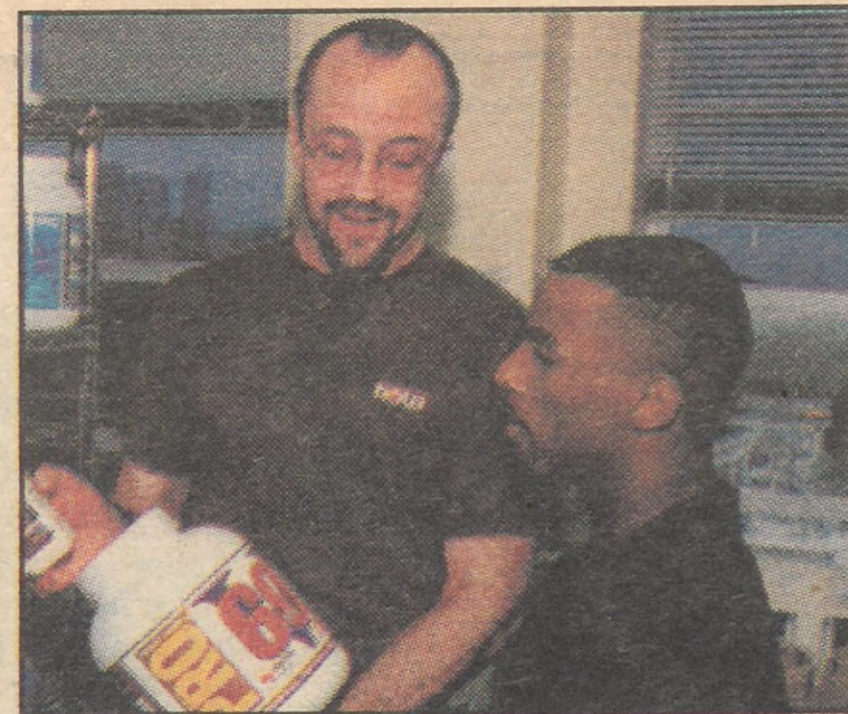


Houston Buyers Club started in a small closet, but now assists thousands of HIV/AIDS patients with vitamins and supplements.
Page 15



INSIDE



Coy Tow, executive director of the Greater Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce, helped hand out awards to mark progress made in 2001.
Page 2



Bob Bouton helped host a recent fund-raiser to assist Houstonians battling HIV/AIDS.
Page 2



The zany 'A Tuna Christmas' is among holiday productions on stage in the area this season.
Page 18

Houston gay man missing



Gay Houston resident Jonathan Cooper has been missing since Dec. 5, and police have not ruled out foul play in his disappearance. Cooper is white with brown hair and brown eyes, is 36 years old, weighs 180 pounds and is 6 feet tall. Authorities are attempting to locate both Cooper and his vehicle — a blue four-door 1983 Mercedes 300 SD, Texas license plate J17 HWF. Anyone with information is asked to call the Houston Police Department at 713-308-3600.

Police still unsure whether or not to suspect foul play in disappearance; vigil is set for Friday

by PENNY WEAVER

Homicide investigators have taken over the case of a missing gay Houston man, but police remain uncertain whether or not foul play is involved in his disappearance.

Jonathan Gregory "Grey" Cooper was last heard from on Wednesday, Dec. 5, when he called a co-worker to say he was in the Galleria area, police said. He told the co-worker that traffic was heavy, so he was going to shop a while longer before trying to leave that area. The call was made about 5 p.m.

"That's the last that anybody has heard from him," said Officer John Cannon of the Houston Police Department. "He has not shown up for work since that day.

"We don't know if he's just decided to take a hiatus and leave or if ... foul play is involved," Cannon added.

An investigator with the HPD homicide division is now pursuing leads in the case, according to Cannon.

"Just because it's in homicide doesn't necessarily mean it's labeled yet [as] foul play," he noted.

But Cooper's partner, Frank Bonner, said the missing man is a reliable person who stays away from drugs and alcohol and has not displayed any kind of erratic or unusual behavior since the two have been together.

"We definitely suspect foul play," Bonner said. "Jonathan has been my [partner] for almost three years. He's a well-respected technical writer. He is a responsible person.

"Him disappearing is so unlike him," Bonner added. "We just don't know what happened."

➤ Continued on Page 9

Gay groups settle relief dispute

Human Rights Campaign donates funds to new relief effort launched Thursday in New York for partners of gay victims of Sept. 11 terrorist attacks

by LOU CHIBBARO JR.

NEW YORK — Two New York gay agencies will disburse \$141,000 in relief funds to surviving partners of gay victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in an attempt to cover any shortcomings in relief efforts for gays, the groups were expected to announce Thursday.

The announcement from the Stonewall Community Foundation and the Empire State Pride Agenda also put to rest a simmering dispute with the Human Rights Campaign, which said in October that it would create its own relief fund and keep a portion of money raised for advocacy work on behalf of victims.

HRC officials said this week that the \$10,000 to \$15,000 raised so far will be

donated to the Stonewall effort.

Stonewall and Empire, concerned that relief efforts from non-gay groups were overlooking the partners of gay victims, were scheduled to deliver checks of \$4,000 each to at least four of the survivors at a press conference Thursday in Manhattan.

"Gay and lesbian life partners have been denied the bedrock government benefits, like workers compensation and Social Security, afforded automatically to spouses," said Joe Grabarz, executive director of Empire State Pride Agenda. "We felt we needed to do something to help offset this discrimination."

Officials with the two groups said the relief fund — the "Sept. 11 Gay & Lesbian

➤ Continued on Page 8



Peggy Neff (right) is trying to cope with the financial impact of losing her partner of 18 years, Shelia Hein, who was killed in the Sept. 11 attack on the Pentagon. Publicity about her plight helped bolster support for a relief fund for the partners of gay victims.

Chamber marks year's progress with awards

Brunjes, Martin among recipients as gay Houstonians reflect on progress made in 2001

Near the end of the year is often a time to recognize and celebrate outstanding contributions within local organizations, and the Greater Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce has offered its annual kudos.

The Chamber wraps up 2001 with awards and recognition for leadership that has guided the group and helps celebrate new growth, with more than 120 new members this year.

On the eve of Dec. 4, Chamber members and guests gathered at the Warwick Hotel for an annual holiday party and awards banquet.

"This yearly event is always a special pleasure because we focus on the people who have given exemplary time and talents to making the Chamber and Houston a better place to live and do business," said Coy Tow, executive director of the Chamber.

The evening began with a festive Nutcracker market for members to focus on unique gift ideas and support one another in the holiday season. The Houston Pride band provided holiday music and wreaths made by Chamber member Jeanette Findlay, also manager of



Among Chamber members recently honored is Janine Brunjes, Mayor Lee Brown's liaison to gay Houstonians, who received an award for Outstanding Community Activism.

Baby Barnaby's on Fairview, adorned each table.

The first award and recognition was to Janine Brunjes and Grant Martin for Outstanding Community Activism. Brunjes thanked the crowd and recognized the community effort that helped Mayor Lee Brown to be re-elected. Both Brunjes and Martin helped build and lead a coal-

tion of support for Brown's campaign and also worked to defeat the anti-gay City Proposition 2.

Outstanding Corporate Awards went to JP Morgan Chase and Shell Oil Co. for ongoing and long-term commitment to the Chamber and to gay Houstonians as a whole. Both companies continue to be local and national leaders for diversity, work force issues and community support, Tow noted.

Two businesses were recognized for Outstanding Business Support: Bartlett Tree Experts and Computer Exchange. Both played roles in helping the Chamber achieve exposure and promote its mission.

"These businesses have stepped up to add value to the Chamber by providing additional financial resources, staff time and ongoing assistance wherever needed," Tow said.

The Chamber recognized and thanked the 2001 board: Gary Baumann, Marion Coleman, James Doyle, Rene Guerra, Joe Hiavak, Debra Hunt, Janie Lopez, Randy Mitchmore, Sara Rook, Rick Taylor and Michael Tolleson. Committee chairs recognized included Empower 2001 Chair Rick Taylor, Newsletter and Resource Guide Chair Marion Coleman, Networking Chair Randy Mitchmore and Program Chair Gary Baumann.

The final awards for members who played significant roles included New Member of the Year, Robert "Shane"

McShane; Outstanding Member of the Year Gary Baumann; The President's Awards to Marion Coleman and Debra Hunt; and the Coy Tow Leadership Award to Rick Taylor.

"These are the best of the best and I am proud to work alongside such a dedicated, talented and incredible group of people," Tow said.

The Chamber was founded six years ago and has more than 400 members — including corporations, businesses, individuals and non-profits — all interested in supporting the group's mission. The organization strives "to advance the economic and cultural development and vitality of gay, lesbian, transgender and supportive heterosexual businesses and organizations," according to its mission statement.

The Chamber meets each month and also hosts numerous special events through out the year, including Empower and the upcoming Let Freedom Ring New Years Gala.

—From staff reports

INFO

The Chamber

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Obituary

Hanzelka, 52, executive chef

Duane Hanzelka, 52, died Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 22, 2001.

He was born on Dec. 31, 1948. He was raised in San Antonio, but resided in Houston for the majority of his life.

During his early career, Hanzelka rose to the rank of executive chef for Tenneco Oil Co. He won many awards for his culinary talents. His artistic and creative expressions later led him to the floral design industry. He was the original owner of Paradise Tropicals, a shop known for creating unusual and elegant floral designs.

Friends recall that Hanzelka was meticulous in his work and took great pride in all of his endeavors. Within the past year, he had taken up painting, which led to the completion of several oil and acrylic pieces. His excellent sense of color is evidenced throughout his surroundings, according to his loved ones.

Hanzelka was buried in Yoakum, Texas. A memorial service to be held in Houston is pending.



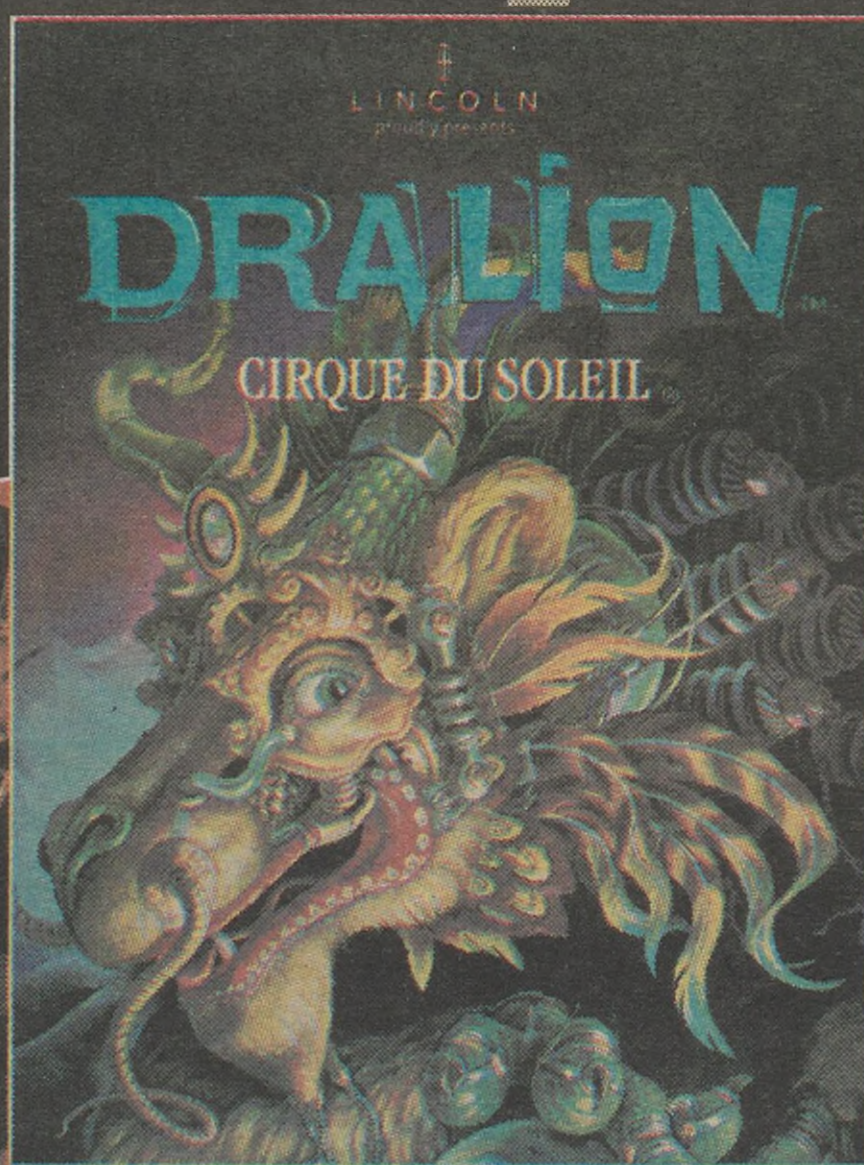
Entertainment for a good cause



Co-hosts Don Gill and Bob Bouton led the festivities at the annual PWA Christmas Show at Brazos River Bottom on Dec. 9. The event, which raises money for the benefit of people with AIDS, garnered almost \$4,300 this year. The show included both live and show tun performances by several individuals, plus groups including Miss Camp America Foundation and Crew of Olympus.

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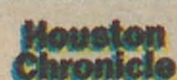
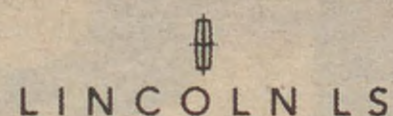
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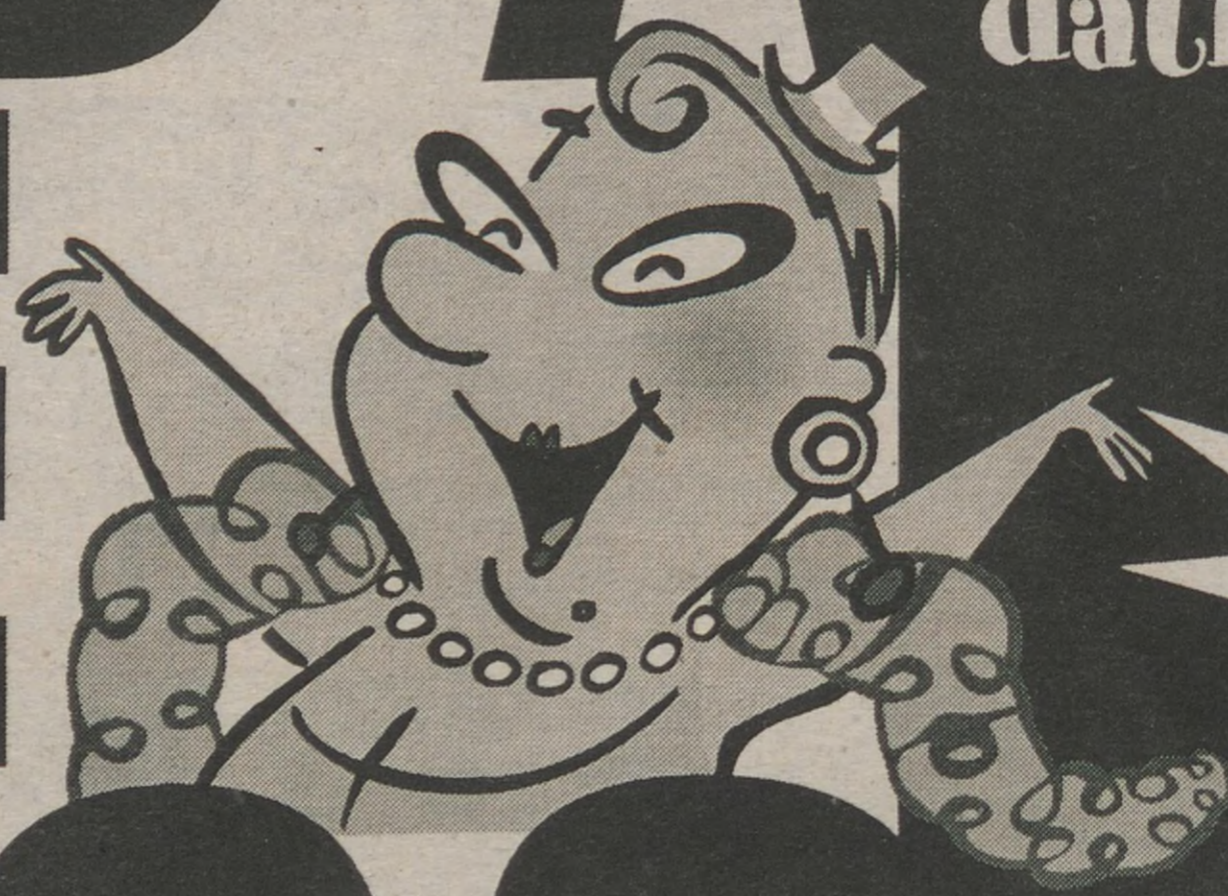
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High school lesbian couple in N.H. named 'sweethearts'

DOVER, N.H. (AP) — Two girls will be listed as "class sweethearts" in their high school yearbook after a dispute over whether same-sex couples were eligible for the honor. Nicole Salisbury and Ashley Lagasse, both 17, were overwhelmingly voted in when the yearbook staff conducted its annual "senior superlatives" survey. But Principal Robert Pedersen declared the vote invalid because the ballot asked to vote for one man and one woman. So the yearbook staff decided to eliminate the category all together rather than award the title to the second-place finishers. As students were collecting signatures protesting the decision, Superintendent Armand LaSelva stepped in and said the original results would stand and noted that the girls received more than 77 percent of the vote. "I believe that even if there was confusion about the ballot, the senior class members spoke," he said.

San Diego OKs lease with Scouts despite protests

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The City Council has narrowly agreed to allow the Boy Scouts to continue to lease a parcel of public park land despite the organization's ban on gays and atheists. After extended debate, the council voted 5-4 on Tuesday to renew the lease for 25 years, with an option for an additional 15 years. Since 1957, the Boy Scouts have leased about 15 acres in Balboa Park for \$1 a year. As part of the new lease, the scouts must spend \$1.7 million over the next seven years to upgrade the campsite. A federal lawsuit is pending against the city by the ACLU asking that the current lease, which expires in 2007, be canceled unless the Scouts eliminate their ban on gays and people who do not profess a belief in God. State Assemblywoman Christine Kehoe (D-San Diego) and others urged the council to postpone a vote to give the Scouts time to change their policy. By renewing the lease before the existing one expires, "you pre-empt what could be a very productive discussion the Scouts could have," said Kehoe, a former City Council member.



California state Assembly member Christine Kehoe, a lesbian, urged the City Council in San Diego to push the Boy Scouts to change its anti-gay policies before renewing a park lease with the organization.

Mich. arbitrator rules in favor of gay teachers

PLYMOUTH, Mich. (AP) — An arbitrator has ruled that Plymouth-Canton Community Schools officials violated academic and First Amendment freedoms in 1999 when they removed displays installed by two openly gay teachers that commemorated Gay & Lesbian History Month and listed facts about homosexuality. Arbitrator Paul Glendon ordered that the district issue a written apology to teachers Tom Salbenblatt and Mike Chiumento. Ruling on a grievance filed by the Plymouth-Canton Education Association against the Board of Education, Glendon found that the district violated its union contract when former interim Superintendent Kenneth Walcott removed the display. Glendon disputed school officials' argument that some parents might object to the gay displays, deciding that instead they were worried the teachers were "promoting" being gay. "The school administration should now put this behind them and commit to a fully respectful learning environment," said Ruth Harlow of the Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund, which assisted union lawyers in the case.

Group wants to ban same-sex marriages in Mass.

BOSTON, Mass. (AP) — A group that wants to ban gay marriages in Massachusetts said it has collected enough signatures to ask the legislature to put the question before the voters. Bryan Rudnick of Massachusetts Citizens for Marriage said the group has collected 110,000 signatures, more than the required 57,100. Of the signatures collected, about 80,000 have already been certified by local town clerks, Rudnick said. If approved by voters, the question would amend the state Constitution to define marriage in the state as between one man and one woman and prohibit the state from giving gays marriage-related benefits. Gay activists called the question unconstitutional because it would deny same-sex couples the right to marry and they are asking the state's highest court to block the question from the ballot. The earliest the question would appear on the ballot would be 2004.

Anti-gay activists take fight to N.H. Supreme Court

DOVER, N.H. (AP) — Conservative activists Charles and Frances Witcomb are taking their fight to tape-record a youth group's meetings to the state Supreme Court. The Witcombs sued the city when police refused to let them tape sessions of the Dover Coalition for Youth, a group that helps teens solve problems. The Witcombs objected to the inclusion of a gay support group on the list of the group's resources and wanted the group to list information about a group that supports using therapy to convert homosexuals to heterosexuals. The coalition refused to list such a group. When the Witcombs tried to bring a tape recorder to the meeting, coalition members complained to police that it violates state wiretapping law. The Witcombs' lawsuit was first dismissed by a Superior Court without a hearing, and is now being appealed to the state Supreme Court.

— From staff and wire reports



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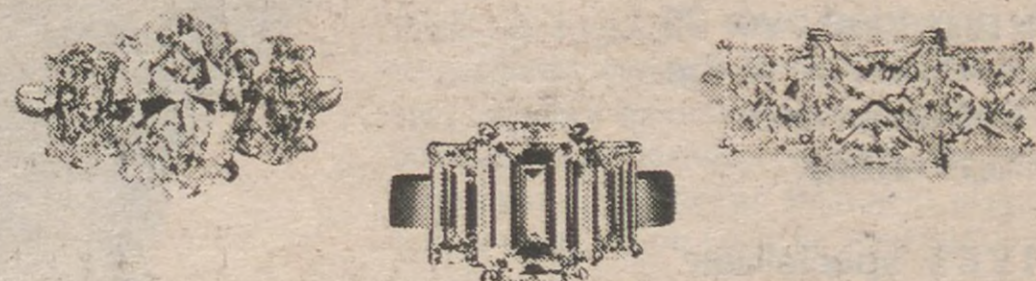
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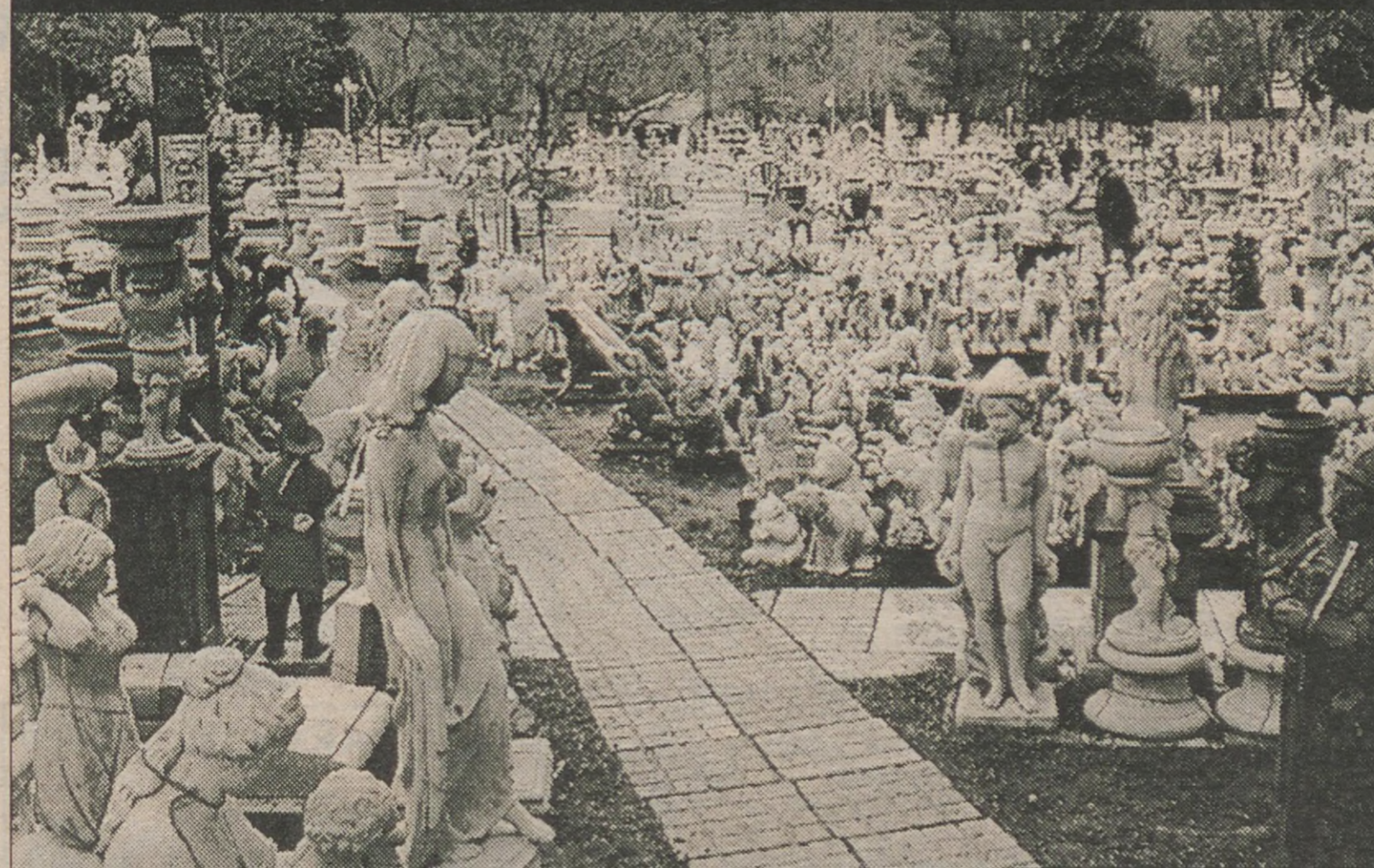
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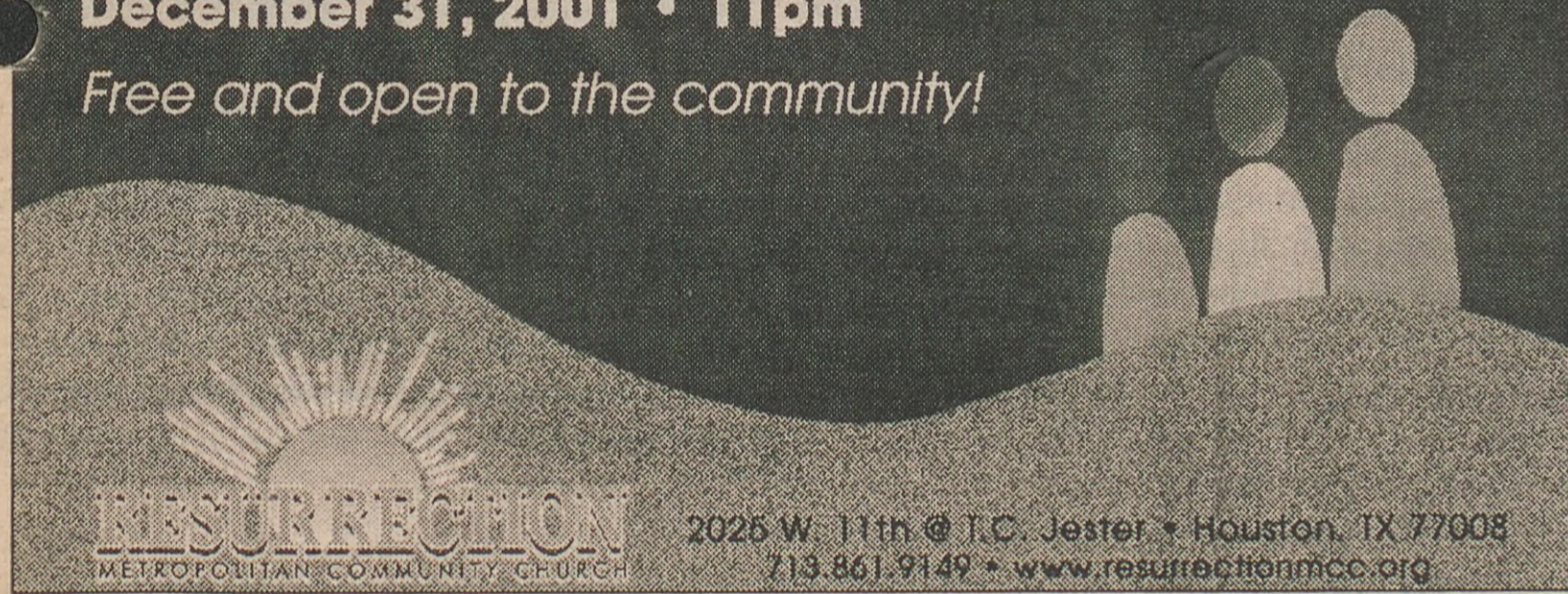
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Funds to be divided among gay partners

➤ Continued from Page 1

Family Fund" — will be divided equally among an estimated three dozen surviving gay partners of the Sept. 11 attacks.

The New York Gay & Lesbian Anti-Violence Project would administer the fund, the officials said.

Among those slated to receive one of the checks was Manhattan resident John Winter, whose partner, William Anthony Karnes, died in the World Trade Center attack. Karnes had worked in the World Trade Center as a software trainer for the financial firm Marsh & McLennan.

The attacks also displaced Winter from his home. The two men had been living in an apartment building near the Trade Center. Authorities have since classified the building as part of a "secure zone" within which all residents have been forced to evacuate their residences.

"It's been three months since I've been displaced," Winter said in an interview Wednesday. "I'm living with friends in Yonkers," a suburban community north of New York City.

Winter said authorities expect to allow him to return to the apartment before the Christmas holiday.

But he said his finances won't allow him to stay there much longer than six months, despite the financial assistance he's receiving from the Stonewall fund.

"It was a two-income rent," Winter said. "We split everything 50-50, but that's obviously no longer possible."

Gay relief fund

The Stonewall foundation began collecting contributions for relief efforts for survivors of gay victims in September, shortly after news surfaced that some gay survivors were being denied financial support by non-gay relief agencies.

Several agencies, including the Red Cross, have since pledged to treat partners of gay victims on an equal footing with surviving heterosexual spouses.

The announcement of the disbursement of the funds by the Stonewall and Empire came one day after the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest gay political group, disclosed that it would donate to the Stonewall group about \$15,000 it raised through its own Sept. 11 relief fund.

HRC announced the creation of its relief fund during its Oct. 6 annual fund-raising dinner in Washington.

Officials with Stonewall and Empire expressed concern earlier this week when a news story appearing on the gay Internet site Planetout.com reported that HRC had created a new relief fund and would be collecting money from contributors to assist surviving partners of gay victims of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Grabarz, Empire's executive director, said HRC's fund had the potential of competing with the Stonewall Community



John Winter's (right) partner, Tony Karnes, was killed in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Since then, Winter has been displaced from his apartment, located near the World Trade Center. Financial assistance has helped, but

Foundation's effort.

Grabarz pointed to statements by HRC officials in October saying HRC would disburse its funds to other relief groups, such as the Stonewall fund, that planned to provide direct assistance to the survivors of gay victims.

Grabarz said he was also troubled by HRC's announcement in October that it would keep 25 percent of the money it collected in its relief fund to conduct "advocacy" work on behalf of the needs of gay survivors of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Grabarz said HRC, like Empire, should use its own funds to pay for political advocacy work rather than use funds donated by contributors to a relief fund, who intend their donations to go directly to people in need.

David Smith, HRC's communications director, said this week that HRC would scrap plans to keep 25 percent of the fund for advocacy work. HRC now plans to give the entire fund, which consists of between \$10,000 and \$15,000, to the Stonewall fund, he said.

"We talked about using 25 percent of the fund for advocacy work at the beginning of this process, when we were uncertain about what would be involved," Smith said.

Smith said he told Planetout.com that HRC members persuaded HRC during the past two weeks to use its existing fund to help gay survivors of the Sept. 11 attacks. At the time of its October dinner, HRC said it would contribute money from its fund to private agencies that pledged to help surviving partners of the gay victims, and would not provide direct assistance to the survivors.

HRC said it would leave that task to groups like Stonewall.

Smith said HRC members and others began contacting HRC last week about a direct relief effort to survivors following press reports that a lesbian in Maryland, Peggy Neff, whose partner died in the Pentagon attack, had been denied financial assistance from a Virginia relief agency.

News of Neff's plight prompted HRC to

shift gears, Smith said, and to begin providing some direct assistance to surviving partners in need.

But Smith said he never intended to give Planetout.com the impression that HRC was starting a new relief effort or that it was dropping its earlier plans to give the bulk of its fund to groups such as Stonewall.

"Our main concern was to determine whether Stonewall planned to provide assistance to all of the victims rather than to just the World Trade Center victims," Smith said. "There was talk early on that they would limit their assistance to New York people."

"Once we determined they would give assistance to everyone, we decided to continue with our original plans to donate our funds to them," Smith said.

According to Smith, HRC has been attempting to contact Stonewall to coordinate efforts on the relief fund, but it has been unable to reach Stonewall officials because it had an incorrect phone number.

Officials with Stonewall and Empire said they had not received a call from HRC as late as Wednesday morning.

Expanded assistance

Bill Mattle, executive director of the Stonewall group, said the organization's leaders initially considered limiting the group's assistance to victims of the World Trade Center collapse; but in early October it changed plans to make contributions to all surviving partners.

Among them, he said, would be partners of those killed in the Pentagon attack and those killed in the plane crash in Pennsylvania.

Out of the \$141,000 raised for the Stonewall foundation fund, \$90,000 was raised by Empire from proceeds of the group's Oct. 4 annual dinner. The remaining \$51,000 came from contributions by individuals and groups from across the country, Mattle said.

Two weeks ago, Empire joined HRC and several other gay organizations in submitting a joint letter to the U.S. Justice Department, calling on Attorney General John Ashcroft to include survivors of gay victims of the Sept. 11 attacks in a soon-to-be-drafted federal relief fund. Details of the federal fund are scheduled to be released Dec. 21.



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Attempt made to use Cooper's credit card at ATM

➤ Continued from Page 1

Friends and family members planned at candlelight vigil for 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 14, at the home Cooper and Bonner share, 2209 Oak St. in Houston. Bonner said yellow ribbons will be tied around nearby trees and a silent vigil will be from 7:15 to 7:30.

Cooper, 36, is described as 6 feet tall, 180 pounds, with brown hair and brown eyes. He is white with a medium complexion and has a mustache. When last seen, he was wearing black western boots. He carries a black leather brief case and was wearing a chain collar with padlock, and also a silver ring on his left hand.

He also has a scar between his index finger and thumb on his right hand.

Cooper was driving a four-door diesel 1983 Mercedes 300 SD, medium blue in color. The license plate is Texas J17 HWF, according to Cannon.

Friends, family members, co-workers and Cooper's employer all told police it is unusual for him to not show up for work or at home without even a phone call. Cannon said police have repeatedly talked to Cooper's closest friends and family members.

On Dec. 6, someone attempted to withdraw money from Cooper's account through a teller machine outside a New



Cooper was driving a 1983 Mercedes much like this one at the time of his disappearance more than a week ago. His partner said he suspects foul play is involved in the case.

Orleans-area bank. It is not known if Cooper's credit card or ATM card was used in both tries at that facility, police said.

"We do have information that an attempt was made to draw money from an ATM in

New Orleans, but the attempt was not successful," Cannon said.

The videotape from that facility is yielding few leads for investigators.

"It's fairly tough to tell who the individ-

ual is who is trying to withdraw the money," Cannon said.

The case initially was handled by the local missing persons unit. Local officials are in touch with New Orleans police and have sent Cooper's photo to law enforcement agencies across the nation, Cannon said.

Both Cooper and Bonner are members of Houston's Classic Chassis Car Club, an organization for gay men and lesbians.

INFO

HoustonPolice Department

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Homicide division: 713-308-3600

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Issue 1103

EDITORIAL

A heretic speaks and we ought to listen

by CHRIS CRAIN

Nothing gets the fur flying among gay activists than a Log Cabin Republican speaking his mind, hence the predictable backlash aimed at Rich Tafel, chief of the gay heretics, over his lengthy commentary against our "virtual victimization," excerpted in an expensive print ad campaign.

In brief (something Tafel isn't), he argues that Sept. 11 has altered the political landscape for almost everyone, except for the lock-step gay rights movement, which reflexively responds that its standard agenda is all the more relevant, even as more gays are tuned to CNN than the latest "alarming" fundraising letter from gay rights headquarters in Washington.

He's right, of course, that our movement leaders haven't found a new vocabulary for the good gay fight, post 9-11. But the criticism doesn't sit well with Tafel's perennial foes at the center-left of the movement, at the Human Rights Campaign and the National Stonewall Democrats. So instead of addressing the gist of his argument, they claim not to understand it — taking shots at Tafel's "muddled message" and his awkward delivery.

Any editor can tell you that Tafel has no monopoly on strained prose and verbosity, especially among activists who take up the pen. (At least he appears to have written his own commentary, which is something of a rarity.)

Those same editors can also tell you that when lobbyists at places like HRC, NSD or LCR are angered by the substance of criticism, the first thing they invariably say is that they don't understand it. It's these Washington games that are far more likely than anything else to alienate gay Americans from "their" movement.

At his most heretical, Tafel argues that the repeated cries of our "victimization" have spawned a legislative agenda that isn't particularly relevant to the average gay American, who is unlikely to suffer the type of job discrimination that merits a legal challenge, and who is even less likely to be the victim of a hate crime.

"The same gay community whose political leaders demanded employment anti-discrimination laws and hate crime protections," writes Tafel, "was traveling on RSVP cruises, packing warehouse circuit parties, and filling black-tie dinner halls to hear keynote addresses from Hollywood celebrities." He calls that dichotomy "virtual victimization."

He's right about that, too, although saying so out loud is to provide a sound bite to those opposing both pieces of worthy legislation. Of course, the same

Tafel is right that our movement's 'virtual victimization' has spawned a legislative agenda that isn't relevant to the average gay American because the real action, post 9-11, is way outside Washington.

is true of most black Americans and most women, but that isn't an argument against their civil rights legislation either.

The real impact of non-discrimination laws is symbolic and preemptive, sending the message that the protected categories — whether racism, sexism or homophobia — are no longer acceptable prejudices in our society. It is that broader impact, as well, that riles social conservatives, much more so than the actual extension of legal protections.

The other important justification for our legislative agenda is that there is little chance of winning the freedom to marry — a much more important legal victory that would impact almost every gay American — until we lay the groundwork in basic civil rights protections.

But the really subversive part of Tafel's commentary — yes, Mary, even Republicans can be subversive — is that his argument undermines his own organization, and not just those he takes aim at. The real action in our movement, especially after Sept. 11, isn't in Washington, and it isn't inside the state capitals either, like the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force is fond of saying.

As a practical reality, the legislative agenda of the gay rights movement, at the federal and state level, won't be on the fast track anytime soon. Smaller legal advances, at the local level, are more likely.

But even more so now than before the terrorist attacks, the real action is in our culture and in our society. Ever since political gridlock stalled action years ago on ENDA and HCPA, our most effective advances have been in Hollywood, where gays are portrayed in much more favorable fashion, and in churches and synagogues, where mainstream faiths have taken important steps toward embracing gay congregants.

When we get fair treatment by the entertainment and news media, the message gets out that, as Tafel put it, "We're Americans who happen to be gay." As more of our fellow citizens absorb that point, and see it everyday in co-workers, friends and family members who live their lives openly, then there'll be less workplace discrimination, fewer hate crimes, and a greater likelihood of federal legislation on both those points.

The struggle for fair treatment within religious faiths is arguably an even more important effort, and it's surprising that Tafel, an ordained Baptist minister, makes little mention of it.

There's no better lesson on the need to foster moderate religious movements than Sept. 11. Of the world's three great monotheistic religions, Islam is unique in the strength of its conservative traditionalists in the impotence of its moderates, and in the near absence of influential progressives.

As we celebrate the defeat of the Taliban and the uncovering of Muslim women and their aspirations, no one even dares bring up the plight of gays throughout the Islamic world. The new government of Afghanistan, praised for its improved treatment of women, has probably heard nothing to date from the State Department about existing laws mandating capital punishment, by particularly brutal means, for anyone exposed as homosexual.

Tafel was right to encourage other national gay groups to support Al-Fahita, the gay Muslim group, still in its embryonic stages. But the movement would also be better served if Al-Fahita and its enterprising 24-year-old leader spent more time pushing for change within Islam than reflexively denouncing any criticism from non-Muslims of that faith's ongoing horrendous treatment of gay men and lesbians.

That record is indefensible, however rich and diverse the Islamic tradition and whatever the prophet Mohammed's (non-)position on the issue; just as Christian apologists get nowhere pointing to Jesus' silence on homosexuality when his followers torment us in his name.

Rich Tafel is a smart guy, and he knew that his ad campaign would spark a debate about the direction of the gay movement. It's ironic that the head of an organization steeped in partisan politics would point us outside the Beltway, and ultimately outside the political sphere. And it's unlikely that was his intent.

But after Sept. 11, like never before, the struggle for gay equality is about winning hearts and minds — and souls — and not just about winning votes.

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



PLANT LIFE

New love means saying buh-bye to, er, 'fun buddies'

by DREW PLANT

Sometime in the last six weeks or so I came home from a date and put on a fave Patti LaBelle CD. The Original Lady Marmalade sang "I'm in love again..." and I sang along. It was a good, big, gay way to capture the very sentiment I was feeling at full throttle.

I think my friends knew how I felt before I did. Just a week before Patti and I celebrated my newly smitten heart with song, some dining buddies had asked the Big Gay Question. No, they didn't ask, "Are you in love?" Instead, my guy pals wanted to know if I had stopped taking calls from "regulars." Of course, they didn't use the term "regulars."

A discussion ensued about when exactly you should decline inquiries and offers from, er, "fun buddies." The consensus was that the decision as to when to decline advances and invitations from new acquaintances is much easier. It's the regulars we all have to worry about.

After all, what if I turned away a regular and then the new romance didn't work out? What would I do then, they wanted to know? They cautioned me that no self-respecting — or is that self-loathing? — gay man could proceed in the Game

Called Love without playing both ends against the middle (so to speak!).

Well, I'm taking that gamble. I may end up with no prospects in the chute, you might say, but I'm taking a chance on love. It's not any less scary than it's been in the past, but it seems a little easier this go-round.

What if I turn away a 'regular' and the new romance doesn't work out? No self-respecting gay man plays the Game Called Love without playing both ends against the middle (so to speak).

I'm not sure I am any wiser now than during past approaches to the Big Heart Throb, but two very wise mentors (thank you, Babs and Len!) and a previous, passionate trip down the aisle taught me not to be so attached to outcomes.

Live in the moment. See where things might lead. Trust the special person you've found. And, most of all, trust yourself. And for God's sake, try to show some self-restraint! (Or, as my mother has oft said to me and to my sister, "Don't let your crotch rule your life!" My sister even listened.)

In other words, it's the process, stupid. And part of that process means taking down the "I will" sign and replacing it — for a few rewarding weeks or for a fabulous

lifetime — with a sign exclaiming, "I'm happy with what I've got and I'm going to give it a fair, honest shot." Flashing, in neon, preferably. (Hey, I wasn't subtle when I was on the market, why should I be subtle now?)

Yup, the sound is fading of Barbara Mandrell crooning (in her best cigarette-

stained voice) "standing room only outside my bedroom door."

Mr. Right and I haven't even had the Big Talk. You know, the one where we commit to monogamy and define the terms. And I don't know if we will. It's nice not to have to. I think we both know what kind of person the other is.

My perhaps-rose-colored impression is that we have both loved enough, lost enough and matured enough to not have to negotiate the terms. Instead of doing the Usual Gay Thing of trying to use and hear wiggly words that let us do whatever in the heck we want, we seem equally confident that we're both staking it all on (gasp!) trust.

Hey, we were lying in bed in his child-

hood room in a house on Long Island when he told me that he loved me. In the dark in whispers and building over time for two months before, my priorities began to shift, and I like the way they're lining up.

I'm putting aside my being-gay-means-I-can-do-anything-I-darn-well-choose-no-matter-who-it-hurts training and doing my derndest not to let My Guy get away. (And not smother him, either. It took me more than 20 years of chasing men to figure out that "intense" can be a bad word too.)

Best yet, I've come to realize that Bill meets a standard that's very important to me: He and my last, now-deceased, sometimes-too-sainted-for-his-own-good partner would have genuinely liked each other. In fact, they probably would have sat in the corner at a cocktail party together and made fun of my sentimentality. I'll take that kind of razzing any day.

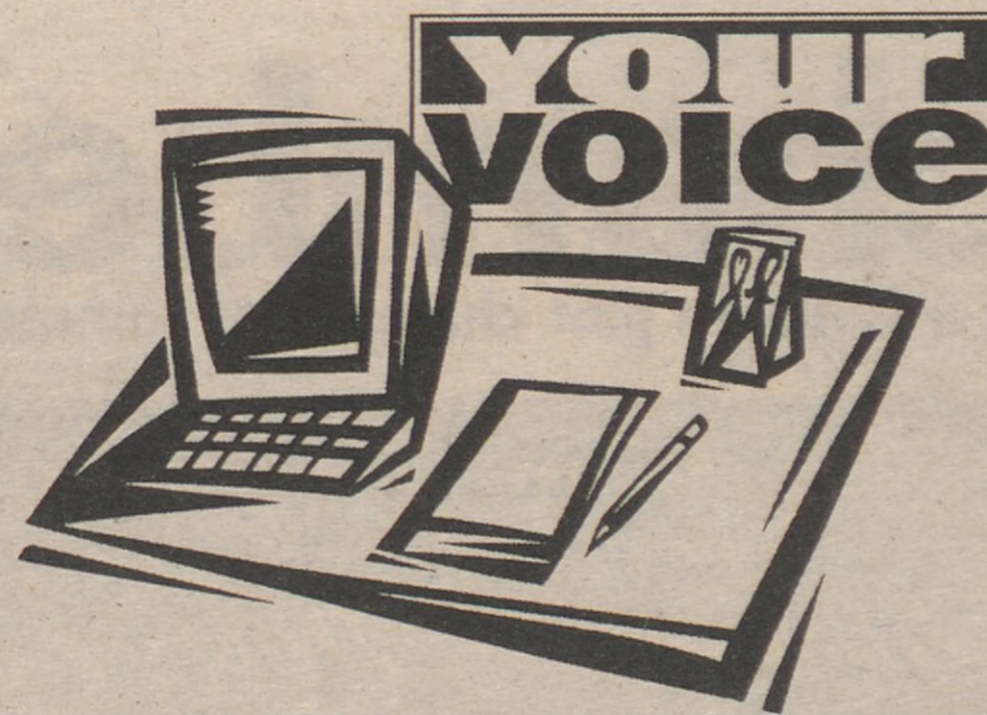
Now — and for a long time to come, I hope — when the lights are out and the candles are lit and there's no one in the world but the two of us, Chaka Khan's "Through the Fire" seems like just the right tune. Give it a listen and you'll know what I mean.

Drew Plant is an Atlanta-based writer and can be reached at drewbob@mindspring.com.

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Dykes to Watch Out For by Alison Bechdel



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"quote/unquote"

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"I don't think pornography like that should be lying around where innocent people can read it in the lonely stretches of the night."

Gay actor Sir Ian McKellan, star of the upcoming "Lord of the Rings," on why he tears out the pages of the Gideon's Bible containing Leviticus 18: 22 — "Thou shall not lie with mankind as with womankind; it is abomination." — when he finds the books in hotel rooms.



Sir Ian McKellan

"[On Judgment Day,] I wouldn't want to be in his shoes."

A Gideon Bible executive, responding to McKellan's interview, in the New York Post, Nov. 27

"I am aware that part of my responsibility in this job is to be a role model. It's important to me because when I was a young reporter there were no role models. I didn't know that it would be possible for me to be openly gay and do what I'm doing."

Openly gay ABC TV News correspondent Jeffrey Kofman, to the Advocate, Dec. 4. Kofman has filed reports from the USS Carl Vinson during the current war in Afghanistan.



Rupert Everett and Robbie Williams

"If anyone was offended, we apologize. Rupert Everett's comments were intended to be tongue-in-cheek."

A BBC spokesperson, after more than 500 viewers complained when Everett, a gay actor, joked that he'd love to have sex with pop singer Robbie Williams, and then added that everyone in the audience, regardless of their sexual orientation, would also want to after they saw him perform. In a recent interview, Williams said he had considered having sex with a man but couldn't go through with it.

"Dr. Jeffrey Klausner, director of Sexually Transmitted Disease Prevention and Control Services in San Francisco, has suggested a number of measures, some coercive, which he thinks would slow the increase of new HIV infections among gay men. Among them: closing sex clubs and adult bookstores; enforcing no-sex ordinances in bars and clubs; enforcing no-drug policies in bars and clubs; and Internet-based outreach and education, particularly in chat rooms where many gay men meet new sexual partners. Putting aside political realities when brainstorming on this subject, Klausner also raised the possibility of quarantining those who cannot control their infectivity — e.g., those barebackers who've infected 20 different people and still refuse to use condoms."

Washington Monthly magazine, November

"All the while that Afghanistan's ruling Taliban has been protecting Osama bin Laden, Italy has been harboring another omnipotent religious zealot, one who equally condemns us Western sinners and incites violence with his incendiary rhetoric. Yes, right there on the European mainland! Meet John Paul II, Christian fundamentalist extraordinaire and a man who inspires thugs across the globe who commit hate crimes against homosexuals, a form of terrorism if ever there was one."

Writer Michelangelo Signorile in the New York Press, Nov. 20

"Let me make this clear. I didn't resign as Surgeon General. I was fired!"

Former US Surgeon General Dr. Joycelyn Elders, to attendees at an HIV/AIDS Conference in Washington, D.C., Nov. 30. The conference program stated that Elders had resigned from her post. Elders, hailed as the "Condom Queen" by AIDS activists, was fired by then-President Clinton for criticizing at a 1994 U.N. World AIDS Day event the stigma around discussing masturbation as a safe-sex alternative.



Dr. Joycelyn Elders



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Out on the Bayou

houston voice • december 14, 2001

Out of the closet and into the limelight

Houston Buyers Club bursts with vitamins, supplements at discount prices for HIV/AIDS patients and other customers

by ELLA TYLER

Five years ago, the Houston Buyers Club operated from a closet in Fred Walters Jr.'s apartment. It stocked six items and had six customers. Today, its newly delivered refrigerator case occupies more space than the original closet.

"We've gone from 16 square feet to 1,600, and we now have more than 2,500 customers," Walters says. "We stock more than 300 vitamins, herbs and nutritional supplements chosen specifically to help people with AIDS alleviate the side effects of their medications."

There is nothing closeted about the club's current home. It's in the high rise at Montrose and Hawthorne and enjoys a spectacular view of downtown. Body Positive is next door.

Routinely, there is a steady stream of visitors. This week, some came by just stick their heads in to see the new refrigerator case, which has generated some excitement. "I'm so happy — there is a Santa!" exclaims one visitor.

Others, like Stephen Watson, stop by to pick up some protein powder and other supplements. Watson, a new Houstonian, is a recent convert to nutritional supplements, and is

Stephen Watson, a client at Houston Buyers Club, checks out some of the products the group offers.

pleased at the results.

"I began taking them two months ago and feel a lot better. I feel healthy, energetic and lively," he relates.

Watson was diagnosed with AIDS in 1995, he says, but never paid attention to nutrition until he moved to Houston and began seeing Dr. Schraeder. His biggest problem, he says, is gaining weight and keeping it on.

Another visitor, Ross, comes in this week for L-arginine, an amino acid that helps blood vessels relax.

"I began taking supplements in 1995, after my first heart attack, and they kept me from having another one for five years," he says.

Although he had a second heart attack last year, Ross continues to take supplements.

"I feel much better," he says, "and as a nurse, I am interested in the research being done."

He comes to the Buyer's Club because, "This is the only place I can get this dosage of L-arginine, so I don't have to take as many pills, and it's about 25 percent less expensive here." Ross says the Buyer's Club prices were a real boon for him.

"After my first heart attack, I was broke; then I only worked half time, so being able to get my vitamins more cheaply was a big help," he says gratefully.

Ross is a new kind of customer for the Buyer's Club, Walters says.

"We're seeing more and more people with cancer, hepatitis C, renal disease, transplants, and so on," he explains. "There's beginning to be a real push to ensure that people with serious illnesses get vitamins and supplements. We get calls from nurses who hear about us from out customers."

Also stopping by the club's high-rise office this week is Erich Glasbrenner, a member of the Buyer's Club board, bearing checks from a recent fund-raiser. Money is a constant issue for the group, which sells products at a minimal markup.

It has a small Ryan White grant that provides funds for supplements for indigent patients, but there's not enough money in the program, Walters says. He stresses how important it is that HIV/AIDS patients stay on their medicine regimens, and how side effects of many drugs make that tough.

"If people can't manage the side effect, they won't take the drugs," Walter says. That's where the Buyers Club offers assistance.



Fred Walters Jr. is executive director of the Houston Buyers Club.

appts

saturday, dec 15

Museum of Fine Arts Houston presents "West Side Story," starring Richard Beymer and Natalie Wood. Set in the Upper West Side of New York City in the late 1950s, the film is a modern-day re-telling of Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," with rival gang fighting for turf while star-crossed teens fight for love. 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 15 and 16. Tickets: \$5. Museum of Fine Arts Houston, 1001 Bissonnett. 713-639-7540.

sunday, dec 16

The Houston Chamber Choir presents two performances of "Welcome Christmas" this week. Surrounded by the Gothic beauty of Trinity Church, the choir will celebrate the joy of Christmas with sparkling carols both old and new. This is the group's sixth season. Tickets: \$20 general admission, \$15 seniors, \$8 students. 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 16, and 8 p.m. Monday, Dec. 17. Trinity Episcopal Church, Main Street at Holman. 713-224-5566.

sunday, dec 16

Members Of Operation Donation (M.O.O.D.) will present "Fabu 2001: A Christmas Party with a Cause" to benefit The House of Hope for Children. The evening will include a wine reception, dinner buffet and fashion show. 7-10 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 16. \$20 suggested donation. Urbana Restaurant, 3407 Montrose. R.S.V.P. 713-542-4353.

ongoing

Museum of Fine Arts Houston showcases American artist Stanton Macdonald-Wright in "Color, Myth, and Music: Stanton Macdonald-Wright and Synchronism" through Feb. 24. The survey of 25 paintings is the first retrospective view dedicated to the artist, known as one of this country's first purely abstract painters. Tickets: \$5. MFAH, Caroline Wiess Law Building, 1001 Bissonnett. 713-639-7300.

The Contemporary Arts Museum presents the groundbreaking work of Bill Lundberg in an exhibition that begins Friday, Dec. 14. "Bill Lundberg: Syntax of Illusion" showcases the work of this pioneer in the genres of film and video installations. The art predates that of some of the best known figures in contemporary film and video. Dec. 14-March 17. Admission is free. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday; 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Thursday; noon-5 p.m. Sunday. Contemporary Arts Museum, 5216 Montrose. 713-284-8250. www.camh.org. Contemporary Dance" program at Miller Outdoor Theatre. The work fills the entire stage area with groupings of dancers that are split apart and then recombined at high velocities. Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 14-16, 8 p.m. Heinen Theatre, central campus of Houston Community College, 3517 Austin St. Tickets: \$11-16. 713-529-1819. www.suchudance.org.



Continued on Page 16 >

Houston Buyers Club keeps on growing

Continued from Page 15 >

"We're here to give people back their lives," he adds.

Ellen Hahn, the club's accountant, who is a full-time volunteer, also contributes her experience with side effects of drugs. She has lost the fat in her face as side effects of some medicines and relates, "I've had women tell me, 'If I'm going to look like you, I don't want to take the drugs.'"

Hahn will have fat injections done soon to help solve the problem. "It's called a cosmetic procedure, but it really isn't," she says. "You can't go out in the world [because of the look some drugs can cause]."

"Kevin Elkins, another board member, recently brought in a new duster for the club's space. He tells Walters about a mutual acquaintance who has been taken off his medication because of neuropathy.

"This is why this program is so important," he says. Elkins gets busy dusting. "Three years ago I was on disability and was too sick to work," he explains. "Thanks to these people, I'm back at work full time. I will do anything for the program."

Walter says does a lot of work on education for the club.

"I spend a lot of time on the phone educating people, and answer lots of questions for people who are shopping," he relates. "I think some people feel more comfortable about asking questions here than they do in a health food store because we have a private place we can go talk."

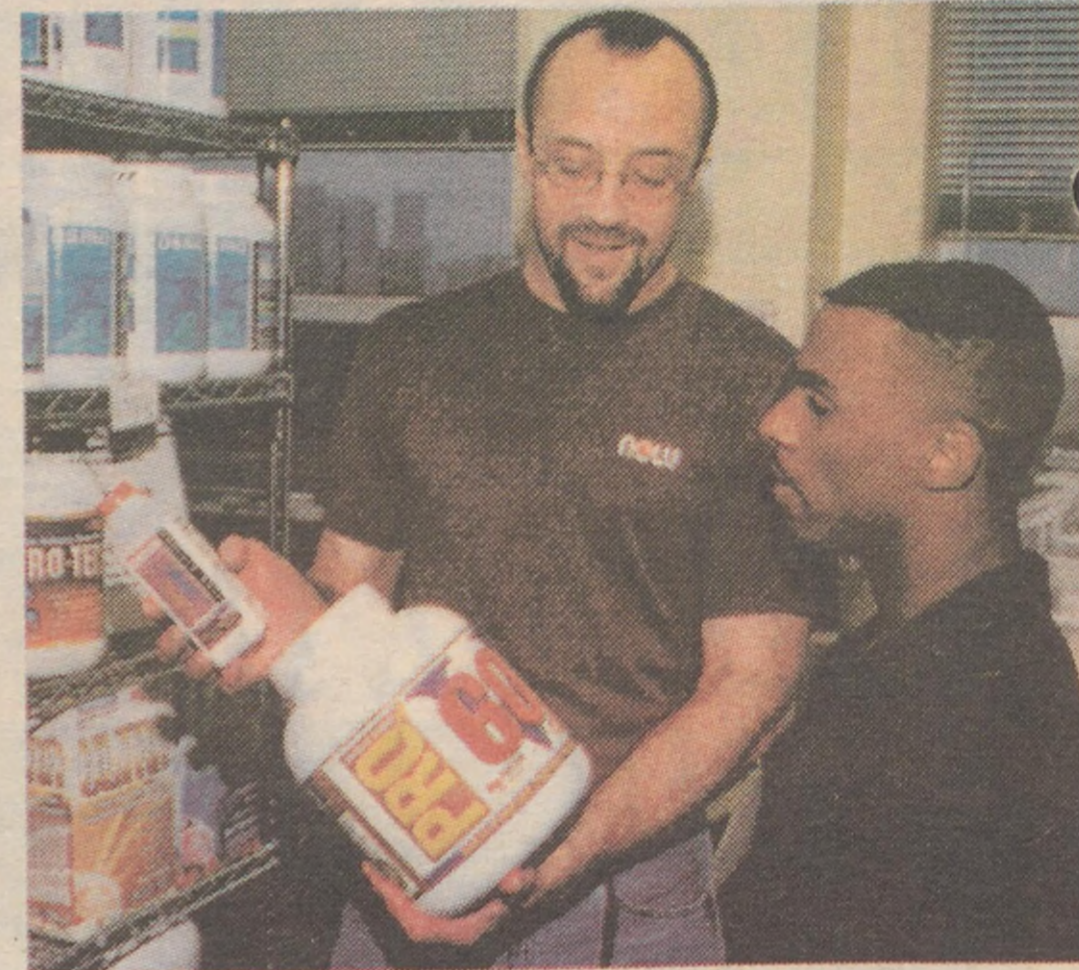
The group hosted a health fair on World AIDS day that drew nearly 250 attendees.

"We were very pleased with the participation. The advertising promised answers for the problems people have, like diarrhea and low sex drive, and that is what people want to know," Walters says.

The next project for the Buyers Club is production of a 48-page publication about managing side effects of AIDS drugs.



Ellen Hahn, the club's accountant, has lost some tissue in her face as a side effect of some medicines. "I've had women tell me, 'If I'm going to look like you, I don't want to take the drugs,'" she says.



Walters and Buyers Club client Russell Handy take a look at protein supplements.

"We have four science writers who are working on this, and we will have 100,000 copies printed and mailed," Walters notes.

Walter says everyone is welcome to shop at the Buyer's Club, regardless of their HIV status.

"There isn't a membership requirement, and we have plenty of merchandise for everyone," he explains. "Some people think we are only for people with AIDS or only for poor people, and they, very nobly, don't want to take advantage of us, but the more customers we have, the better."

INFO

Houston Buyers Club

10 a.m.-6 p.m. weekdays

10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturdays

3400 Montrose Blvd, Suite 605

713-520-5288 or 800-350-2392

Fax: 713-521-7419

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out on the aisle

THEATER CALENDAR

Holiday stages get busy

by PENNY WEAVER

'All About Christmas Eve'

A few twisted songs — and a few nice ones — punctuate the new one-act musical from close-harmony ensemble Quoz. "All About Christmas Eve" takes the stage at Theatre New West for three days next week. Formerly known as On Q, the group Quoz formed when Director Charles Baker asked a few friends from the Gay Men's Chorus of Houston to join him in a fund-raiser, "Songs Slightly Twisted," for the Body Positive Wellness Center in May 2000. The troupe has since performed at the Little Room Downstairs Theater, Ashland Street Theater and at Silent Moon, a fund-raiser for the chorus. "All About Christmas Eve" features the usual proportion of both twisted and nice songs from Quoz. The tunes are linked by a story of backstage intrigue in Santa's workshop, sparked when French elf Yves (David Gebo) insinuates himself into the lives of Santa (Rex Gillit) and Mrs. Claus (Steve Bullitt), the other elves (David Carter, Eric McAnallen, Neal Massey and Charles Baker) and Santa critic Myron Fuzick (Michael Pitkin). The production is directed by Craig Bushey.

Rayne, who adapted this production from the original "ghostly little book," returns to the Alley as director.

'A Christmas Carol' Through Dec. 30

Tickets: \$39-\$54
Alley Theatre
615 Texas Ave.
713-228-8421
www.alleytheatre.org

'A Tuna Christmas'

Celebrating its 12th anniversary in Galveston, the laugh-filled "A Tuna Christmas" plays at the Grand 1894 Opera House through Dec. 16. This performance brings to the stage again classic characters Didi Snavelly, who runs the used gun shop; her husband, R.R., who sees UFOs as his rescue from marriage; Aunt Pearl, who poisons poodles trespassing on her yard; and all their neighbors. The gang goes on a rampage because a "phantom" is destroying holiday displays before the annual prizes are awarded. Plus, these Texans are battling a bad economy, and a local production of "A Christmas Carol" is endangered by bad actors and a Scrooge-ish electric company. Original cast members — and Tony nominees — Joe Sears and Jaston Williams star. This piece has been described as a "long-horn version of 'A Night Before Christmas.'"

'All About Christmas Eve'

8 p.m. Dec. 18-20
Tickets: \$15
Theatre New West
1415 California St.
Reservations: 713-394-0464

'A Christmas Carol'

Houston's Alley Theatre presents the classic Charles Dickens tale, "A Christmas Carol, A Ghost Story of Christmas" through Dec. 30. The chilling tale features everybody's favorite miser, Ebenezer Scrooge, and reminds audiences of the true meaning of holiday spirit. British director Stephen

'A Tuna Christmas'

2 and 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 15
2 and 7 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 16
Tickets: \$11-\$48
Grand 1894 Opera House
2020 Postoffice
Galveston Island, TX 77550
409-765-1894
www.thegrand.com

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Actors (counter-clockwise from bottom left) Neal Massey, David Carter, Charles Baker, Rex Gillit, Michael Pitkin, David Gebo, Eric McAnallen and Steve Bullitt take the stage in the Quoz production of 'All About Christmas Eve' next week at Theatre New West.

homefront

Light up the holidays

Enjoy the beauty of bright displays this season, from electrical to nature's own popular poinsettia

by ELLA TYLER

I love driving past petrochemical plants at night because of all the lights, so December is one of my favorite months. There are lights nearly everywhere you go. And they're red, green, blue, yellow, and white; flashing and twinkling; wrapping tree trunks, draping shrubs and outlining roofs, sometimes all in one yard!

It is possible to achieve special lighting effects and still have time to work to pay the light bill. There is an amazing variety of "light sculptures." Trunk wraps are lights arranged on a grid that come with hooks, so you don't need to make yourself dizzy going round and round with the string of lights.

Bushes can be draped with prefab nets of lights. The white icicle lights that appeared a few years ago now come in colors, too. Nearly any bulb style that can be used inside can be used outside. Garden centers, arts and crafts stores and big discount stores are all good sources for lights and accessories.

I love lights, and enjoy all displays, even ones that are overdone. I like casinos for their lights, too. However, I think prettiest settings have either one or two colors or have all multi-colored lights. A little planning goes a long way.

Be careful that what you are using is labeled for outdoor use and make sure all plugs are secure. If you're using a ladder,

have someone around to keep the ladder steady and hand materials to you. Breaking your leg while putting up Christmas lights just does not have the same cachet as a skiing accident, and gets little sympathy.

Whether or not you put up lights, be sure to cruise through downtown and enjoy the lights. So far, Lamar gets my vote for the best decorations, but there are streets I haven't checked out yet. Take the side streets for a few days and enjoy the personalities that different neighborhoods show in their lights.

I'm not sure that some of the new developments in lights are an improvement — colored icicle lights, for example — but plant breeders are doing great things with poinsettias. There is a new variety called Winter Rose that has curled bracts that make it look remarkably rose-like. It is available in six shades of pink and red. I've also seen one called Plum Pudding, which looks like Aggies bred it. It's pale maroon.

Poinsettias also come in solid pink, salmon, cream and several shades of red. Some, called Monet, have various shades of pink, and others have a marbled look.

Poinsettias are susceptible to several water-borne fungus, so avoid wetting the foliage when you water them. If a plant has gray spots on the leaves, do not buy it. They like bright light, but not direct sun; good air circulation; and temperatures above 50. They should not dry out, but don't like soggy soil. If you have them in a decorative container, be sure they have good air circulation and are not sitting in water.

Poinsettias have very fragile stems, so handle them with care. If you snap a flower off by accident, seal the cut by putting it in boiling water for 30 seconds or passing it through a flame. Then use it like any cut flower.

When the colored bracts finally fall, you can cut the plant back and keep it for next year, either in a pot or in the ground. It will bloom again if given total and uninterrupted darkness for 15 hours a day from Oct. 1 'til the bracts color, about nine weeks. If you have planted it outside and it's not coloring, there is some light coming from somewhere that is disturbing the plant. The plant will freeze.

Poinsettias bloom in response to long nights, which is why in their native Mexico, they are naturally in bloom near Christmas, but Christmas Cactus bloom primarily in response to cool nights. This is important to the buyer, because they are likely to drop their flowers if the temperature gets too warm. Keep them in the coolest place in the house.

By the way, congratulations are in order to R. Michael Lee and Chuck Gulick, whose MacGregor area garden is featured in Traditional Home, Holiday 2001. The garden truly is as wonderful as the pictures.



The Winter Rose poinsettia is a new version of this perennial holiday favorite.

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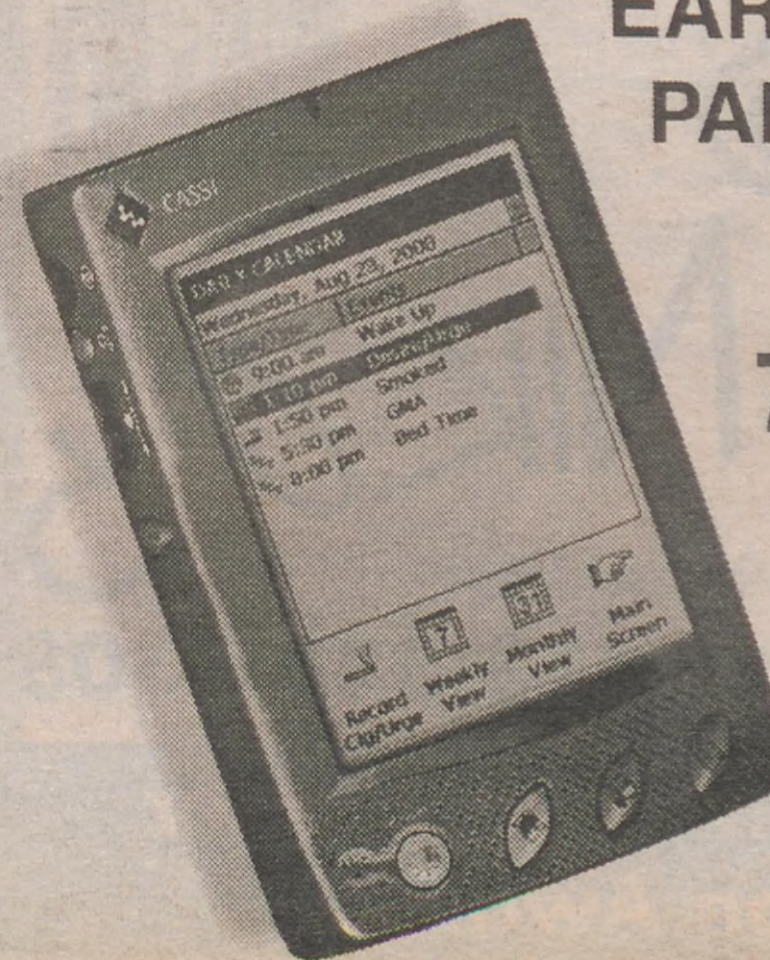
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RESTAURANT REVIEW

Eatery serves the mundane

World Cafe and
Margarita Bar excels at
drinks, but fails to offer
worldly tastes

by TRAYCE DISKIN

Without a doubt, the location of the new World Café and Margarita Bar occupies a very prominent place in the minds of Houston diners.

Whether that's due to the spacious structure itself, surrounded in palm fronds and Mexican tile, or due to the revered memory of the Blue Agave (and perhaps fainter memory of the Moose Café), the unveiling of a yet another incarnation on the corner of West Gray and Waugh has been much anticipated.

The good news is that this new establishment lives up to half of its name. Margaritas (much like the Blue Agave's) are devilishly potent and lush. That takes care of the drinks.

When it comes to the dishes, however, World Café seems to have fallen prey to the trend of "world" or "fusion" cuisine. In its attempt to specialize in "great cuisine from around the world," it has oversimplified not only the cuisine, but the dishes themselves.

The menu reads as a virtual "Miss Universe" pageant of dishes that may symbolize each region, but are ultimately lacking in substance. Rather than use its concept as an entryway into the innovations and subtleties in world cooking, we're greeted with the old standbys such as shrimp tempura (Japan), barbecue pork (China), lamb chops (France), and of course the hamburger that all U.S. patriots can be proud of.

In other words, world cuisine or not, the menu reads like a haphazard and rather cliché potpourri.

The only thing that can save an unpromising menu, of course, is excellent food, and here World Café tends to falter as well. The appetizer options consist of Garlic Butter Calamari with Pineapple (\$5.99), which features a frothy butter sauce with a minute whiff of pineapple. The Lettuce Wraps (\$7.99) feature either spicy minced Thai shrimp or chicken. While we appreciated the well-seasoned meat in these dishes, the minced texture on cold, wilting lettuce made the dish a little cumbersome to manage.

The Spicy Chicken Strips (\$4.99) with Vietnamese Dipping Sauce and Ranch Dressing were particularly insipid. I do recommend the Peel-em and Eat-em Boiled Shrimp (\$5.99), which were large and succulent, and accompanied by a velvety wasabi cocktail sauce that had the flavor and pizzazz that many of the other sauces lack.

When we asked our server about the size of the shrimp, and how much to order for our group, she politely stated she had "no idea," and didn't offer to find out for us. No wonder, then, that when one friend ordered the Sesame Crusted Sushi Tuna with Ponzu Sauce (\$17.99), our server happily sat down Sexy Skirt Steak with

Chipotle Blouse (\$11.99) in its place. Although the restaurant was hardly full, we could forgive a this type of gaffe — but didn't our server remember that she never asked us how we wanted the steak cooked?

Rather than wait another 20 minutes for her meal, my friend graciously ate the steak and reported that it was a little tough, although the smoky chipotle added a savory kick. Another friend enjoyed her Scaloppini of Sesame Chicken Breast (\$9.99), due to the harmony of the kaffir mandarin sauce and sesame seeds. The breast was well-cooked, although she lamented the Pesto New Potatoes, which were richly sautéed in onions and garlic, but coated too heavily in a vinegary basil sauce.

My Chipotle Aioli Seared Redfish (\$16.99) was meaty, moist and delicious, although I had a similar complaint about the potatoes. The accompanying sauce was much like the Calamari's, greasy, without much pineapple flavor. The chipotle sauce wasn't as prominent as I would have preferred, but the clean, simple taste of the fish was enough.

World Café offers a rather predictable list of salads and soups, and while patrons may have no problem finding a favorite or two, like Thai Chicken Soup (\$3.99), or Goat Cheese and Pecan Field Green Salad with Ginger Dressing (\$6.99), very few transcend the menu's overall mediocrity.

If World Café were the only café on the block, it would be an entirely reasonable place to enjoy some grilled fish or a burger. Fortunately, however, we're blessed with better restaurants doing the "taste your way around the world" thing (Farrago's immediately comes to mind).

In order to compete, World Café will have to introduce us to a world that's a bit less mundane and far more worldly.

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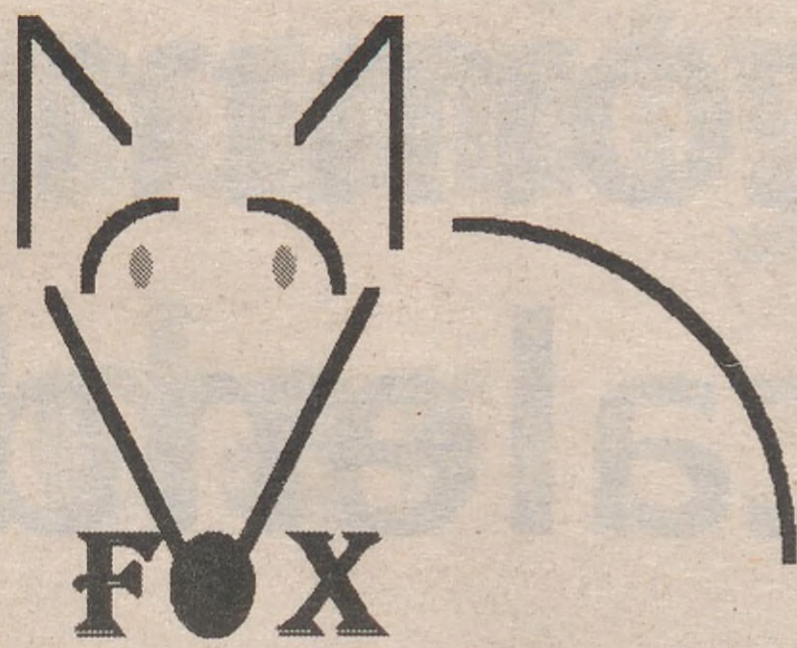
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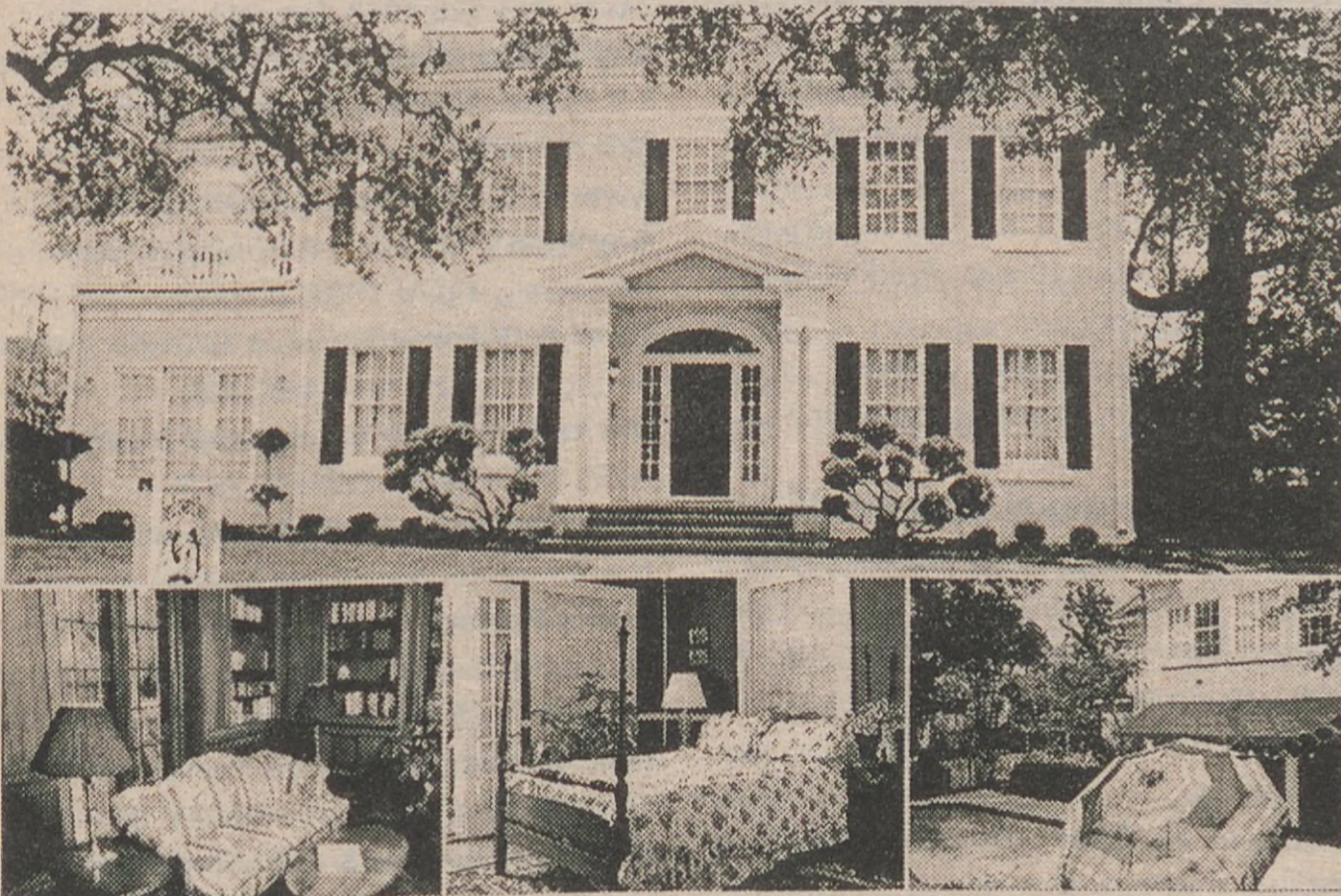
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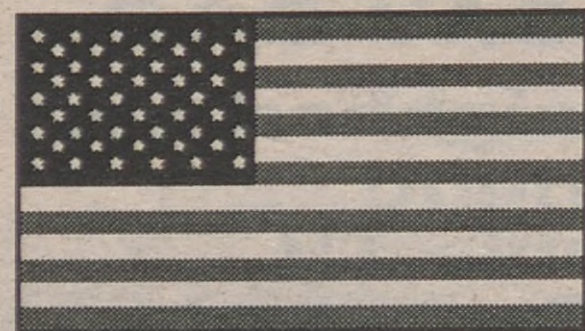
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community calendar

saturday, dec 15

Asians & Friends Houston. Dining with Friends at Hunan Chef II. 713-626-6300. www.AsiansAndFriendsHouston.com.

every saturday

After Hours. KPFT 90.1 FM. 12 a.m. to 3 a.m. 713-526-5738.

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

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

Houston Chain Gang Bicycle Club. Call for ride locations. 713-863-1860.

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

Q-Patrol walks the streets 9:30 p.m. Convenes at community center. 713-528-SAFE. E-mail: qpatrolinc@aol.com

Rainbow Fishing Club. Meeting. 713-526-7070 or 713-880-9235.

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

Houston Gay & Lesbian Community Center. Drop-in noon-4 p.m. • Center cleanup, 10 a.m. • Texas Association for Transsexual Support, 3 p.m. • STAG (Some Transgenders Are Guys), 7 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

sunday, dec 16

every sunday

Anarchist Black Cross Federation/Anarchist Reading Group. 1 p.m. www.houstonabc.org. 713-595-2103

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

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

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

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

First Unitarian Universalist Church. Services at 9:30 & 11:30 a.m. Brunch available, 10:30 a.m. Panel discussion, 1:30 p.m. 713-526-5200. church@firstuu.org.

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

Grace Lutheran Church. Sunday school for all ages 9 a.m. Service 10:30 a.m. 713-528-3269. Houston Mission Church. Service 10:30 a.m. 713-529-8225.

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

Maranatha Fellowship Metropolitan Church. Service, 6:30 p.m. 713-528-6756.

Rainbow Riders. A bicycle club for women.

713-869-1686.

Resurrection MCC. Services. 9 and 11 a.m. Adult Sunday School, 10 a.m. Youth Sunday School, 11:15 a.m. Handbell Choir rehearsal, 1:30 p.m. 713-861-9149.

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

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

Thoreau Unitarian Universalist Congregation. Adult discussion, 9:45 a.m. Service, 11 a.m. 281-277-8882. www.tuuc.org.

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

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

Houston Gay & Lesbian Community Center. Drop-in 2- 5 p.m. • LOAF (Lesbians Over Age Fifty), 2 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. • 713-524-3818.

monday, dec 17

Gay Fathers/Fathers First. Christmas social. Tom, 713-726-8736. www.geocities.com/gaydadshouston/

every monday

AIDS Mastery. 7 p.m. Montrose Counseling Center. 713-529-0037.

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

gayDAR. Wellness Community. Support Group. 7 p.m. 713-526-1017, Ext. 211.

Gay Fathers/Fathers First. Support group. 8-9:30 p.m. Grace Lutheran Church, Tom, 713-726-8736.

www.geocities.com/gaydadshouston/

Gay Men's Chorus of Houston. Open rehearsals, 7 p.m. 713-521-7464.

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

HIV testing. STD exams and treatment. Free. AVES. 1-6:15 p.m. 713-626-2837.

Houston Tennis Club. 9 a.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. 713-692-2703.

Kolbe Project. Eucharist 7:30 p.m. 713-861-1800. Lesbian & Gay Voices Radio Show. 8-10 p.m. KPFT 90.1. 713-529-1223.

Northwoods AIDS Coalition Food Pantry. Open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. 936-441-1614.

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Drop-in 6-9 p.m. 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

tuesday, dec 18

every tuesday

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

CPR Classes. 3 p.m. 713-607-7700.

For Mature Audiences Only. Support group. 7 p.m. Bering Memorial UMC. 713-526-1017.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 8 p.m. to midnight. Club Houston. 713-830-3000.

Gay Men's Process Group. 7 p.m. 3316 Mt. Vernon. 713-526-8390.

community calendar

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

Helping Cross Dressers Anonymous. Support group. 7 p.m. 713-524-0439.

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

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

Men's Network. Discussion group for social, educational development of gay and bisexual men.

7 p.m. Montrose Counseling Center. 713-529-0037.

Northwoods AIDS Coalition Food Pantry.

Open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. 281-633-2555.

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

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Drop-in 6-9 p.m. • Lesbian Coming-Out Group, 7 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

wednesday, dec 19 every wednesday

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

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

Free HIV Testing. Thomas Street Clinic. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 2015 Thomas St. 713-793-4026.

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

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

Houston Tennis Club. 7:30-9 p.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. houstontennisclub@aol.com Lesbian Literature Discussion Group. 7 p.m. Meets every other Wednesday. 713-383-6738.

Northwoods AIDS Coalition Food Pantry.

10 a.m.-6 p.m. 936-441-1614.

Spiritual Uplift service. 7 p.m. Bible Study 7:30 p.m. Resurrection MCC. 713-861-9149.

Women's Network. Montrose Counseling Center discussion group for social, educational development of gay and bisexual women. 7 p.m.

Montrose Counseling Center. 713-529-0037.

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Drop-in 6-9 p.m. • Free HIV testing, counseling, 9 p.m. • Houston Committee for People's Radio, 6:30 p.m. • Bi-Net Houston. 7:30 p.m. 713-524-3818.

thursday, dec 20 every thursday

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

Free HIV Testing. By the Montrose Clinic. 8 p.m. to midnight. Toyz Disco. 713-830-3000.

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

Gay Houston. New social group for all ages. 7 p.m. 713-526-9318.

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

HIV Art Therapy Program. 1-4 p.m.

Kermit Eisenhut. 713-523-9530.

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

Lambda Skating Club. 8 p.m. Tradewinds.

Skating Rink. www.lambdaroll.org. 713-410-7215.

Northwoods AIDS Coalition Food Pantry. 10 a.m.-

6 p.m. 281-633-2555.

Rainbow Ranglers. Free C&W dance lessons.

Two hours free line dance instruction. No partner required. Drop in anytime. Brazos River Bottom.

8:30 p.m. 713-528-9192.

STD exams & treatment. Free. AVES. 713-626-

2837.

Spanish Charla Conversation Group. Empire Cafe, 7 p.m. Email charlahouston@msn.com. 713-

416-7203.

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

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center.

Drop in 6-9 p.m. • Monthly board meeting, 7 p.m.

• 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

friday, dec 21 every friday

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

Govinda Yoga Club. Free yoga classes at 3115

West Loop South, No. 21. 713-439-0455.

Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals

(H.A.T.C.H.) Meeting. 713-942-7002.

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

at the Tennis Center. houstontennisclub@aol.com

Kolbe Project. Morning prayer, 10 a.m.

713-861-1800.

Lesbian & Gay Voices. KPFT 90.1 FM. 7 p.m.

713-526-5738.

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

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center.

Drop-in 6-9 p.m. • Hawthorne Men's Club, 7:30

p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818

volunteer/self-help

Gay & Lesbian Help line. For gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. Staffed

by volunteers of all ages. 6-11 p.m. Monday-

Friday, 5-10 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

888-340-GLBT.

Peer Listening Line. Youth only. Staffed by GLBT

youth for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and

questioning youth. 5-10 p.m. Monday-Friday.

800-399-PEER.

Volunteers needed. Trauma volunteers needed

at Memorial Hermann Hospital to comfort and

support family members in the emergency and

trauma departments. 866-666-6772.

To list an event, call 713-529-8490,

fax at 713-529-9531,

or e-mail editor@houstonvoice.com.

Deadline is Monday at 5 p.m.

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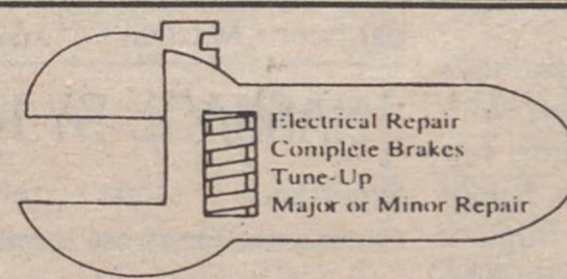
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FREE yoga classes every Friday @6:30 p.m. • 3115 West Loop South #21 • No restrictions • No reservations needed • 713-439-0455

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Continued on page 25

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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58							59				60		61
62							63				64		
65							66				67		

"FIERSTEIN THEATER"

ACROSS

- 1 Ballerina's skirts
- 6 Document prepared by Eric McCormack's character
- 10 Get better
- 14 Montalban's "The ___ of Khan"
- 15 Singer Gorme
- 16 Continent of Margaret Cho's ancestors
- 17 Condon's award for "Gods and Monsters"
- 18 ___ standing up (gets no applause)
- 19 Fairy godmother's stick
- 20 Start of a quip from "Torch-Song Trilogy"
- 23 Urvashi has one
- 24 Infamous Amin
- 25 "Kiss of the ___ Woman"
- 29 Liberace and Elton John
- 34 Fierstein, in "Torch Song Trilogy"
- 35 "Tales of the City"'s Madrigal
- 36 Palindromic boy king
- 37 "It's ___ of your business!"
- 38 More of the quip
- 39 "Tales of the City" character
- 40 Mon. follower
- 41 Sound breathless
- 43 Fierstein, of "Torch Song Trilogy"
- 45 That's Rich!
- 47 Revamps
- 48 Org. that likes to shoot off
- 49 Fleecy female
- 50 End of the quip
- 58 You may spread it open before eating it
- 59 Album of the ___ (GLAMA award)
- 60 GLAMA pop award winner Teresa
- 62 Six Feet Under creator Ball
- 63 "___ Patience"
- 64 DeBeque in South Pacific
- 65 Org. that may include bears
- 66 Stats from "A League of Their Own"
- 67 Rita Mae and Martina did this

DOWN

- 1 DiFranco's "___ Little Girls"
- 2 Astronomer's bear
- 3 Grace
- 4 State where two women could be in a marriage, formerly
- 5 Respond to the cold
- 6 One of Spencer-Devlin's irons
- 7 Prefix that means "queer"
- 8 Gladly
- 9 L of GLAAD
- 10 Where they say "Aloha" when they go or come
- 11 Jacob's hairy brother
- 12 "It ___ Necessarily So"
- 13 "My Fair ___"
- 21 Socially challenged person
- 22 ___ St. Vincent Millay
- 25 He gives gifts in stockings
- 26 Word before Mary, in song
- 27 Boyd's "Gay Priest: an ___ Journey"
- 28 Deer in Maria's song
- 29 Prop department jewelry
- 30 Pinch opening?
- 31 Where Susan Feniger shows a range of skills?
- 32 Etheridge, before a concert
- 33 Has more than a one-night stand
- 38 Crews ___ (Dallas bar)
- 39 A-Team member known for his gold chains
- 41 Roz portrayer on _Frasier_
- 42 What Niles and Frasier do to patients
- 43 Goldie of "The First Wives Club"
- 44 Like people in a burning building that come out
- 46 Vocalize
- 49 New money on the Continent
- 50 Baez, Rivers, or Crawford
- 51 Where Bertrand Delanoe often deplanes
- 52 Votes of approval
- 53 Cruise obnoxiously
- 54 Comic- juggler Felder
- 55 Shirley MacLaine's la Douce role
- 56 Hans Christian Andersen's "The Emperor's New ___"
- 57 _Vogue_ competitor
- 61 Was out in front

Answers on Page 27

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OCCASIONS

Happy Second anniversary to John Esqueda and Ovin Phalen. Two years and still lovin' it!

Asians and Friends member Christopher celebrate a birthday on 12/07

CCCC members Lee P. (12/12), and Gerald S. (12/20) steer clear for the birthday cakes this week.

The BRB's own Tommie Sue Ellen sneaks in a birthday on 12/18.

RSICSS's Barbara Morin cheers in a birthday on 12/21

Montrose Inn owner Henry sneaks in a birthday on 12/18.

Pacific Street's own Jay Allen lifts his glass for a birthday toast on 12/18.

Sexiest Voice in town Mike Scott celebrates his birthday on 12/19.

PETS

PET PHOTOS WITH SANTA

Houston Humane Society • Dec 5 & 6 at First Colony Mall • Dec. 11 & 17 at Baybrook Mall • 713-434-5555

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VOLUNTEERS

STEVEN'S HOUSE

Seeking caregivers for transitional housing program for HIV+ adults • Must have high school diploma and experience as a caregiver • Contact Ms. Straham @ 713-522-5757 or fax resume to 713-522-1910

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PET OF THE WEEK!

An American Bulldog mix, Minnie is a special case, rescued from an abusive home. She is fond of kitties and very protective of her owners-to-be. She hopes to be the only dog in her new home. She is about 2 1/2 years old and is very strong and playful. To adopt this cutie-pie, call the Houston Humane Society at 713-434-5555.



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TO PLACE AN AD:

IN PERSON: Bring completed order form with payment to Houston Voice offices (M-F, 9-5:30 pm) 500 Lovett, suite 200. **BY MAIL:** Mail completed order form with payment to Houston Voice Classifieds, 500 Lovett, Suite 200, Houston, TX., 77006. **BY PHONE:** Call in with completed order form to 713-529-8490. **BY FAX:** Fax completed order form and credit card information to Classifieds 713-529-9531. **BY E-MAIL:** croberts@houstonvoice.com
AD POLICY: Houston Voice reserves the right to edit, reclassify or reject ads not meeting Houston Voice standards. No refunds for early cancellation. Misprints: Houston Voice is not responsible for misprints appearing after first week. Check ads promptly.

Deadline for ad submission is: MONDAY at 12 NOON

1 PICK YOUR CATEGORY

FREE*: Call for guidelines
 ___ HIV Services & Education
 ___ Volunteers
 ___ Non-Profit Organizations
 *First 20 words

INDIVIDUAL RATE \$10:

___ Announcements
 ___ Auditions
 ___ Employment-Seeking
 ___ Pets-Free or Lost & Found
 ___ Roommates
 ___ Personal Web sites

BUSINESS RATE \$18:

___ Auto Repair
 ___ Business Opportunities
 ___ Entertainment
 ___ Help Wanted
 ___ Help Wanted-Seeking
 ___ Home Improvement
 ___ Items For Sale
 ___ Licensed Massage
 ___ Moving Services
 ___ Professional Services
 ___ Real Estate For Rent
 ___ Real Estate For Sale

Call 713-529-8490 for other categories

2 WRITE YOUR AD

Please print clearly

CATEGORY: _____ # OF ISSUES: _____

Giant or Bold Headline - Not to exceed 14 characters and spaces

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

TEXT: _____

3 TOTAL YOUR COST

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Up to 20 words: \$10.00

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Bold headline: 5.00 (per week) _____

Subtotal: _____ x _____ # of issues

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Phone _____

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Signature _____

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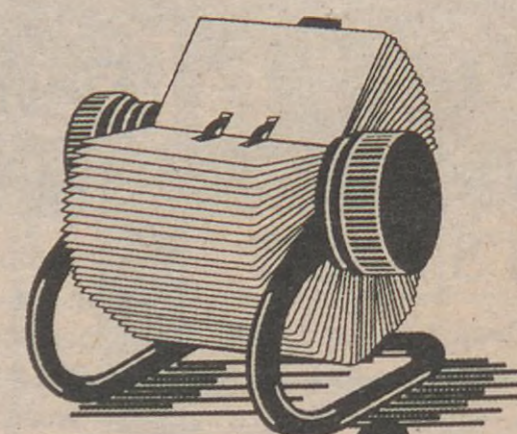
December 28 Issue 12 noon December 20

January 4 Issue 12 noon December 27

For more information call Wanda Faulkner or
Carolyn Roberts 713-529-8490

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WFaulkner@houstonvoice.com

My Stars!

by JILL DEARMAN

YOUR WEEKLY HOROSCOPE



Dec. 14-21



ARIES (March 21 to April 20)

If you are suffering from an embarrassing lack of knowledge about a subject that matters deeply to you, get off your butt and resume your studies. A Leo wants to respect you in the morning (and the afternoon, and the evening).



TAURUS (April 21 to May 20)

You're going to have to try a lot harder to make a wish a reality, while Saturn is retrograde in your sign, darling. What are your intentions for this lifetime, dear? Get on 'em! The planets are screaming "commitment" in your ear. Are you listening?



GEMINI (May 21 to June 21)

The Sun shifts into your house of collaboration and serious partnerships on Dec. 21. It's time for you to slip out of your daywear and into your evening wear. Depth and glamour matter more than function and form during this cycle. A Pisces thinks you have it all.



CANCER (June 22 to July 22)

Mars in fellow water sign Pisces makes this a sexy time to be watery, you sensitive Cancer, dear. Don't hide your vulnerability. Flaunt it. Your ability to navigate the waters of the emotional world make you a great catch. And a Gemini wants to get serious and fast. Why hold back?



LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22)

Day-job matters become more important after the 21st. Even if you're vacationing you'll have to concentrate on the bottom line. Multi-task your way to a happy new year. Ring it in with a Cancer.



VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22)

You may be easily irritated during this cycle - too many planets are riding your ass. You may have to swallow your pride and crawl back to a Taurus for attention.



LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22)

You really should lose your temper once in awhile, darling. All this nicey-nice business has grown tedious. Your family and your dearest friends want to see you lose it. Aren't you ready to tell it like it is, babe? A Leo wants to get under your skin. Scratch the itch!



SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21)

This is a busy time of year for you, but do try to see everybody if you can. Now's the time to drop a line to people you've missed, or dissed. A Virgo is waiting to hear from you.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21)

This is one of the most powerful weeks in your life. Make the most of it! You can radically change the course of your fate if you are persistent and persuasive. But first you must believe. A Cancer believes in you already.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19)

The moon will be conjunct Mars in the social area of your chart on Dec. 20. Use this aspect to your advantage. Ask out a stranger. Flirt with a friend. Be a little racy. You can get away with it my melancholy baby. A Scorpio is hoping for your attention..



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18)

You are in the midst of a season of epiphanies. Don't even try to act casual when it comes to matters of the soul. You may be about to change religions or create a new one. An Aries plays a key role.



PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20)

The Sun moves into your house of friends on Dec. 21. Invite pals old and new over to break bread. You are definitely the one who can teach your buddies about forgiveness and tolerance. Get in the spirit. A Capricorn needs your guidance.

during the holidays get fit not fat.

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SAT & SUN 8AM - 8PM**

**PERSONAL TRAINER
CLAY MAXWELL**

YOUR Gym...



Answer to Puzzle on Page 24

D	E	D	A	T	E	S	A	R	E	S	E	N	Y
E	L	E	M	I	L	O	R	Z	N	A	N	A	L
L	L	T	R	U	L	A	R	E	Y	O	E	O	R
						E	S	R	I	S	E	J	O
						E	W	E	N	R	A	N	
S	R	S	E	R	T	A	L	A	N	E	N	E	A
Y	E	V	A	R	H	A	N	T	P	A	N	E	T
A	N	A	M	O		A	S	I		E	N	O	N
T	T		A	N	N	A	N	A	D	O	N	A	R
S	T	S	I	N	I	P	I	A	R	D	E	R	S
Y	T	A	U	T	E	B	E	F	O	G	I	N	A
D	N	A	W			S	E	S	D	I	E	A	R
A	S	I	A			E	I	E	D	I	E	H	A
L	A	E	H			L	L	W	I	L	S	T	U



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a fondue restaurant

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