responsibilities will include leading the sales department, handling distribution and managing the Voice office.

William Waybourn, president of Window Media, parent company of the Voice, said Emerich is a welcome addition to the Houston team.

"We are indeed fortunate that someone with Daniel's newspaper background and sales management experience is taking over the helm of the Houston Voice," Waybourn said. "With much of the recent harsh economic times now in the past, we believe Daniel will be a tremendous asset as he grows both the Houston Voice and Eclipse to the potential we know is there."

"He is also dedicated to working with our customers to make sure they stay on the road to recovery, as well,"



Longtime newspaper publisher Daniel Emerich is the new general manager for the Houston Voice and Eclipse in Texas.

Waybourn added. "His arrival in Houston (from Ohio) is another step in our ongoing commitment to serving Houston, insuring that it has a strong

community voice."

Emerich said he is excited about joining the Houston Voice team.

"Houston has a large and vibrant community — a community that the Houston Voice has served well for many years," Emerich said. "Most people don't really think about it, but the Voice relies solely on advertising revenue to grow the paper."

"As the region's most respected gay and lesbian newspaper, we're in a great position to serve our advertisers," he added. "Our goal will be to focus on understanding and meeting the needs of our current advertisers, attracting new advertisers and delivering outstanding results."

"For our readers, all this will allow us to invest in printing more pages, increasing our news coverage and adding exciting new features," he noted.

Most recently, Emerich served as publisher of Impact Weekly, a 30,000-circulation alternative weekly in Dayton, Ohio. A native of Dayton, Emerich is a 1983 graduate of Wright State University in Dayton, where he earned his bachelor's in marketing.

Emerich has 20 years of experience in newspaper sales and management. He began his career in the newspaper industry with The Xenia Daily Gazette, serving

as senior account representative and later as advertising director.

During this period, he contributed to the Thomson Corporation's transformation from a diverse collection of 120 daily newspapers in the United States to a cohesive sales, training and marketing organization consisting of 150 daily newspapers and more than 200 specialty publications.

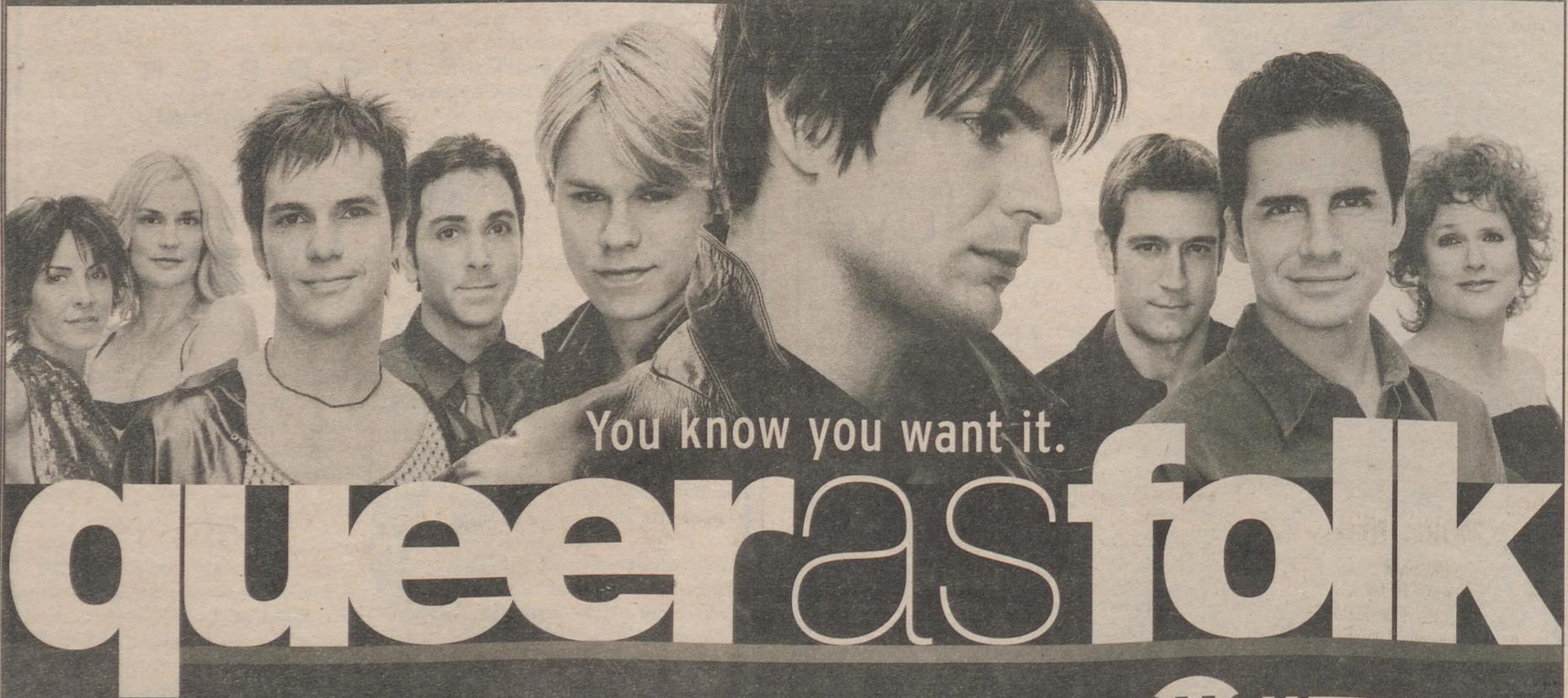
Emerich joined the fledgling Dayton Voice in late 1995 as advertising director, developing the newspaper's retail and classified sales strategies and procedures. In early 1998, he spent three months assisting Gambit Communications in New Orleans in the development of its Internet sales strategy for the Best of New Orleans Web site.

In late 1998, he returned to the Dayton Voice — now Impact Weekly — as advertising director and consultant to assist in the preparation of the newspaper for a potential sale. The sale of Impact Weekly was completed in June, 1999, and Emerich then was appointed publisher of the newspaper in December, 1999.

At the Houston Voice office, Emerich may be reached via e-mail at demerich@houstonvoice.com, or by phone at 713-529-8490.

From staff reports

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around houston

Destiny's Child member to take part in AIDS Walk Houston

Native Houstonian Kelly Rowland of the musical trio Destiny's Child will show her support Sunday by helping kick off the annual AIDS Walk Houston. Registration will begin at 8 a.m., followed by the walk at 10 a.m. The 5K event benefits AIDS Foundation Houston (AFH) and 13 local AIDS service organizations, providing housing, food, education, counseling, job resources, medical services and more to individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Kelly Adels Hess, vice president of development at AFH, said, "It is amazing to see someone like Kelly Rowland who understands the need for the Houston community to come together and take a step in the fight against AIDS. We are anticipating a great participant turn out to help raise funds and awareness this year."

i MORE INFO

2003 AIDS Walk Houston
Sunday, March 9
Sam Houston Park
Downtown Houston
1000 Bagby St.
www.AIDSwalkhouston.org

Gay parents plan family day activities

Houston Gay & Lesbian Parents plan a family day this Sunday. Activities to choose from will include kite flying, kickball and basketball. The day's picnic is planned for 3 p.m., followed by a stilt-walking demonstration, according to Glenda Redworth, HGLP communications chair. Those who want to participate should meet at Spottz Park, located at the northeast corner of Heights & Memorial Drive by the Masterson YWCA. Redworth said attendees should bring a picnic and drinks for their families and a dessert or snack item to share. For more information, call Glenda or Michele at 713-666-8260 or e-mail gredworth@analysts.com.

i MORE INFO

HGLP Family Day
2-5 p.m. Sunday, March 9
Spottz Park, Houston

Facility celebrates 25 years with fund-raiser

Montrose Counseling Center plans its 25th anniversary celebration, "Bringin' in the Silver," next weekend. The annual event raises funds for the center's services, which include mental health assistance to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and HIV-positive Houstonians. MCC offers counseling, support groups, HIV/AIDS case management and outpatient chemical dependency treatment. All proceeds from "Bringin' in the Silver" go directly toward client services, according to center officials. Entertainment will be by Marshall Maxwell Entertainment Agency. The event includes refreshments, hors d'oeuvres, a silent auction, complimentary valet parking and celebrity bartenders provided by the Four Seasons Club.

i MORE INFO

Bringin' in the Silver
5:30-8:30 p.m. • Friday, March 14
Donation at the door: \$50
Historic Magnolia Ballroom • 751 Franklin
www.montrosecounselingcenter.org

'Queer As Folk' actor to speak at HRC gala

The Human Rights Campaign in Houston will hold its sixth annual gala on Saturday, March 15, with a French-themed event that includes a silent auction and cocktail reception, complete with DJ and models.

Keynote speaker is Congressman Chris Bell, recipient of the first John Walzel Political Equality Award. Special guests are "Queer As Folk" actor Robert Gant and Judy Shepard, HRC director and mother of Matthew Shepard. Deborah Cannon, president of Bank of America Houston and chair of the Greater Houston Partnership, will serve as honorary gala chair. Emcee for the evening is Frank Billingsley, chief meteorologist at KPRC Channel 2. The dinner begins at 8 p.m., with a dessert and champagne reception scheduled for 10 p.m. The HRC is the largest national lesbian and gay political organization. The group works to lobby Congress, provide campaign support and educate the public to ensure that gay Americans can pursue equal rights.

i MORE INFO

Houston HRC Gala
8 p.m. • Saturday, March 15
Tickets: \$175 and up
Houston Intercontinental Hotel
2222 West Loop South
HRC Houston: 713-522-1115
www.hrchouston.org

Group focuses on support for partners of HIV patients

The Bering Support Network of Bering Memorial United Methodist Church offers "Negative Partners of Positive People," a topic-focused HIV/AIDS group, beginning Wednesday, March 12. Advance registration is required. The network continues to offer both a general group for people impacted by HIV/AIDS and a group for people disabled due to the disease, but this series of topic-focused groups is designed to delve more deeply into some specific issues, themes and concerns. According to a Bering Support Network press release, "Living in a loving relationship with someone who is HIV-positive presents a unique set of issues. This group explores the concerns of these wives, lovers, husbands and partners living with HIV once-removed." Melissa Beason Smith, LPC-I, will facilitate the group. There is no cost to attend, and potluck supper will be held one hour prior to the group session.

i MORE INFO

"Negative Partners of Positive People"
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Bering Memorial United Methodist Church
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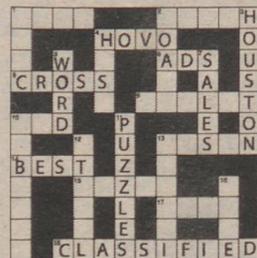
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N.Y. mayor to march in St. Pat's parade that bans gays

NEW YORK (AP) — Mayor Michael Bloomberg marched through the rain March 2 at a small St. Patrick's Day parade in Queens that permits gay groups to march, unlike the upcoming larger parade. "I'm glad everyone's here marching," a green-clad Bloomberg said before marching the 15-block route in Sunnyside, Queens. "I wish all parades could be that way." On Feb. 27, a group of gay Irish-American politicians criticized Bloomberg for planning to march in the main St. Patrick's Day parade on March 17, where gays are barred from marching under their own banner as other groups do. "Marching in a parade that discriminates is sending a message that their behavior is acceptable," Council member Christine Quinn said. The Ancient Order of Hibernians, organizers of the larger parade, maintains it is a private group with a First Amendment right to choose participants.



New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg (second from right) marched in a small March 2 St. Patrick's Day parade that allows gays to participate. Bloomberg will also march in the main March 17 parade that excludes gays. (Photo by Robert Mecea/AP)

Nashville council weighs 'modest' gay rights bill

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — A measure introduced in Nashville's Metro Council Nov. 25 would ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation for metro government employees, but would not apply to private companies, the Tennessean newspaper reported. Under pressure from religious groups, including the Southern Baptist Convention, Council members Chris Ferrell and Eileen Beehan last month withdrew a broader measure to ban sexual orientation bias in employment and housing that included private companies. "I don't think it's a defeat," Ferrell said. "This is a more modest step than what we originally proposed." The new bill notes that Nashville's existing Human Relations Commission already has the authority to investigate claims of anti-gay bias in housing and employment, but no power to levy fines. The new measure could see a floor debate in the Metro Council on March 18, where Ferrell said he is optimistic he can win the 21 of 40 votes necessary for passage.

Trans cop wins case against Cincinnati

CINCINNATI (AP) — A federal court jury awarded \$320,511 to a transsexual police officer who said the city discriminated against her. The jury on Feb. 26 ordered the city to pay back wages and damages to Philecia Barnes, formerly Phillip Barnes, a police officer for 22 years and a former Marine Corps sergeant. Barnes, 43, said she will request a court order to force the city to reinstate her as a police sergeant. She became a probationary sergeant for six months in 1999, then was demoted to an officer's rank. City officials haven't said whether they will appeal the jury verdict. Police Chief Thomas Streicher said his department didn't discriminate against Barnes. Barnes notified the city two years ago that she changed her name and considered herself a woman, her lawyers said. Barnes said the city, in denying her promotion to sergeant, violated her constitutional right to equal protection of law.

New Orleans DA backs sodomy law repeal

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Eddie Jordan, New Orleans' new district attorney, said he would support efforts to repeal laws making oral or anal sex illegal in Louisiana. "If the legislature is willing to reconsider, I will testify that private, non-commercial acts of sodomy between consenting adults are not a public matter and therefore should not be a violation of the law," Jordan said Feb. 26 in a news release. Under crimes against nature laws, anal or oral sex is a crime punishable by up to five years in prison and \$2,000 in fines. Gay and lesbian groups have unsuccessfully lobbied the state legislature to overhaul the law and failed to get the 197-year old statute overturned in the courts. The law should only apply to prostitution and non-consenting or public sexual acts, said Jordan, who took office in January.

N.H. human rights panel nominee against gay law

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — Gov. Craig Benson's nomination of a former state legislator to the Human Rights Commission does not have enough votes to pass, but Benson said he wants councilors to take more time to think about their opposition. The seven-member Human Rights Commission handles complaints filed under the state's civil rights law, which includes protections based on sexual orientation. As a legislator, Gary Daniels voted against the gay rights law, saying that homosexuality is unnatural, immoral and unhealthy. In an interview with the Concord Monitor last week, Daniels said he still does not believe sexual orientation should be included in the law. The governor stands by the nomination, according to spokesperson Kelly Ayotte. The nomination requires a majority vote of the commission's current five members for approval. At least three members have said they won't vote for Daniels. The Log Cabin Republicans, a national gay GOP group, called on Benson to withdraw the nomination.

From staff and wire reports



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police beat

White supremacist pleads guilty to killing Calif. gay couple



James Tyler Williams pleaded guilty to killing gay couple Gary Matson and Winfield Scott Mowder. Williams and his brother, Benjamin Matthew Williams, were also convicted of arson attacks at three synagogues and an abortion clinic. (Photo by Michael Burke, Redding Record Searchlight/AP)

REDDING, Calif. (AP) — A white supremacist convicted of fire bombing three Sacramento synagogues and an abortion clinic pleaded guilty Feb. 28 to killing a gay couple. Under a plea agreement with prosecutors, James Tyler Williams, 32, avoided a possible death penalty and will be sentenced to 25 years to life in prison for the 1999 killing of Gary Matson and Winfield Mowder in their home. Williams and his brother, Benjamin Matthew Williams, were charged with killing Matson and Mowder and with setting fires at the synagogues and a medical building. No one was injured in the fires. The pair also pleaded guilty to setting fire to Country Club Medical Center, which houses the Choice Medical Group abortion clinic. They were given 30-year prison sentences for the fires. Benjamin Matthew Williams killed himself in November in the Shasta County jail.

Mexico mayor vows crackdown on gay prostitutes after killing

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The mayor of Torreon in northern Mexico is urging a crackdown on male prostitutes following the murder of a priest who prosecutors say had patronized prostitutes. The Coahuila state attorney general's office said that two 18-year-olds confessed to the Feb. 21 killing of a Catholic priest, Jose Reglio Carrillo Valenzuela. Prosecutors said the men admitted robbing and killing Carrillo, 46, after accepting his offer of 400 pesos (about \$40 U.S.) each to have sex. They were arrested Feb. 22 while driving the victim's car, according to the attorney general's office. Mayor Guillermo Anaya Llamas said the campaign in the city of 530,000 would be aimed at male prostitutes, not at law-abiding gays. He said the city wants to make the center of town a safe area for families and cited health risks in male prostitution. "In January we arrested more than 50 homosexuals in the city," he was quoted as saying by the newspaper La Opinion-Milenio of Torreon. "The previous administration was very lax in that sense."

Egyptian men arrested for gay sex in apartment

CAIRO, Egypt (AP) — Thirteen Egyptian men were arrested for homosexuality in a rented apartment where they were having sex, a security official said Feb. 25 on condition of anonymity. The suspects were jailed pending investigation. The prosecutor is expected to either extend their detention or charge them with debauchery and homosexuality, the official said. Wafd newspaper, an opposition mouthpiece, reported that the arrested men included university students and hotel employees. The apartment belonged to the owner of a travel agency. The newspaper said the detainees did not deny that they are gay. A wide range of Egyptian laws covering obscenity, prostitution and debauchery are applied to gays; Islam, the religion of most Egyptians, prohibits homosexuality. This latest arrests join dozens of others that focused international attention on the country's treatment

of gays, including the November 2001 Nile River boat arrests of 52 men that led to 25 convictions and prison sentences.

New York gay man beaten in apparent bias attack

NEW YORK — A man was assaulted on the Upper East Side of Manhattan yesterday in what appears to have been a bias attack, police told Newsday. Three men punched and hit Raymond Spreng with a metal bike frame in the early morning hours of March 2, police said. The three allegedly approached Spreng and yelled anti-gay remarks before striking him in the head. "They were coming after me and I raised my hands, saying, 'I don't want any trouble,'" Spreng told the New York Post. "The young man replied, 'Faggot, you're going to have trouble tonight!' ... They went crazy." Queens residents Sucjovic Mirsad, 22, Oscar Afre, 22, and Christopher Pan, 26, were arrested and charged with assault after an onlooker called police. Spreng, 53, who police believe was alone when the attack occurred, suffered head lacerations that required more than a dozen stitches to his face.

Mich. trans teen shot; family fears hate crime

DETROIT — As police investigate the Feb. 21 killing of pre-operative transsexual Nikki Nicholas, family members and gay rights activists said they fear the shooting was a hate crime. The body of the 19-year-old was found in an abandoned farmhouse with a gunshot wound to the head. "We think he was killed because he was gay," said Willie Parker, Nicholas' stepfather. Known to friends and family as Nikki, Nicholas was born a male but lived as a woman for the last two years, according to family members. "We have no motive and we aren't willing to say it is a hate crime at this time," said Police Chief Robert Brookins. Officials with the Triangle Foundation, a Detroit-based gay group, said the slaying appears to be hate-related.

From staff and wire reports



medical report

Black publications address growing AIDS epidemic

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Newspapers, magazines and television networks with predominantly black audiences began an unprecedented public awareness campaign in recent weeks, running stories and ads in a coordinated attempt to educate people about AIDS. The Los Angeles-based Black AIDS Institute developed the media effort, called the Drumbeat Project, about 17 months ago. Participating media companies promise to double their AIDS coverage this year. According to CDC statistics from 2001, more blacks are living with AIDS than any other ethnic group in the United States. Debra Fraser-Howze, president of the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, said African-Americans "have a catastrophe on our hands." Participating publications said they hope to call attention to the problem. Essence magazine profiled a small Florida town where 90 percent of those infected with HIV are black, and most are women. "It's important for a black women's magazine to say this is not happening to somebody else. It's happening to us," said Diane Weathers, Essence's editor in chief. The National Newspaper Publishers Association's wire service, which serves more than 220 black-owned newspapers, produced an eight-part series on AIDS. The American Urban Radio Network stations and Black Entertainment Television agreed to run public service announcements.



The HIV/AIDS epidemic represents a 'catastrophe' for African-Americans, according to Debra Fraser-Howze, president of the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS. (Photo courtesy of BLCA)

Bush: No AIDS funds to abortion providers

NEW YORK — A State Department memo revealed last week would prevent new global AIDS funds recently announced by President Bush from going to foreign organizations that do not separate HIV and abortion services, Reuters Health reported. But according to the Global AIDS Alliance, most groups in Africa and other parts of the world have integrated their services. More than 100 groups sent a letter to President Bush objecting to the policy. "These restrictions are morally and ethically indefensible and contradict basic principles of public health, human rights, and economic efficiency," Jodi Jacobson, executive director of the Center for Health & Gender Equity, told Reuters. A policy enacted by President Ronald Reagan barred U.S. funds from going to foreign groups that use non-U.S. funds to perform or lobby for abortion services. President Clinton rescinded the policy on his second day in office; Bush put it back in place on his first working day as president.

Viagra-like drug researched for women

NEW YORK — Medical treatments under development now could offer women with sexual dysfunction help similar to the male impotency drug Viagra, the New York Times reported. The pharmaceutical company NexMed Inc. has received a patent for a cream to treat what it has dubbed "female sexual arousal disorder." But FDA approval of the treatment may be "at least three years away," NexMed's Dr. James L. Yeager told the Times. The cream uses prostaglandin to help increase blood flow to the genitals to trigger sexual arousal. According to a 1999 study in the Journal of the American Medical Association, 43 percent of women ages 18-54 reported problems with sexual arousal.

Fla. drug fraud includes HIV meds

TAMPA, Fla. — A scheme where people on Medicaid sell their prescriptions to wholesalers or on the street could lead to people with HIV and other medical problems receiving drugs that won't help them, Florida health officials warned. "Unsuspecting individuals are getting the medication thinking it will work," Mary Ann T. Green of Florida AIDS Action told Reuters Health. "The ramifications can literally be life or death." Drugs to treat HIV and cancer rank high on the list of the fraudulent drugs, Florida AIDS Action said. Some of the drugs may not have received necessary refrigeration, or they may be old or weakened. Because wholesalers are reselling the drugs to pharmacies, patients may not be aware that they are not getting fresh medications. Health officials warned that patients should check with their doctors if their medications appear different or seem to stop working.

Aging conference to include gay issues

CHICAGO — A national conference on aging issues next week in Chicago will include several discussions of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues among its 900 scheduled sessions. The Joint Conference of the National Council on the Aging (NCOA) and the American Society on Aging, set for March 13-16, is expected to draw 4,000 participants, according to the ASA's Lesbian & Gay Aging Issues Network. "Presentations on LGBT aging at the NCOA-ASA Joint Conference provide the most up-to-date research on the topic," said LGAIN Co-chair John Yoakam, assistant professor of social work at College of St. Benedict/St. John's University in Minnesota. Gay-related topics set for discussion include HIV, sensitivity among caregivers, housing options, spirituality, public policy and aging among the intersexed.

From staff and wire reports

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Issue 1167

Forum

HOUSTON VOICE

MARCH 7, 2003

PAGE 12

point

Gays should speak out against war

Many gays have a tendency on issues like war to prove our patriotism, but human rights issues must go beyond how we have sex.

BY MUBARAK DAHIR

A HELICOPTER IS SWARMING overhead, making a circle in the air over the section of Vienna's that holds its most famous palaces, monuments and museums.

As I make my way through Vienna's sometimes maze-like alleys, I notice gaggles of Austrian police decked out in riot gear. They stand in small groups, smoking cigarettes, and, like others this day — here in Austria and around the world — they are anxiously waiting.

In particular, the police are waiting for the day's anti-war protest to begin. But the real waiting game and the deeper anxiety for all of us comes from wondering just when American bombs might start exploding in Iraq.

The demonstration today is against that seemingly inevitable action. It's an international day of protest, with similar rallies across the world. Away from home, I want to join the voices calling for restraint against George Bush's single-minded vision for military action in Iraq, so I follow the demonstrators with hand-made cardboard signs to Pestsaule Square.

The square features famous baroque cherubs and saints put in place in 1692 to celebrate the end of the black plague that had decimated Europe. It's a fitting site for today's protest, as there seems to be a deadly bug being spread by the American government: The idea that war in Iraq is the world's only option.

SOME READERS WILL OBJECT TO this column and say that gay writers and organizations shouldn't be espousing their opinions on war in a gay publication. These critics will argue that the war isn't a "gay issue."

I couldn't disagree more. On the contrary, I believe that particularly as gay men and lesbians, we are specially situated to act as skeptics and critics to questionable government policies and outright misinformation, especially when government policies could result in an unknown death toll.

With all that we have collectively learned from our own history, it would be a shame if we limited our critical thinking abilities and our questioning voices to a narrow range of topics.

In fact, rather than limiting our thoughts and discussions to a narrowly defined set of "gay issues," I believe we have a responsibility to expand our scope. We can't harp about our own human rights and ignore everyone else's, particularly when we are citizens of the most powerful country in the world — a country that is not shy about using its military might to wrestle what it wants in other parts of the world.

Now more than ever is when we need to exercise our skepticism publicly.

Despite the idealistic notion that we as Americans value individuality, the hard truth is that in our society — as in most societies — it's often very difficult and takes a lot of courage to voice unpopular opinions.

It's particularly hard when it comes to questioning authority, especially if that authority is as powerful and forceful as the president of the United States. Even worse, many people will call us "un-American" or "unpatriotic" for doing so.

DURING TIMES OF CRISES, IT'S understandable that most people have an automatic reflex to support their own government. For us as gay men and lesbians,

there may be another powerful force pulling us to support the administration's move toward war: We all know what it's like to be outsiders.

For many of us, being gay or lesbian has meant that we have been the ultimate outsiders from American society for much of our own lives. Now, especially in the light of so much European objection to America's handling of Iraq, there will be a natural tendency for many of us to want to "prove" our patriotism, to want to show other Americans we are "just as American" as they are, to band together as full-fledged team players, so that we can finally "belong" in a way that we might not always get to do.

But I believe we have a special place in public discourse, and I think part of that includes a special responsibility to be willing to ask tough, unpopular questions, to exhibit unapologetic skepticism, and to take up a broad band of human rights issues that may not narrowly relate to the single topic of how we have sex.

And even as I stand in a foreign country to make my voice heard through this protest, I can't imagine what could be more American.

@ Mubarak Dahir is a syndicated columnist living in New York City and can be reached at MubarakDah@aol.com.



counterpoint PAUL VARNELL



Claims by 'progressive gays' against war are strained, and even bested by more powerful reasons why we should support Bush on Iraq.

Gays should back war with Iraq

IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THERE WILL be a U.S. military incursion into Iraq, probably before the end of March to avoid military operations during Iraq's hot summer.

The 1991 Gulf War cease fire was conditional upon Saddam Hussein's disarmament. But clearly Hussein has not disarmed and is playing a cat and mouse game with U.N. inspectors, who were only supposed to confirm proof that Hussein has disarmed, not hunt about for evidence that he has not.

It is odd that some "progressive" gay and lesbian organizations and writers, who you think would oppose an aggressive Stalinist dictatorship like Hussein's — based on murder, torture and fear — not only oppose the war but struggle to portray opposition as somehow a gay issue.

It is a gay issue, they insist, because: (1) When the U.S. invades Iraq, some gay and lesbian soldiers will be killed. (2) Under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," gay soldiers don't have the same benefits as heterosexual soldiers and will suffer the pains of separation from their partners in silence. (3) The war will reduce the money available for other government programs, such as AIDS drugs and housing for PWAs.

THESE ARE STRAINED ARGUMENTS, the kind people make up after they have

already decided what side they are on.

(1) In all wars, but no more so in this one, soldiers risk being killed. That risk is part of what they are paid for. Progressives have the argument backwards: The military exists for the sake of foreign policy; foreign policy does not exist for the benefit of the military. If the latter were true, we would never have fought Germany or Japan.

Further, to the extent "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" has discouraged some gay men and lesbians from joining the military, then gays are a disproportionately small percentage of the military, making the war even less a gay issue.

(2) "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is a wretched policy, whether there is a war or not. But military personnel are often sent overseas — in this war, a different war, or no war, so that is no argument against this war. And gay military personnel knew the ground rules, however unfair, under which they voluntarily enlisted and serve. We can be sorry for the plight of separated or surviving lovers, and that is an argument against "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," but it is not an argument against the war.

(3) There's no direct evidence that war may not reduce money for gay and AIDS projects, but even if it does, so does every



other non-gay or AIDS program during war or peace. Money is always finite.

Gay and AIDS activists can certainly push their issues forward to acquire what money remains available, but they are not, as gay/AIDS activists, well-positioned to say which competing programs should be postponed or cut.

BUT COULD THE ISSUE OF WAR ACTUALLY be "gay" in the sense that we should support it on specifically gay grounds? Typically, the thought seems not to have occurred among "progressive" gays. Yet:

(1) Saddam Hussein's one-party dictatorship severely oppresses gays. As British gay activist Peter Tatchell points out, two years ago Hussein decreed homosexuality a capital crime. Doing so was either a further effort to control the lives of his subjects or one of his many recent efforts to display zealous support for Islam. Eliminating Hussein and installing a more secular, pluralist regime would benefit Iraqi gays.

(2) A broader benefit of toppling Saddam Hussein will be to pressure

neighboring Arab states to moderate and modernize, reducing support for fundamentalist Islam and terrorism.

(3) Although the military's "stop loss" order officially does not apply to gays, the facts of war are that superior officers retain valuable personnel during a war effort because they know their units must do well to earn promotions. That was true when gays were completely barred and it is true now when gays are barred only if they are out. This will further undermine the argument for "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

(4) To the extent gay progressives vocally oppose the war to ensure heterosexual progressive support for gay equality, that sounds like exactly as good a reason for all the rest of us to vocally support the war: to show moderate and conservative Americans that we share many of their fundamental values and have the general interest of the country at heart.

@ Paul Varnell is a Chicago-based syndicated writer and can be reached at pvarnell@aol.com.

Dykes To Watch Out For by Alison Bechdel



on the record

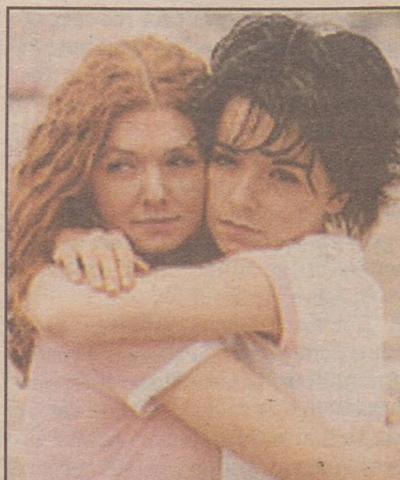
"[I have been accused] of supporting homophobia. But I think it's a different matter with respect to the military, because you're essentially told who you're going to live with, who you're going to sleep next to. [But] out of a military environment, in a school, I think any act that suggests someone should be discriminated against or in some way stigmatized because of their racial background, ethnic background or sexual preference is not appropriate."

Secretary of State Colin Powell, responding to an interviewer for Teen Ink, a national magazine for youth, who said that homophobia was a bigger problem in her school than racism or religious intolerance (Washington Times, March 3)



"Homosexuality is unnatural, immoral and unhealthy. How can we accept a new set of ideas that has been primarily responsible for the spread of AIDS in this country?"

Former N.H. state legislator Gary Daniels, during a debate over a gay rights bill; Daniels has been nominated by N.H. Gov. Craig Benson (R) to the state's human rights commission, which enforces the gay rights law; Log Cabin has called on Benson to withdraw the nomination (Associated Press, Feb. 25)



"People are saying that it's a pity the country that gave the world Pushkin and Gagarin is now represented by lesbian nymphets. But that's garbage."

Artyom Troitsky, music critic and founder of Russian Playboy, on the international fame of Tatu, two teenage girls picked by their manager out of an audition who now claim to be in love and often kiss erotically on stage (New York Times, March 4)

"If we can stand against drugs, if we can stand against alcohol, if we can stand against violence, we definitely ought to be able to stand against homosexuality. ... What about the protection of our children, the ones that don't want to voluntarily be homosexuals?"

Danny Buggs, a former NFL player paid more than \$70,000 a year to be a motivational speaker at DeKalb County, Ga., public high schools outside Atlanta, on the passage of an anti-harrassment law he dubbed the "Danny Buggs Law," since it followed his suspension from work after using an anti-gay epithet during a high school assembly (Atlanta Journal-Constitution, March 4)

"I'm a contradiction."

Bonnie Dumanis, a lesbian Jewish Republican recently elected district attorney of San Diego County (Los Angeles Times, Feb. 22)

"I yelled, 'I felt something! It's a f— man.'"

Nicole Brown, testifying about her reaction after learning at a party that Gwen Araujo was biologically male; Brown testified that her friends cornered Araujo, assaulted and ultimately killed her (Feb. 20)

"I talk about my family, my religion, where I live, my personal feelings on this or that. I talk about my personal life a lot. What I don't talk about is my love life. I wasn't that kind of person before I was well-known, and I'm not going to become that kind of person after I've become well-known. But if you don't play the game, you're accused of being this or that or the other. The fact is, in all that's been written about [my sex life], there's not been anything that's true."

Actor Kevin Spacey, on speculation that he is gay (Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Feb. 21)



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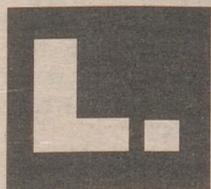


Out on the Bayou

Real life survivor

Co-founder Martinez steps down as director of Center for AIDS, but won't let the disease stop him from enjoying life

By KAY Y. DAYUS



JOEL MARTINEZ, THE RECENTLY resigned director and a founder of The Center for AIDS, can also lay claim to being an attorney, a poet, an aspiring scientist and an avid seeker of answers to the HIV/AIDS plague. But most of all, Martinez is a 17-year survivor of

the very same disease he would like to see eradicated.

Martinez was pronounced HIV positive in 1986. And unlike many of his contemporaries, who received the same diagnoses, he is still around to talk about those early years before the age of free and easy sex and worry-free bathhouses came to an end.

Most of the others are long gone. He was part of a support group in those early days of AIDS, but before too long, he was one of only two remaining members.

"Everyone died, including the therapist and the intern," Martinez says. "They all died. There were just two of us left. We stay in close contact."

Like most other gay men in the early '80s, Martinez had heard of the scourge that became AIDS — a scourge that was suddenly claiming thousands of lives in this country's gay male population. In 1986, no one was more shocked than he to find that he was HIV positive. He had been in a monogamous relationship since 1981 — a relationship that still thrives today.

"That meant I had to have gotten it before 1981, and it wasn't until 1983 that the disease was first described," Martinez says.

Back then, he recalls, "Doctors showed you a chart showing the progression of the disease, to the end when you would die." And there was little doubt that AIDS patients would die since there were few treatments. "It was AZT or nothing," he says.

Because there was so little with which to treat the disease, Martinez says many tried alternative medicines. "We went in caravans to Mexico for Ribavirin. We had nothing to lose." He even offered himself for experimental treatments.

"We were deathly afraid of any cough because it signaled pneumonia and if you got pneumonia you were usually dead within 18 months. Ironically, I didn't get pneumonia until two years ago," he says with a wry smile.

Touch and go

MARTINEZ IS A MAN OF SLIGHT BUILD, A SOFT RASPY voice, a winning smile and a heart full of hope. Given all the AIDS-related ailments he has suffered, it is amazing that he can still smile. This is a man who in those early days had a T-cell count that dramatically fell to only one cell.

"My disease progression was not typical. I've had more cancer than anything else. My T-cell count went low pretty

fast. Within a year I had 350 T-cells," he says, noting that a normal count is 500. "Then I went to 20 and then I went to single digit T-cell counts. Finally, I went down to one cell. But I felt fine — just had low fevers."

More than once, doctors have told him that he should not expect to live, but he has. "I don't believe them anymore," says Martinez.

Over the past 17 years, Martinez has had more health problems than most people encounter in a lifetime. His numerous AIDS-related illnesses have had him down, but never out: He's still here and he's still smiling and determined.

He lists his illnesses: lymphoma, Kaposi's Sarcoma (a rare form of cancer usually found in advanced AIDS patients), chronic leukemia, a triple heart bypass (last year), and he was recently diagnosed with throat cancer.

He had radiation for his throat cancer last year and seemed to be on the mend, but the cancer recently re-occurred and now he is undergoing chemotherapy at M.D. Anderson. The night before his interview with the Houston Voice, he was at Anderson having a blood transfusion. He still made the interview, although obviously a little weak.

He will stay active with the Center for AIDS in a limited capacity. Along with

Michael Peranteau and Christopher Kerr, he helped start the organization in 1995. In a nutshell, the center advocates both locally and nationally for better treatments and better access for care for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Back in the '90s, Martinez says, there was no central agency in Houston where someone with HIV/AIDS could get the most comprehensive and latest information about the disease and its treatments.

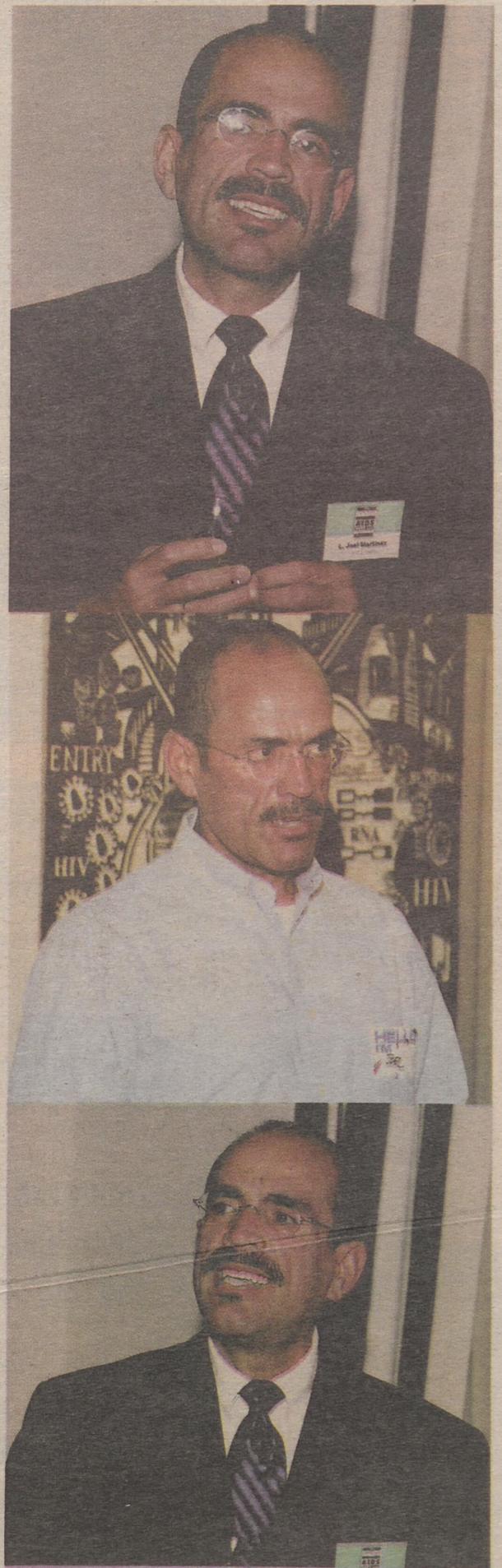
"The center came out of wanting to do something about my own situation and not finding the resources," Martinez says. "I looked for a resources list, but no one had one — there was no such animal. Here we were, the fourth largest city in the country and not a single source."

The facility is now a central place for people with HIV/AIDS to learn about the disease and the latest treatment and where to go for those treatments. Martinez says the founders wanted to not only access care for the disease, but also to get "cutting edge care."

"I wanted people to have access to the type of research and care that might make a difference between life and death," he says.

Today, the center houses the largest collection of HIV/AIDS-specific literature in this part of the country. The facility staff publishes newsletters for patients, researchers and health professionals.

"In the process [of founding the center], I learned a lot about HIV and got with people involved in research in Houston," Martinez says. Getting to know the ins and outs of HIV/AIDS, its inception, its progression and its potency



L. Joel Martinez was diagnosed as HIV positive in 1986, and since then has battled the disease both personally and professionally through Center for AIDS. (Photos by Dalton DeHart)

Please see SURVIVOR on Page 16

out on the bayou

Martinez: 'Political will' needed to cure AIDS

SURVIVOR, continued from Page 15

allowed Martinez to explore the scientist in him. In fact, he says he should have been a scientist, not an attorney.

During this time, he had some health problems in the terms of fatigue and what he calls "a strange manifestation" of AIDS-related seizures.

"But I would always sort of bounce back," he says. "The center was a motivation — it kept me going."

Funding for the center in the early days came from his friends. "Lots of people owed me lots of favors and I would call them up and say, 'It's your turn.'" He asked and they gave. Nowadays, funding also comes from pharmaceutical companies, foundations, the private sector and partially from the federal government.

Throughout his ongoing battle with HIV/AIDS, Martinez has been comforted by his partner of 22 years. He does not want his partner's name mentioned, but he does say his partner is HIV free.

"He fully expected to be [HIV-positive] himself and was surprised to find out he wasn't. He copes exceptionally well. He's a Southern boy from Alabama and has the patience of Job," Martinez says with a smile.

The two love to travel overseas and Martinez has no intention of letting his illnesses stop him from that. He also loves to write poetry and is looking forward to doing more writing now that he's no longer tied to the center full time.



L. Joel Martinez co-founded the Center for AIDS in Houston with Michael Peranteau and Christopher Kerr in 1995. The facility is now a central place for people with HIV/AIDS to learn about the disease and the latest treatments. Martinez says the founders wanted to not only access care for the disease, but also to get "cutting edge care." (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

Continued battle

MARTINEZ OFFERS SOME SOBERING statistics on HIV/AIDS from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. As of the end of 2000, some 36.1 million people worldwide — 34.7 million adults and 1.4 million children younger than 15 years — were living with HIV/AIDS. More than 70 percent of these live in sub-Saharan Africa. Approximately 40,000 new HIV infections occur yearly in the U.S., about 70 percent of those among men and 30 percent among women.

Of new infections, the Centers for Disease Control estimates that 60 percent of men were infected through homosexual sex, 25 percent through drug use and 15 percent through heterosexual sex. Around 50 percent are black, 30 percent white and 20 percent Hispanic.

AIDS claimed almost 500,000 lives in the

U.S. by the end of December 2000 and is now the fifth leading cause of death in the U.S. among those ages 24 to 44.

Given these sobering numbers, what does Martinez think are the solutions to containing HIV/AIDS?

"Sex is an undeniable force. The urge to have sex is so great that infections continue to grow," he says. "However, safe sex interventions seem to dampen growth a little bit. If sex were taken out of the equation, we'd be rid of the problem."

But he knows that is unrealistic. He says that younger gay men are in denial; they think they are invincible — that they won't get HIV/AIDS. They see people living longer with AIDS, but what they don't see are all the drugs PWA take every day, Martinez points out.

"I would encourage young gay men to learn more about their cultural history," he

says. "They have no concept of what it was like to go through a period when people were dying left and right. We need to keep that in mind because if we don't we're destined to repeat cavalier attitudes about it. We need to remember what it was like back then."

Martinez thinks also that there has to be the "political will on the part of society" to treat and to find a cure for HIV/AIDS. And he also thinks that ultimately there has to be a "therapeutic vaccine" for those already infected.

For now, Martinez says, the different combinations of drugs are the only answer. But some patients don't respond to them and some build up immunity to them.

Furthermore, not everyone in this country can afford them and certainly not those in Africa. And, he says, there has to be the right political will to make the drugs affordable.

As far as Martinez is concerned, he will try to go on.

"Part of me doesn't believe the doctors when they tell me to prepare for the worst. Part of me looks at the alternative. What should I do? Crawl into bed?"

"I really enjoy my life. I want to live."

i MORE INFO

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



Justin Timberlake will set gay hearts aflutter when he plays gay on 'Will & Grace.'

Justin time for sweeps

Boy band member plays gay in latest NBC ratings stunt

HE MAY NOT BE THE BEST SINGER OR the best actor, but **JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE** and his sexy demeanor still have the attention of many gay men.

Timberlake is decidedly un-gay, but gay male fantasies can take flight when he plays the part on NBC's way gay "Will & Grace." Stunt casting and straight people in gay roles on "W&G" is hardly new, but according to the Internet Movie Data Base, it's true again with the network's latest installment of the formula using the former N'SYNC crooner.

In a script written especially for him, Timberlake reportedly will play a gay schemer who is out for Jack (**SEAN HAYES**) and his money. The facts that Jack is hard to get and has no money should prove for interesting plotlines.

Timberlake said that he will donate his \$50,000 paycheck for the episode to a national AIDS organization, so unlike many porn stars, Timberlake isn't even gay-for-pay.

But remember, **ROSIE O'DONNELL** tested the waters by playing a lesbian on "W&G" just weeks before she came out in the press. Maybe the future holds something similar for every gay man's curly-haired, hard-bodied young fantasy man.

IT MAY SEEM LIKE A FAMILIAR FIGHT, but this time Bush vs. Gore doesn't refer to former Vice President **AL GORE**, but to gay novelist and philosopher **GORE VIDAL**. Vidal has been an expatriate for decades, but he recently announced that he's coming back to the country and moving to Los Angeles.

And he apparently has been saving some particularly unkind words for President **GEORGE W. BUSH**.

"As dumb as this administration is, they don't look ahead," Vidal told the New York Post's Page Six this week. "They don't know where any countries are. They don't know how to make deals. They don't really know much about anything. There is no plan ... Now you have people [in Washington] who have no interest in the country at all. They're interested in their companies, their corporations grabbing Caspian oil."

Vidal's feud — one-sided as it may be — comes from a long line of his dragging other famous people's names through the mud in public, including a long-running feud with late fellow gay novelist **TRUMAN CAPOTE**.

Welcome back, Gore. It will be great to have another persnickety old queen living in L.A. — as if we needed more.

GAY ICON MADONNA MAY NOT HAVE the same literary aspirations as our man Gore, but she is putting pen to page for five new books, none of which will feature her naked or engaging in some hot girl-on-girl action.

Momma Madonna is writing five new children's books for Penguin, the Associated Press reports.

"[Madonna] has drawn on a lifelong passion for and deep familiarity with literature and children's books to create contemporary classics that combine great storytelling with ravishing art," Nicholas Callaway, the founder of Callaway Editions, the book's state-side publisher, said in a statement.

Apparently, if Madonna was as knowledgeable about acting as she is about literature, she never would have made "Swept Away" or "Shanghai Surprise" or ... oh, never mind.

Anyway, on to the ravishing art, as if there weren't enough of that in her "Sex" book.

Callaway says that Madonna has a celebrated illustrator lined up for each of the books, but he didn't say if **TOM OF FINLAND** was one of them.

"Despite the astonishing range and variety of her stories, they all evoke the secret that the red fox shares with the Little Prince," Callaway said, citing the quintology's theme: "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly."

The first book, "The English Roses," is due out in September.



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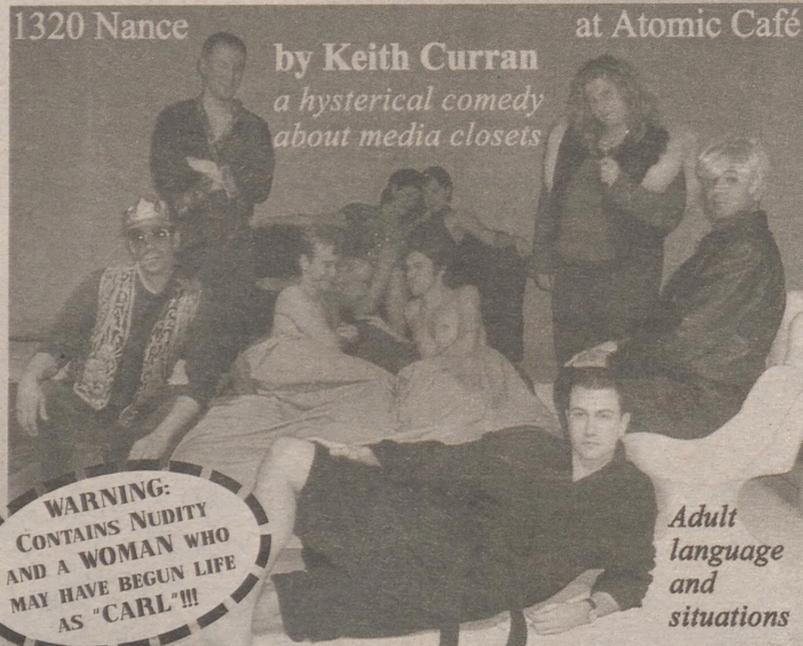
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out on the aisle PENNY WEAVER

Gay-themed plays continue this month,
with new productions starting as well

March stages thrive

'Fruit Cocktail'

Theatre New West offers up the world premiere musical review by Eric Lane Barnes ("Fairy Tales"). "Fruit Cocktail" consists mostly of comedy numbers, plus a few ballads, and a cast of six men who sing about the contemporary gay lifestyle. The inaugural production at Theatre New West was a major success. It is directed by Joe Watts, artistic director of the theater. Michael Harren is musical director for the production. Critics call the play "a jubilant, enlightening gay musical review" and also said "such moments on stage are rare and wonderful."

on stage 'Fruit Cocktail'

8 p.m. Fridays & Saturdays • Through March 8
Tickets: \$20 • Theatre New West
1415 California • 713-522-2204

'Lucky Stiff'

Masquerade Theatre presents the Houston premiere of "Lucky Stiff," based on "The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo" by Michael Butterworth. Lynn Ahrens wrote the book and lyrics and Stephen Flaherty composed the music for this zany, offbeat murder mystery farce. The play follows an unassuming English shoe salesman forced to take the corpse of his recently murdered Atlantic City croupier uncle on a week-long vacation to Monte Carlo. Should he succeed, Harry Witherspoon stands to inherit \$6 million. If not, the money goes to the Universal Dog Home of Brooklyn, according to a press release from the theater. The insanely jealous and legally blind mistress of Witherspoon's uncle, her brother and a Universal Dog Home representative make Witherspoon's task all the more difficult.

on stage 'Lucky Stiff'

8 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays & Saturdays
3 p.m. Sundays • Through March 8
Tickets: \$25 or \$20 for seniors/students
Masquerade Theatre • 1537 N. Shepherd
713-861-7045 • www.masqueradetheatre.com

'Rumors'

The Company OnStage presents "Rumors," a farce by Neil Simon. The deputy mayor of New York is slightly shot and his wife goes missing. His lawyer quickly decides to engineer a cover-up just as guests begin arriving for the couple's anniversary party, according to a press release from the theater. What ensues is a roller coaster of laughs as party guests become more and more crazed trying to sort everything out.

on stage 'Rumors'

8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays • Through March 8
Tickets: \$12 or \$10 for seniors/students
The Company OnStage • 536 Westbury Square
713-726-1219 • www.companionstage.org

'The Stand-In'

Ex-soap star Lester Perry thinks he knows what his next step up the Hollywood ladder is: a choice role as a gay umpire in a

cable TV movie. The only problem is that Perry is deeply closeted and doesn't think he can stand to be identified as gay. His way out of this dilemma is to continue his straight charade and to insist that a stand-in do all the graphically gay shots, according to a press release from Unhinged Productions. All of that works until two gay journalists get wind of the game Perry is playing. Those elements are at the heart of Keith Curran's satire, "The Stand-In," which opens this weekend. Unhinged this year presents its works at Wayne Wilden's Atomic Café, located just north of the downtown area.

on stage 'The Stand-In'

8 p.m. Fridays & Saturdays • 5 p.m. Sundays
Through March 16
Tickets: \$15 or \$10 on Sundays
Unhinged Productions • Atomic Café
1320 Nance St. • 713-547-0440

'Where's My Dinner, Bitch?'

Theater-goers hungry for a change from the usual fare will enjoy a serving of "Where's My Dinner, Bitch?" according to a press release from Dos Chicas Theater Commune. The original comedy by Houston-based playwright Bob Morgan illustrates the power of female bonding as the husbands of abused trailer park gals begin showing up dead across Jackson County. When the regional manager for Nova cosmetics begins a torrid lesbian romance with the head of a women's shelter to further her sales, the ladies of Jackson County simultaneously move from being hapless abuse shelter residents to rising stars in the direct-marketing cosmetics field. The feminist play contains violence, strong language and nudity and is not suitable for children.

on stage 'Where's My Dinner, Bitch?'

8 p.m. March 7, 8, 10, 14, 15, 17, 21, 22
Tickets: \$10 or \$6 for seniors and students
March 10 and 17 pay-what-you-wish performances
Dos Chicas Theater Commune
411 Westheimer • 713-869-3227
E-mail: dccommune@yahoo.com

'The Supporting Cast'

George Furth's comedy, "The Supporting Cast," takes place amidst the Malibu summer fires and mudslides. A weekend gathering at the beach turns sour as the guests get the opportunity to read a soon-to-be-published "tell-all" novel about them.

on stage 'The Supporting Cast'

8:30 p.m. Friday and Saturdays, through March 22
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dining J.A. CHAPMAN

Restaurant serves up friendliness along with successful breakfast and lunch menus

Klub is worth a trip

WHEN YOU STEP INSIDE THE Breakfast Klub, you feel like you're a guest in owner Marcus Davis's home. Davis and his staff greet their customers like friends, and after you've visited a time or two, you're a friend as well.

Stylishly decorated in tones of maroon, gold and brown, with striking African-American themed art on the walls, the Breakfast Klub is located in the transitioning neighborhood near Travis and Alabama. In keeping with its easy-going atmosphere, you stand in line to order and the staff brings your plate out to you when it's ready. No fewer than four types of quality coffee are available from the self-serve thermoses.

On my first visit, I had to try one of the signature dishes, the Wings and Waffle (\$6.75). Six pieces of fried chicken surround a waffle sprinkled with powdered sugar and topped with a fresh strawberry. The fried chicken is excellent, with just the right combination of spices. The waffle was a little soggy, but still good, and I loaded it up with maple syrup from the hot syrup dispenser, one of the best food-related ideas I've seen lately. If you can't decide between breakfast and lunch, then chicken and waffles is a great middle ground.

My friend opted for the breakfast special (\$5.50), a huge plate full of bacon, sausage or ham, two eggs, potatoes or grits, and a biscuit or toast. The potatoes were excellent, tossed with onions and bits of red bell pepper. The biscuit, while tasty, seemed to have been in a warmer for a little too long and had lost some of its oomph. But these are minor quibbles. I love a great breakfast in a place where you can linger over your meal and refill your cup of coffee as many times as you like.

EVERY TIME I VISITED, THE Breakfast Klub was hopping. Tables of business associates hammering out deals mingled with tables of friends or coworkers stopping in for breakfast or lunch. Davis supports community businesses with a small counter and bulletin board holding cards and flyers. One day I even saw a musician come in a drop off a stack of CDs. As I watched the friendly interaction between the customers and staff, I decided this had to be one of the most welcoming restaurants I've ever visited.

I love breakfast, but on my second trip, I thought I'd try a lunch sandwich, just to check out the rest of the menu. I opted for the chicken "Klub" (\$6.75), which comes with a pickle spear and your choice of chips in a bag. A marinated chicken breast is served on wheat bread, with lettuce, tomato, bacon, American and Swiss cheese. I found the sandwich to be a little too salty for my taste. In a quest to reduce the saltiness, I kept removing various ingredients, but finally decided the salt



was in the marinade for the chicken. It's tasty, though, and in Breakfast Klub tradition, it's very satisfying.

I couldn't visit the Breakfast Klub without trying their other signature dish, Katfish and Grits (\$8.25). This is no small meal. A large, perfectly fried catfish fillet is served with a mound of grits dripping with butter. You also get to choose potatoes or eggs and toast or a biscuit. I loved this dish. The catfish was piping hot and tender with just the right amount of crunch to the crust. The grits were substantial, not the soupy kind you find all too frequently. With the thick Texas toast and potatoes on the side, this dish was perfection. I've heard that catfish and grits is a Southern tradition, and I can see why it's popular. I know I'll be back for it again.

THE BREAKFAST KLUB IS OPEN FOR breakfast and lunch only, closing at 2 p.m. Expect to find it crowded, especially around the lunch hour. I've never had a problem finding a seat, though, so don't be deterred even if you have to drive around a bit to find a parking spot. The menu has a range of breakfast foods, including breakfast sandwiches and omelets, and lunch specials are offered as well.

The Breakfast Klub is a friendly, welcoming type of place. Visit a few times, and you're one of the family. If you're in the mood for a great breakfast and a relaxed atmosphere where you can linger over your cup of coffee, then join the Klub.

**The Breakfast Klub**

3711 Travis
Houston, TX 77002
713-528-8561

Food: 101101101
Service: 101101101
Value: 101101101
Scene: 101101101

☛ = Stay home and eat cereal
101101 = Well, if you really must
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homefront ELLA TYLER



Old buildings offer a lot
to look at in cities and rural
towns across the nation

Architecture is a joy

MY AFFECTION FOR OLD BUILDINGS makes visiting cities like New York, Washington and New Orleans very economical. Point me toward the gargoyles, carved marble or art deco detailing, and I'm happy.

Other entertainment is appreciated, but not necessary. Old hotels are fine, as long as the interesting old detailing has been kept and the mattress is good.

I've become a fan of the Access guidebooks because they describe the interesting buildings by address. In some cities, including Houston, the local chapter of American Institute of Architects has prepared a guide to the city's notable architecture. The main library has many of them; check one out before your next trip and throw it in your tote bag.

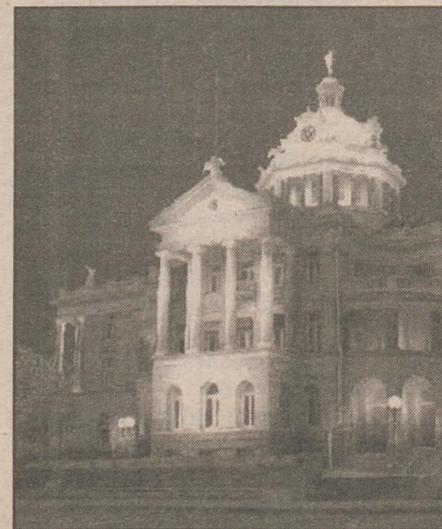
IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO GET ON AN airplane to enjoy old buildings, but it is necessary to get off the interstate. As you make your spring wildflower pilgrimages, drive into the downtowns of the county seats. Old courthouses are rarely torn down, although they may be converted to other use or sadly neglected. They are some of our state's most interesting public buildings, and often show definite regional touches.

Marshall, in east Texas, has an absolutely wonderful old courthouse that is under restoration. Jefferson, just a few miles up the road, looks like it has no buildings that are newer than 1900.

Part of my attachment to old buildings is that they offer something to look at from street level. So many new buildings have an interesting shape when seen from afar, but that's all. And of course, many don't even have an interesting shape.

ANOTHER IS THAT OLD BUILDINGS don't all look alike. I have become increasingly dismayed by the sameness of the American landscape. The strip centers I saw on a recent drive straight down the middle of the country looked a lot like the strip centers in Houston, Dallas and up the East Coast.

And, of course, time has culled out the badly built and truly ugly buildings. It's hard enough to preserve good-looking



The old Harrison County courthouse in Marshall is an example of detailed architecture that catches the eye of many tourists. (Photo from www.saveourcourthouse.org)

buildings.

This is not to say that I do not appreciate new commercial and residential buildings. There are some of both that I enjoy looking at, because they do the same things that the old buildings do — give me something different to look at.

There is a house on Houston Avenue, near Summer Street, that always catches my eye because it has an interesting metal work gate over its front door. Several houses attract my attention with sculpture in the front yard. There was a house in Cherryhurst that I admired for years because the ceramic light fixtures at the front door were the same color as that house and its trim — cream, brick and turquoise.

This kind of detail takes time and attention and inspiration, but it's probably cheaper than importing stone carvers from Italy.

One source of inspiration is the Azalea Trail, which ends this weekend. Also, the Galveston Home Tour is the first two weekends in May. I'm mentioning it now, because otherwise I'll forget.

As a gardener, I suggest people stop and smell the roses. I'd also like to propose that they slow down and admire the brickwork.

It is not necessary to get on an airplane to enjoy old buildings, but it is necessary to get off the interstate. As you make your spring wildflower pilgrimages, drive into the downtowns of the county seats.

community calendar

SATURDAY, MARCH 8

Houston Buyers Club. Free BIA (Bioelectrical Impedance Analysis) the first two Saturdays of the month. Hours: 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Houston Buyers Club, 3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 604. 713-520-5288. http://www.houstonbuyersclub.com/bia_testing.html

Houston Outdoor Group. March breakfast at Luby's, Highway 290 at W. 34th St. Bill and Thomas: 713-526-6963. HOG: 713-KAMP OUT.

EVERY SATURDAY

All-Spanish Worship Service/Noche Espiritual 6 p.m. Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, 2026 W. 11th. 713-303-3409 or 713-861-9149.

After Hours. KPFT 90.1 FM. 1-4 a.m.

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

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 11 p.m.-2 a.m. at Viviana's. 713-830-3000.

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

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

Lambda Center. Alcoholics Anonymous. 11:30 a.m. Eye Opener Group, 8 p.m. Saturday Night Live, 9:30 p.m. Willing Ones Group. 1201 W. Clay. 713-521-1243 or 713-528-9772. www.lambdahouston.org.

Q-Patrol. Volunteers walk the streets to help prevent hate crimes. 9:30 p.m. Convene at community center. 713-528-SAFE. E-mail: qpatrolinc@aol.com

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

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in, noon-5 p.m. • TATS (Texas Association for Transsexual Support), 3 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

SUNDAY, MARCH 9

S.I.S.T.E.R.S. (Sharing Inner Strength, Encouragement & Realistic Support). A support group for African-American lesbians. 3:30 p.m. Houston GLBT Community Center, 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-695-8089.

TGRA-Houston. Local gay rodeo group's chapter meeting, 2 p.m. All are welcome. Michael's Outpost, 1419 Richmond. 713-520-8446.

EVERY SUNDAY

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

Center for Spiritual Living. Services at 11 a.m., for children at 10:50 a.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808. The center also has commitment ceremonies, metaphysical bookstore and classes.

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

Community of Kindred Spirits in Beaumont. Worship at 6 p.m. 1575 Spindletop Ave., Beaumont, Texas. 409-813-2055. E-mail: cksev3@netzero.net

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

Emerson Unitarian Church. Adult education, 10 a.m. Service, 11 a.m. Lunch at noon. www.emersonhou.org.

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

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

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 9 p.m.-midnight at Club Inergy. 713-830-3000.

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

GLOBAL. Gay Lesbian Or Bisexual Alliance. University of Houston GLBT student group meeting. 2 p.m. at the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.uh.edu/~global. E-mail: global@bayou.uh.edu.

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

Houston Roughnecks Rugby Club. Practice from 4-6 p.m. For more information, log on to www.roughnecksrugby.org.

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

Lambda Center. Alcoholics Anonymous. 9:30 a.m. Came to Believe Group. 1201 W. Clay. 713-521-1243 or 713-528-9772. www.lambdahouston.org.

Maranatha Fellowship Metropolitan Church. 10 a.m. service. 3333 Fannin, Suite 106. 713-528-6756.

Northwoods Unitarian Universalist Church. Services at 9:45 & 11:15 a.m. Sunday school 9:45 a.m. 281-298-2780.

Resurrection MCC. Services, 9 and 11 a.m. Children and Youth Sunday School, 10 a.m. Children's service, 11 a.m. 713-861-9149.

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

Sunday Brunch. For HIV-positive men. 11 a.m. Riva's, 1117 Missouri St. Paul, 713-880-0690. e-mail: PoznBuff@aol.com.

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

Thoreau Unitarian Universalist Congregation. Adult discussion, 9 a.m. Service, 11:15 a.m. 281-277-8882. www.tuuc.org.

Unitarian Fellowship of Galveston County. 502 Church St. Service, 10:30 a.m. 409-765-8330.

Unitarian Fellowship of Houston. Adult forum, 10 a.m. Service, 11 a.m. 713-686-5876.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in, 2-6 p.m. • GLBT Community Church with Rev. Melissa Wood: Bible study, 10-10:45 a.m., worship 11 a.m. www.geocities.com/glbtc • LOAF (Lesbians Over Age Fifty); 2 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

MONDAY, MARCH 10 EVERY MONDAY

Center for Spiritual Living. Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

Free HIV Testing. Houston Area Community Services. 9 a.m.-noon at Joseph-Hines Clinic, 1710 West 25th St. 713-526-0555, ext. 231, 227 or 226.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 8 p.m.-midnight. Keys West. 713-830-3000.

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

Gay Fathers/Fathers First. Support group. 8-9:30 p.m. Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. Tom, 713-726-8736. www.geocities.com/gaydadhouston/

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

Houston Roughnecks Rugby Club. Practice from 6:30-8:30 p.m. For more information, log on to www.roughnecksrugby.org.

Kolbe Project. Eucharist 7:30 p.m. 713-861-1800.

Lambda Center. Alcoholics Anonymous. 8 p.m. Beginners' Group. 1201 W. Clay. 713-521-1243 or 713-528-9772. www.lambdahouston.org.

Montrose Clinic. Offers weekly peer support groups for gay and bisexual men with HIV. Spanish speaking group meets, 6:30 p.m. 215 Westheimer. 713-830-3050. Grupo de Apoyo para Latinos gay y bisexuales VIH positivos. Lunes 6:30. Para mas informacion llama al 713-830-3025.

Queer Voices Radio Show. 8-10 p.m. KPFT 90.1.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • HRC PAC (Human Rights Campaign Political Action Committee), 7 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

TUESDAY, MARCH 11 EVERY TUESDAY

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

Center for Spiritual Living. Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

Free HIV Testing. Houston Area Community Services. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Joseph-Hines Clinic, 1710 West 25th St. 713-526-0555, ext. 231, 227 or 226.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 8 p.m.-midnight at Club Houston. Also 4-8 p.m. at 611 Club, 611 Hyde Park. 713-830-3000.

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

Helping Cross Dressers Anonymous. Support group. 7 p.m.

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

Introduction to Buddhism. All welcome at 634 W. Temple in the Heights. 7 p.m. Carlton, 713-862-8129.

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

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • Pride Committee of Houston general meeting, 7 p.m. • 400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12 EVERY WEDNESDAY

Center for Spiritual Living. Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.; SOM Discussion & Exploration, 7 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

Crystal Meth Anonymous (CMA). 8:15 p.m. meeting. Montrose Counseling Center, 701 Richmond Ave., Room 15.

Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. Support Network Pot Luck Dinner, 6:30 p.m. Various support groups, 7 p.m. 713-526-1017.

Bible Study. Noon & 6:30 p.m. St. Stephen's Episcopal. 713-526-6665.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 4-8 p.m. at Mary's; 9 p.m.-midnight at Ripcord; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at EJs; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at Midtowne Spa. 713-830-3000.

Free HIV Testing. Thomas Street Clinic. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 2015 Thomas St. OraSure method. Call for appointment. Sharon, 713-873-4157.

Houston Pride Band. Open rehearsal, 7-9 p.m. 1307 Yale. 713-528-4379.

Houston Roughnecks Rugby Club. Practice from 6:30-8:30 p.m. For more information, log on to www.roughnecksrugby.org.

Houston Tennis Club. 7:00-9 p.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. houstontennisclub@aol.com

Spiritual Uplift service. 7 p.m. Resurrection MCC. 713-861-9149.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in, 2-9 p.m. • Free HIV testing, counseling, 6-9 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

THURSDAY, MARCH 13

Lesbian & Gay Immigration Rights Task Force-Houston. Meeting. 8 p.m. Chris, 713-426-3128. E-mail: lgirtf-houston@egroups.com.

EVERY THURSDAY

BiNet Houston. Group for bisexuals; everyone welcome. 7:30 p.m. Hobbit Cafe, 2240 Portsmouth. www.flash.net/~bihouse. 713-467-4380.

Center for Spiritual Living. Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

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

Free HIV Testing. Houston Area Community Services. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Joseph-Hines Clinic, 1710 West 25th St. Also 11 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at Gallery Medical Clinic, 5900 North Freeway, and Club Toyz from 9 p.m.-midnight. 713-526-0555, ext. 231, 227 or 226.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 4-8 p.m. at The Outpost; 8 p.m.-midnight at Brazos River Bottom and Cousins; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at Toyz Disco. 713-830-3000.

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

Web site: <http://home.swbell.net/larathon/houfir.htm>. E-mail: larathon@swbell.net.

GLOBAL. Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual Alliance at the University of Houston-Central Campus. Weekly meeting, 6 p.m. e-mail: nguyen0023@hotmail.com.

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

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

Lambda Skating Club. 8 p.m. Tradewinds Skating Rink. www.neosoft.com/~lrsc. 713-523-9620.

Montrose Clinic. Offers weekly peer support groups for gay and bisexual men with HIV. English speaking group meets, 6:30 p.m. 215 Westheimer 713-830-3050.

Rainbow Ranglers. Free C&W dance lessons. No partner required. Brazos River Bottom. 8:30 p.m. 713-528-9192.

Recovery From Food Addiction (RFA). Meeting for 12-step program open to all. Noon-1 p.m. St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 1805 W. Alabama St. RFA: 713-673-2848.

www.geocities.com/rfa77235/. E-mail: rfaeworldservice@aol.com.

Spanish Charla Conversation Group. Café Agora, 7 p.m. E-mail charlahouston@msn.com. 713-416-7203.

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

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • Montrose Writers Project, 7 p.m. • Monthly volunteer meeting, 7 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

FRIDAY, MARCH 14 EVERY FRIDAY

Center for Spiritual Living. Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 10 p.m.-2 a.m. at The Meatrack; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at EJs and at Midtowne Spa. 713-830-3000.

Free HIV Testing. Thomas Street Clinic. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 2015 Thomas St. OraSure method. Call for appointment. Sharon, 713-873-4157.

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

Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals (H.A.T.C.H.) Meeting. 7-10 p.m. 713-942-7002.

Houston Tennis Club. 7:00-9 p.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. houstontennisclub.org

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

Mishpachah Alizim. GLBT Jewish congregation. Sabbath services at 8 p.m. on the second Friday of each month at Baby Barnabas, 602 Fairview. Monthly study groups with Congregation Beth Israel, 5600 North Braeswood. Mishpachah Alizim, P.O. Box 980136, Houston, TX 77098. 866-841-9139, ext. 1834.

Q-Patrol. Volunteers walk the streets to help prevent hate crimes. 9:30 p.m. Convene at community center. 713-528-SAFE. E-mail: qpatrolinc@aol.com

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • Women's Game Night, 7:30 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

VOLUNTEER/SELF-HELP

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

HoP-ON. Anyone can join this non-profit moderated e-mail announcement list that helps facilitate advocacy work and organizing efforts for gay Houstonians. Quantity of postings is strictly limited. Postings include press releases and action alerts from national, state and local gay and allied organizations. For info or to join, access www.groups.yahoo.com/group/HoP-ON/.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Volunteers perform a variety of critical tasks which include staffing the information desk during drop-in hours; helping with center programming and events; working on community outreach efforts, fund-raising and publicity. Card players, writers and artists in particular are needed. 713-524-3818.

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

Pride Committee of Houston. Volunteers sought for Pride 2003 preparations. This is the 25th Pride celebration. www.pridehouston.org. E-mail: volunteers@pridehouston.org.

appts

a weekly guide to arts & entertainment activities for gay Houstonians

SPECIAL THIS WEEKEND

Let Us Entertain You (LUEY) Weekend this year is March 6-9 at several clubs in Houston. The event offers food, cocktails and socializing in Houston for people after Mardi Gras in New Orleans. Host bars include EJs, Mary's...Naturally, the Outpost, the Ripcord, Brazos River Bottom and Rich's. Cost: Free for out-of-town guests; \$15 donation requested from in-town participants. Registration limited to the first 1,000 people. Houston Council of Clubs, P.O. Box 667486, Houston, TX 77266. www.lueyweekend.com

NEXT WEEK

"Halfway to 100" is Bob Bouton's fund-raiser/party to celebrate his 50th birthday and raise money for the non-profit Assistance Fund, which helps people with HIV/AIDS. The event will include a small reception and hors d'oeuvres, followed by an evening of entertainment. The reception begins at 7 p.m., and the show kicks off at 8 p.m. Saturday, March 15. EJs, 2517 Ralph. 713-527-9071.

MUSIC

Lesbian rocker **Michelle Malone** takes the stage this week at Houston's Rhythm Room, along with Austin musician **Ginger Leigh**.



THURSDAY, MARCH 13

Musicians Michelle Malone and Ginger Leigh bring their brand of rock'n'roll, jazz, funk and blues to Houston next weekend. Atlanta-based Malone has played and toured extensively with the Indigo Girls, as well as carving a successful solo career for herself. Leigh is a fifth-generation musician from Austin who has just released her latest recording of original tunes, "Charge Laughing." 9 p.m. The Rhythm Room, 1815 Washington. 713-995-5251. www.rhythmroomhouston.com. www.gleigh.com. www.michellemalone.com.

FILM

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, MARCH 8 AND 9

"Secret Lives: Hidden Children and Their Rescuers during WWII," directed by Aviva Slesin, recounts how non-Jews, at great personal risk, took young Jews into their homes to save children from the Nazis. Interviews with survivors examine how the extraordinary experience affected their sense of family, as well as their personal and religious identities. 7 p.m. Tickets: \$6. Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Caroline Wiess Law Building, corner of Main Street and Bissonnet/Binz. 713-639-7515. www.mfah.org.

GALLERIES

THROUGH MARCH 9

Museum of Fine Arts Houston presents "Old Masters, Impressionists, and Moderns: French Masterworks from the State Pushkin Museum, Moscow" in an ongoing exhibit. The showing brings together 76 landmark French paintings from one of the world's great museums of fine arts. It includes Impressionist and Post-impressionist works by Degas, van Gogh, Monet and Renoir, plus early Modern works by Bonnard, Breque, Matisse and Picasso. Admission: \$7. Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Audrey Jones Beck Building, 5601 Main St. 713-639-7300. www.mfah.org.

ONGOING

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Q Puzzle

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14						15				16			
17						18				19			
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56					57		58				59	60	61
62					63				64				
65					66				67				

"Best in Show"

Across

- "Ed Wood" Best Supporting Actor Martin
- Where T.E. Lawrence traveled
- Gen. Stuart (contemporary of Stonewall)
- Noel Coward's "___ the World in Eighty Days"
- River of the land of Margaret Cho's ancestors
- Bobby of hockey
- "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf" Best Supporting Actress
- Eminem's mentor Dr. ___
- Nemesis of Tinkerbell
- Meeting with Niles Crane
- Org. for the celebs in this puzzle
- Nonpornographic raw material
- Not potent
- Splits, with "out"
- Sake
- "Together ___" (1992 flick)
- Locale of Da Vinci's "Last Supper"
- Frequently, to Whitman
- Angelina's tomb-raiding role
- Family flower?
- Lesbos, for one
- W. H. Auden's tongue
- Pigeon ___, Tenn. (home of Anita Bryant Music Mansion)
- Halliwell's partner
- Opera tenor Caruso

- 101, 102, 103, etc.
- "That's a wrap!"
- Singer Spencer
- Squeak in "The Color Purple"
- Open, to Billie Jean
- "Good Day" ___ the Scarecrow
- Robin Williams' home planet, in a sitcom
- "American Beauty" Best Actor
- Sgt. Leonard Matlovich, e.g.
- "Glen or Glenda: ___ Two Lives"
- Used the Divine Miss M's name in vain?
- Organ pleased by Britten
- Gas brand in the land of k.d.lang
- Awards won by five actors in this puzzle

Down

- Sixth notes in "Do-Re-Mi"
- Constellation over Sydney or Rio
- No to Rimbaud
- Milk candy
- "Alice Doesn't Live Here ___"
- Milk source
- "Atlas Shrugged" author Rand
- Lots of lesbians, to Melissa Etheridge
- What Washington couldn't tell
- Tchaikovsky or Nureyev
- "The Accused" Best Actress
- Billy Bean boo-boo

- George of "The Gay Sisters"
- Shrek's shoe size, perhaps
- Where to see Goth Talk
- Alfred Kinsey's tool
- "The Practical Heart" novelist Gurganus
- "My Fair Lady" Best Director
- Latina writer Castillo
- Paul Lynde's "Beach Blanket ___"
- "Showboat"'s "Nobody ___ But Me"
- Harry of the Mattachine Society
- Fashion designer Jacobs
- What comes out in spring
- Like a nervous Nellie
- Waikiki paste
- Sportscaster Cross
- Title character in a McNally play
- His mother made him a heterosexual
- Edvard Grieg's land (abbr.)
- Major screwup
- Make up
- Lover of Dali, perhaps
- 069-69-0069, e.g.
- Phallic swimmers
- Part of YSL
- Military cross-dresser Jeanne ___
- Possible commitment ceremony vow
- Tennessee's country, once (abbr.)
- Always, to Emily Dickinson
- Stat for Esera Tuaalo

Answers on Page 22

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My Stars!

March 7 — 13



ARIES (March 21 to April 20)

Put the past behind you, baby. If you've been holding on to old heartaches, it's time to let them go once and for all. Perform a ritual or just write a "kiss off" letter. But whatever you do, make sure you welcome a Scorpio into your life.



TAURUS (April 21 to May 20)

Mars in the adventurous sector of your chart means that you need to follow your passion, sweetie. Use it or lose it! A fellow Taurus is just as randy as you are. If you've been letting your love burn out, it's time to stoke that flame.



GEMINI (May 21 to June 21)

Uranus is pushing its way through your career house one small, strong step at a time. Follow the pull of the universe, and don't try and go against it. You can change the world from a position of power. The fringe world no longer serves you. A Pisces would like to serve you day and night.



CANCER (June 22 to July 22)

You don't have to worry too much about what other people think during this cycle. Everyone is looking at you with newfound respect. That means that you don't have to pretend to be something you're not. A Pisces wants to know the real you. Start revealing, doll.



LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22)

Saturn transits your house of friends and forces you to think twice before taking an Aries for granted. Put time and energy into those who have poured so much time and energy into you. Step one, redo your schedule and un-complicate your life.



VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22)

This is a tough time to be you, but it's worth it! Put your energy into your love life and all will be well with your work life soon enough. Work on your body during this stressful and emotional time. A yoga or workout routine could save your soul, sweetie! A Capricorn helps, too.



LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22)

Your life may feel like a reality TV show this week. Everyone is voting on how popular you are. If you want to come back for next week's episode, you better turn on the charm with an Aquarius and keep your mouth shut with everyone else. Diplomacy, darling.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21)

Uranus transits your house of creativity and pushes you into a whole new level of artistic development. A Gemini encourages you to express your true passions on the page or with a paintbrush.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21)

The Sun and Mercury meet in your house of home in mid-March and inspire you to make your own crib more of a palace and less of a hovel. As you clean out drawers you may decide to clean out some tired old loves from your psyche. It's time to make room for a Taurus, who wants to be true to you.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19)

Mars transits your sign this week and brings you some much-needed physical energy. You're able to use your body to grab the attention of a Scorpio who has previously eluded your grip. Grab now, sweetie.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18)

The Sun, Mercury, and Uranus are all transiting your house of finances in the days ahead, which means that you should put extra energy into the material world. It will reward you back. A Sag will help you to figure out what steps to take next.



PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20)

This is your time to take charge and point your life in the direction of the future. Stop waiting, Pisces. Action leads to fabulous reactions from all the right people. A Cancer responds just as you'd hoped.

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

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