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Tough as leather
With the upcoming Mid-Atlantic Leather Weekend approaching, take a look at this popular culture.

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JANUARY 13, 2006

GRANT: Assistance offered for GLBT families affected by Katrina. **Page 3**



ALITO HEARINGS: Nominee claims he helped the 'small person'. **Page 5**



FORD: Automaker is again target of conservatives. **Page 6**



In 'Brokeback Mountain,' Jake Gyllenhaal (left) and Heath Ledger may be caught in the sliding spectrum of orientation between their love for each other and their relationships with their wives, played by Anne Hathaway (left) and Michelle Williams.

Probing the 'Brokeback Syndrome'

Can a straight man fall in love with another man?

By RYAN LEE

Despite Heath Ledger's critically acclaimed acting in "Brokeback Mountain," it's not entirely convincing when his character, Ennis del Mar, defiantly insists, "You know, I ain't queer."

What makes the statement difficult for some audiences to accept at face value is that Ennis says it right after he and Jack Twist (Jake Gyllenhaal) engage in decidedly queer sex.

Movie critics and the media — gay and mainstream — are largely ignoring Ennis' protestations, universally classifying "Brokeback" as "the gay cowboy movie."

Both lead actors drew the ire of some gay moviegoers and critics by insisting in interviews that their characters aren't gay.

"I approached the story believing that these are actually two straight guys who fall in love," Gyllenhaal says in a recent Details magazine story. "These are two straight guys who develop this love, this bond."

Ledger attempts a similar argument in an interview in Time magazine.

"I don't think Ennis could be labeled as gay. Without Jack Twist, I don't know that he ever would have come out," Ledger tells the magazine. "I think the whole point was that it was two souls that fell in love with each other."

So can a straight man really fall in love with another man, or are love and sex inextricably tied to sexual orientation? Does "Brokeback Syndrome," at least as Ledger and Gyllenhaal tell it, occur in nature?

Eric Marcus, the gay author of "Is It A Choice? Answers to the Most Frequently Asked Questions About Gay & Lesbian People," dismisses talk of Ennis and Jack being anything but gay as box office-

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Local clinic sees no cause to stop using rapid HIV tests

High number of false positives reported with OraQuick

By ERIC ERVIN

An official with Legacy Community Health Services said false positive HIV test results reported at health clinics in California and New York do not warrant discontinuing use of the OraQuick Advance rapid HIV test at the organization's two Houston clinics.

"I've been tracing the whole case since it was first reported," said Eric Roland, Legacy's director of education. "Our number of false positives are within the range discussed in insert material by the manufacturer."

Some health clinics in California and New York recently stopped using the oral test, which is administered by swabbing the inside of the mouth, after receiving a high number of false positives. Results are available in about 20 minutes.

After the oral test, patients are given a more accurate blood test to confirm the positive results. Health officials caution people that the oral rapid test is only preliminary.

"That's a preliminary positive, that's not confirmed," Roland said.

The problems the clinics in the two states are having with the rapid test arise when the blood test comes up negative. Officials with the Bethlehem, Pa.-based company said they are working



Clinics in California and New York have reported a high number of false positives while using Orasure rapid oral test.

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local life
Bryan Levinson is looking for men in Houston to organized his HIV/AIDS online support group.
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music
Gay favorite Ricky Martin has a new album and upcoming scheduled stop in Houston.
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i am ready.

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hovorwire thelatest hovoblog

get the latest breaking news and opinion, as well as gay-related politics, entertainment and trends.



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local news briefs

HRC President Joe Solmonese to attend Table Captain event

Joe Solmonese, president of the Washington, D.C.-based Human Rights Campaign, is scheduled to attend the local chapter's Table Captain event Jan. 18.

The Table Captain event serves as a pre-party before the annual Human Rights Campaign Gala. During the event, guests will have the opportunity to select tables for the gala. HRC Gala Table Captains commit to do their best to sell seats at their chosen tables but are not required to purchase those they do not sell. Remaining seats will be open to general public sale three weeks prior to the main event.

The Human Rights Campaign is the largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender political organization with members throughout the country.



Matthew Burrus, Fiona Dawson and Alton LaDay are chairs of this year's Human Rights Campaign Gala, 'The Roaring 20's Ball', scheduled for April 29 at the Hilton Americas-Houston Hotel. Honorary co-chairs of the ninth annual event are Dr. Carolyn Farb and Bob Devlin.

Houston transgender group sets Feb. 14 scholarship deadline

The Houston Transgender Unity Committee has set Feb. 14 as the postmark deadline to receive applications for the first-ever Peggy Rudd Transgender Scholarships.

The nonprofit organization will award two scholarships—one for \$500 and one for \$250—at the annual Transgender Unity Banquet on April 15 at the Westchase Hilton.

Transgender individuals who are attending or will attend accredited institutions of higher learning are eligible. The application can be downloaded at www.houstontransgenderunity.org.

The Houston Transgender Unity Committee formed in 1999 to serve as a link among transgender groups and promote unity with gay and bisexual organizations. Representatives from six Houston-area transgender groups serve on the Unity Committee.

Tickets are now available for the Unity Banquet. Some proceeds from the ticket sales support the Peggy Rudd Transgender Scholarship Fund. Tickets are \$50 in advance, \$60 at the door and can be purchased at www.houstontransgenderunity.org, Jewel's Crossdresser's Boutique and by mail at P.O. Box 542287, Houston, TX 77254. Scholarship applicants may direct questions to info@houstontransgenderunity.org.

Montrose Softball League to hold recruitment day

The Montrose Softball League, which urges participation of gay men and lesbian in the Houston area, will seek new members during its annual recruitment

day on Sunday, Jan. 22, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Memorial Park No. 4 and 5 fields. The fields are located on the south side of Memorial Drive between Westcott and the West Loop. After registering new members, the group will hold a celebration at Guava Lamp, 570 Waugh, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. All new and past members are invited to attend. For more information, visit www.montrosesoftballleague.com.

Pride Houston to host party, open house Jan. 19

Pride Houston will host a party and open house for volunteers and those interested in becoming volunteers for the group's annual parade at 6 p.m.-8 p.m. on Jan. 19, at the organization's offices, located at 1415 California. People are encouraged to come by and meet other volunteers or talk to current volunteers to find out how they might like to get involved with Pride in Houston.

The Pride office has recently been expanded to accommodate the organization's increasing activities and the Office Committee is currently busy fixing up the organization's space.

Pride officials are also accepting applications from organizations seeking to get a spot in this year's parade, which is scheduled for Saturday, June 24. The application for the 2006

Houston Pride Parade can be downloaded at www.pridehouston.org. Parade entries are lined up in "first-come, first-served" order, so the sooner you send in your completed application and payment, the closer your group will be to the front of the Parade, officials say.

For more information, call 713-529-6979 or e-mail info@pridehouston.org.



local news

Grants target gay, trans families affected by Katrina

\$500 grants to be awarded to 60 eligible families

By ERIC ERVIN

More assistance is coming to families headed by gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender adults who were affected by Hurricane Katrina, many of whom now call the Houston area their home.

A \$35,000 grant has been awarded to the San Francisco-based national Children of Lesbians & Gays Everywhere to provide these families assistance in trying to get their lives back together following the hurricane, which struck New Orleans in August 2005. Applications are being accepted until Feb. 10 for families seeking help.

Grants of \$500 each will be awarded to the first 60 eligible families to submit complete applications. A committee will review the applications after the deadline and shortly afterwards the money will be distributed.

The National Youth Advocacy Coalition's Hurricane Katrina LGBT Relief Fund is responsible for securing the grant. It will provide assistance for these families who have children under the age of 18, officials said.

"We awarded COLAGE the grant because they had such a strong connection to families in New Orleans," Craig Bowman, coalition executive director, said in a press release. "We created the fund in order to help the LGBT community, and COLAGE is poised and ready to support the fund's goals."

Beth Teper, COLAGE director, said the National Youth Advocacy Coalition "really stepped up hours after Hurricane Katrina."

More than 100,000 New Orleans residents evacuated to Houston where they were met with an outpouring of support and assistance from Houstonians and Houston area agencies. John Szewczyk organized Houston's Rainbow Cross, a relief drive to help evacuees find assistance.

"We're not the Red Cross," he said. "We're just trying to get information on services in the community and get this information passed on to evacuees."

Other local agencies stepped up to the plate to help.

Pride Houston established the Pride Houston Hurricane Relief Fund, which received \$10,000 in seed money from the Coors Brewing Company. The group also partnered with the Montrose Counseling Center to provide counseling and case-management services to help evacuees navigate through the health care system.

COLAGE is a non-profit organization run by and for children with lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender parents. According to the national group's website,



COLAGE Director Beth Teper said grants will help families with children under age 18 recover from last year's hurricane.

its mission is "to engage, connect, and empower people to make the world a better place for children of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender parents and families."

There are chapters and affiliated chapters scattered throughout the country. Houston's affiliated chapter is named Houston Gay & Lesbian Parents.

A social and support group for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender parents and their children, the local group sponsors monthly family activities. The New Orleans chapter also has had an active and well-established group.

"Our families were hit just as hard by Katrina, as other families," Teper said. "It is our hope that these grants will help fill some gaps in services that our LGBT families are experiencing as they work to recover from this tragic experience."

Dale Liuzza is a gay parent who serves on the COLAGE board of directors and coordinates the New Orleans chapter. "No amount is too small for any family at this stage in the game—anything helps," he said.

"These grants will help families in many useful ways and show that COLAGE cares for children with LGBT parents and their families," Liuzza said.

Liuzza said because of Katrina, the group's monthly events were canceled for the months of August and September. In October, parents were able to organize a Halloween party.

"It was so important for the kids to get back together and to see familiar faces, and the parents as well," Liuzza said.

COLAGE officials said in the wake of Katrina, staff and chapter coordinators connected New Orleans families with other families across the country for temporary housing.

Liuzza said he does know of some families who fled to Texas during the hurricane, but is not sure where they ended up.

In addition to grants to individual families, the New Orleans chapter will also receive a grant to conduct family-oriented programming in 2006.

MORE INFO

COLAGE
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San Francisco, CA 94110
415-861-5437
www.colage.org

cover story

Experts: Many factors could contribute to positives

ORAQUICK, continued from Page 1

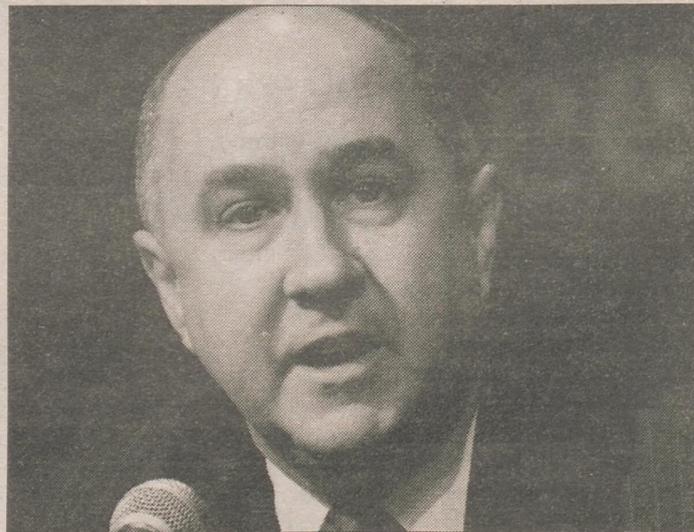
with the Centers for Disease Control and the FDA to try to discover why the false positives are occurring in what appear to be geographical clusters.

Experts say it could be due to any number of factors including problems with the way the OraQuick Advance test is administered, a bad batch of tests, other substances present in the mouth, or environmental factors like temperature.

"We are certainly taking seriously the recent reports from the clinical sites, and we have moved aggressively to systematically evaluate each situation," OraSure President Douglas A. Michels said in a prepared statement. "Based on our investigation to date, we remain confident in the overall performance of the test."

Roland said over a three-month period ending in December, the Legacy clinics in Houston administered about 400 tests each month using the OraQuick system, with half taking place out in the field and half on site. He said about seven revealed false positives.

Bernard Branson, associate director for lab and diagnostics at the Centers for Disease Control Division of HIV/AIDS



Douglas Michels, president and CEO of OraSure Technologies, said the company is aggressively investigating reports of false positive results but remain confident in the reliability of its product.

Prevention, said manufacturer OraSure Technologies Inc. allows for four false positives per every 1,000 tests administered.

Branson said FDA guidelines allow for two false positives per every 100 tests.

But it's important to look at the number of false positives reported over a period of time, Branson said.

"It doesn't mean you get one [false positive] every 250 people," he said. "You may

go through 2,000 people and have no false positives, then suddenly you have eight."

Some of the clinics in New York and California have started using a rapid blood prick test, which also gives results in about 20 minutes, if a person receives a positive result from the oral test.

"With any test, there are going to be false positives," said AIDS activist Larry Bryant, national field organizer for

i MORE INFO

Legacy Community Health Services
• 215 Westheimer
713-830-3000
• 3311 Richmond, Suite 100
713-830-3033

Housing Works in New York. "We don't want to give people a reason not to go and get tested."

In New York, for example, about 4,000 tests are conducted each month, he said. In August and September, clinics in New York reported five false positives. In October, there were 11, and in November there were 35. But during four months, there was an average of 3.5 false positives per 1,000 tests, Branson said.

Bryant said the higher number of false positives in New York may have been just a "blip," as the numbers are slowing down.

So far, no problems have been reported with the blood-prick test, which also gives results in 20 minutes.

Roland hopes the recent news doesn't shy people away from the two clinics.

"They shouldn't be afraid," he said. "To know your status is really important."

Is 'Brokeback' really 'cowboys on the down low'?

BISEXUALITY, continued from Page 1

influenced political correctness intended to steer straight audiences to the film.

"It's absolutely a universal love story — a love story about two gay men," Marcus says. "My vote is that Jack and Ennis are gay, and there was never any doubt in my mind."

But how can Jack and Ennis be gay when their sexual and romantic lives included wives, girlfriends and children?

"It gets complicated when we have to assign labels to something that is often more complicated than the label presents, ..." Marcus says. "[But] in terms of what they desired, it seems pretty clear that what they desired was each other."

Even the people responsible for bringing "Brokeback" to the screen don't all agree with Ledger and Gyllenhaal. Director Ang Lee told this publication that the bond between Jack and Ennis constitutes a "gay relationship."

Producer James Schamus responds to Gyllenhaal's statement in Details with surprise.

"Did he really say that?" Schamus asks in the magazine. "Well, I suppose movies can be Rorschach tests for all of us, but damn if these characters aren't gay to me."

But Gyllenhaal and Ledger aren't the only people unconvinced that their characters are completely queer. Just as clearly as Marcus sees two closeted gay men, Fritz Klein observed something different when he walked out of the theater.

"I left saying, 'Oh, what a nice film with two main characters who were bisexual,'"

says Klein, a bisexual activist and author of "The Bisexual Option."

"In our society, it's so much easier to say they're gay or straight and leave out the gray area of bisexuality," Klein says. "What makes them not bisexual? That's what I want to know."

Luigi Ferrer, president of BiNet USA and board member of the Bisexual Resource Center, two bisexual rights organizations, asks the same question.

"I wondered why the headline of all the stories about the movie is always 'gay romance,'" Ferrer says. "Because in actuality, if we're talking behaviorally, both men are bisexual."

Both Ferrer and Klein point to the extended relationships Jack and Ennis maintain with their wives alongside their two-decade affair with each other.

Klein makes a distinction between the two characters, speculating that Jack — who initiates the love affair with Ennis and has sex with other men — is more "toward the gay side of bisexuality."

Ennis, whose sole same-sex relationship is with Jack, is "a bit more toward the straight side of being bisexual," Klein says.

Dee Hawkins, a 22-year-old bisexual from Chicago, agrees.

"It was never mentioned in the movie, but I definitely got the sense that Ennis was an example of what being a bisexual person is like," Hawkins says. "He didn't search out men, and you also saw where he was really in love with his wife. Then after they separated, he was attracted to other women."

But the heterosexual marriages of Jack

and Ennis weren't significant enough to change Marcus' opinion that the men are gay.

"I don't doubt they had feelings for their spouses, but there seemed to be no question as to where the depth of their feelings were," Marcus says. "I don't think this was the story of bisexual men struggling with love for two different partners of two different genders."

Kevin Johnson, 38, identifies as bisexual. He agrees that simply having sexual experiences with both genders doesn't qualify someone as a bisexual, gay, or straight.

"There's lots of gay men who have had wives — that doesn't mean they're less gay, and that doesn't mean they're bisexual," Johnson says. "The act [between Jack and Ennis] is homosexual — the people are complex."

Instead of addressing whether Jack and Ennis are gay, bisexual or straight men with an anomalous "Brokeback Syndrome," the media watchdog Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation opted to promote "Brokeback" as a neutral, universal love story.

"While the media was quick to brand this the 'gay cowboy' film, we've really discussed the film as being one about love and the relationship that develops between these two characters," says Damon Romine, entertainment media director for GLAAD.

"It takes place in a time where gay or bisexual people couldn't acknowledge who they were or who they loved, so there are no labels for the relationship that develops between these two men," Romine adds.

But with media outlets labeling

"Brokeback" as "gay," GLAAD advocates the inclusion of bisexuals in discussions of the film, Klein says.

"When it is this obvious that it is a bisexual character, but it's still not discussed, this is part of the erasure problem bisexual people face," he says. "It's another example of bisexuality being eliminated, or ignored or being put under the carpet."

Exactly what determines someone's sexual orientation and where it falls in a spectrum can be ambiguous. There is no clinical definition of the term bisexual, and many mental health experts and lay people doubt even the existence of bisexuality.

A common misconception is that bisexuals are equally attracted to both men and women simultaneously and equally, but rarely is that the case, experts agree.

Johnson, who had a longterm relationship with another man, is currently dating a woman and hasn't been romantically involved with a man for more than 10 years. He has no plans to date another man, but says he is still bisexual.

"The relationships I've had with women tended to encompass more of what I was looking for on an emotional level," Johnson says.

The only data available on the prevalence of people on the sliding scale of sexual orientation comes from self-reporting, with estimates for bisexuals ranging as high as sex researcher Alfred Kinsey's 50 percent of the U.S. population. Kinsey's methods gauge sexuality using a linear

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national news

Alito cites pro-gay ruling in Senate hearing

Nominee dodges questions on gay marriage, privacy

By LOU CHIBBARO JR.

WASHINGTON — Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito believes that some of his judicial decisions have favored “the small person who was challenging a big institution.”

His unsolicited comment this week during his confirmation hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee centered on a gay-related decision he wrote while serving as an appeals court judge in 2004.

During the third day of hearings on Jan. 11, Alito volunteered that he ruled in favor of a New Jersey middle school student whose parents wanted him to attend a high school outside of his neighborhood to escape severe, anti-gay harassment over his effeminate appearance.

Alito's ruling overturned a lower court decision siding with the school, which refused to reimburse the parents for placing their son in a school outside of his home district.

“This was a case in which a ... student had been bullied unmercifully by other students ... because of their perception of his sexual orientation,” Alito said.



Supreme Court nominee **Samuel Alito** said some of his judicial decisions have favored ‘the small person who was challenging a big institution.’ (Photo by AP)

Gay rights attorneys said Alito's ruling on the case did not change their view that his overall, 15-year record as an appeals court judge and his legal writings as a Justice Department attorney during the Reagan administration indicate he would be hostile to gay rights as a Supreme Court justice.

Seven national gay rights groups, including Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund, are opposed to Alito's nomination. The national gay group Log Cabin Republicans said it would wait until the end of the hearings before taking a position on Alito.

Alito also has ruled against gay rights in a case that struck down an anti-harassment law that banned “hate speech.” However, he ruled in favor of a family with a child with AIDS in an AIDS discrimination case.

As a Princeton University senior in the 1970s, Alito co-authored a paper on privacy rights that called for repealing state sodomy laws and expressed opposition to employment discrimination against gays.

“It's interesting that he brought up the school bullying case as an example of how he does help the little guy,” said Lara Schwartz, chief legal counsel for the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest gay political group. “He's good at answering questions with nice sounding answers. But on the questions that matter for LGBT people and other minorities, he said nothing to change our view of him.”

Alito's mention of the school case came in response to comments by Sen. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) that the majority of his rulings on the 3rd Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals during the past 15 years went against people claiming discrimination.

Discussion about the school case came after Alito said he believes the U.S. Constitution provides a right of privacy. But he repeatedly declined to say whether he believes that right applies to key cases that could have a bearing on a woman's right to an abortion or gay rights.

Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.) asked

Alito for his views on the federal Defense of Marriage Act, which defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman and allows states to refuse to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states.

Noting that pending cases are challenging the law on grounds that it violates the Constitution's full faith and credit clause, which pertains to interstate commerce, Brownback asked Alito if he thought the Defense of Marriage Act rested on solid constitutional grounds.

“Well, several constitutional doctrines seem to be implicated by the matters that you have discussed,” Alito said. “And a challenge to the Defense of Marriage Act under the full faith and credit clause would call into question the precise scope of the doctrines.”

Gay rights attorney Michael Adams of Lambda Legal said there is “really nothing new in what [Alito] is saying” in the hearings.

“He said there is a right to privacy in the Constitution, but he has not said what that right to privacy encompasses,” Adams said.

Adams said Alito's statement that he believes “traditional values” should play a role in governmental affairs also is troubling to gay rights and civil liberty advocates.

“There is no way to tell from his answers how he would approach LGBT people on the privacy issue or how he would apply his call for traditional values for gay people,” Adams said.

NBC show is latest target of American Family Association

Religious group calls 'Book of Daniel' anti-Christian

By ELIZABETH WEILL-GREENBERG

The American Family Association, the group that recently boycotted Ford Motor Co. for advertising in gay publications, has moved on to a new target — NBC's “The Book of Daniel.”

Accusing the show of being anti-Christian, the group launched a campaign to lobby NBC affiliates to drop the program that premiered Jan. 6.

“The decision by NBC to air the series reflects the anti-Christian bias which exists at the highest levels of the network,” American Family Association Chair Donald E. Wildmon said in a statement.

The Mississippi-based group referred to the show's creator, who is gay, as a “practicing homosexual.”

“The Book of Daniel” depicts an Episcopal priest, Daniel Webster, played by Aidan Quinn, who regularly talks with a manifestation of Jesus Christ as a means of coping with his turbulent family and professional life.

Among his many problems: his daughter was arrested for selling marijuana and his brother-in-law may have stolen the church's money. While it's clear that Webster loves

and accepts his gay son, he's unsure of how to tell his tightly wound father about it.

The American Family Association was not available for comment.

“The American Family Association in no way speaks for Episcopalians,” said Jim Naughton, director of communications at the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, D.C., which launched a blog about the program.

In 2003, the church consecrated its first openly gay bishop, V. Gene Robinson of New Hampshire.

American Family Association protests have little to do with religion, said the show's creator, Jack Kenny.

“Like every other corporation, they're in the business to make money,” he said. “Like every other bully, they've gone after the new kids on the block.”

Stations drop show

So far, only a few stations have yanked the show. NBC affiliates in Terre Haute, Ind., Beaumont, Texas, Meridian, Miss., and Tupelo, Miss., refused to air the pilot, according to an NBC spokesperson.

Those markets make up less than one percent of the network's national audience, Kenny said.

When the NBC affiliate in Little Rock, Ark., decided not to air “Book of Daniel,” the WB 42 picked it up. Since the WB 42 made its decision, according to general manager Neal Ardman, the station has received several



Christian Campbell (left), who plays Peter, and **Aidan Quinn**, who plays the title character Daniel Webster, talk about Peter's homosexuality on NBC's 'Book of Daniel'. (Photo by Virginia Sherwood)

thousand negative e-mails and phone calls.

But according to several Episcopal dioceses, the American Family Association is making much ado about nothing.

“I don't see anything offensive about the content of the show,” said Melodie Woerman, director of communications at the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas. “There are shows that I find personally much more offensive like eating bugs on ‘Fear Factor.’”

Rev. Dean E. Wolfe of the Kansas Diocese wrote a commentary on the controversy, emphasizing that this was fiction — “a sort of ‘Desperate Housewives’ meets ‘Seventh Heaven.’”

MORE INFO
The Blog of Daniel
<http://blog.edow.org/weblog/>

The show articulates important realities, like the infallibility of priests, Wolfe said. He applauded the show's reverence for prayer and the presence of Jesus Christ.

“[A]s does all fiction, the show expresses truths Christians of all types will recognize,” he wrote.

After protests in Kansas, the NBC affiliates there reportedly reversed the decision not to air the pilot. The stations were not available for comment.

“We don't think the show should be censored,” said Katherine Moorehead, Rector of St. James Episcopal Church in Wichita, Kansas.

While Episcopal Church leaders may not agree with the American Family Association's criticisms, several have their own reasons for disliking it. Some pointed out minor inaccuracies in the show, like the misspelling of the church's name.

“There would never be a bishop at church who didn't preach or celebrate Eucharist,” said Carol Barnwell, communications director at the Episcopal Diocese of Texas.

Barnwell said she didn't like the show because “it was just silly.” Barnwell said the Websters' mansion-like home and the family's black housekeeper disturbed her.

national news

AIDS agencies wary of new federal HIV data rules

CDC insists information will be kept confidential

By ANDREW KEEGAN

A new government program designed to collect behavioral information about people with HIV is invasive and time-consuming, according to an AIDS advocacy group that wants the new requirements scrapped.

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention has already implemented its Program Evaluation & Monitoring System, dubbed PEMS, for state health departments. AIDS service organizations that accept federal funding for HIV prevention must also begin collecting the data by spring, according to CDC spokesperson Jessica Frickey.

Questions service providers are required to ask clients include where they met their last sex partner, whether they knew their name, their sexual history and if they use drugs or alcohol.

"The AIDS organizations have begun training on the new data collection software," Frickey said Jan. 6. "We expect them to all be trained by April. The CDC is offering the training for free."

The first round of comprehensive data collection is scheduled for May.

But some AIDS watchdog groups said the program may be too aggressive and will burden already understaffed AIDS service providers.

"This program is not going to give us the answers we need," said Sean Barry, director of prevention policy for the Washington, D.C.-based Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project. "Data collection that is too hard to do, and that conflicts with good and ethical prevention education will not happen in a thorough way."

Barry said that agencies are being asked to do extra work for the same amount of federal money, which places a substantial burden on staffers.

Activists also fear information collected in the PEMS database could possibly be used in criminal prosecution.

For prevention targeted at people who are already HIV-positive, the questions include when the person became aware of their status and identifying information for their sexual partners since then.

Currently, 34 states have some type of criminal statute making it a crime for an HIV-positive person to not disclose their HIV status to a sexual partner.

"The CDC has still not publicly stated under what circumstances someone may have access to the highly sensitive information in the PEMS database," Barry said.

But Linda Wright DeAguiro, CDC chief of program evaluation, said Jan. 10 that all data collected under the federally funded program is secure.

"That information has an assurance of confidentiality," she said. "It is protected from [Freedom of Information Act



Most AIDS service groups are too dependent on government funding not to comply with a new data collection program, according to Eric Altman of New York City's Gay Men's Health Crisis. (Photo by Adam Frederick)

requests] and from being subpoenaed."

PEMS is a separate program from the CDC recommendation that states report HIV cases using names, said Craig Thomas, a CDC behavioral scientist and team leader on the PEMS project. PEMS data will not be combined with names-reporting data, he said.

Daunting task

For an agency like the New York Gay Men's Health Crisis, which serves more than 10,000 HIV-positive clients annually, the new system creates a potential avalanche of information.

"We would be entering data into both state and government systems," said Eric Altman, GMHC director of program and quality assurance. "After we are trained on the new data system, we will have to back-enter all the data collected beginning in January. We don't have the funds to hire data entry people."

While Altman said it is essential for AIDS service providers to measure progress and setbacks in the field, some worry clients may actually suffer under PEMS.

"Being told how much data to collect and when puts a client in jeopardy," Altman said. "Someone could be coming in for just an AIDS test."

Still, a majority of AIDS service providers are too dependent on government funding to not comply, according to Altman.

"The kind of scrutiny placed on the CDC from the current administration is 100 percent behind this new collection system," Altman said.

But according to CDC officials working on the implementation of PEMS, the "new" questions really aren't new.

"This type of data has been collected since 1985," Thomas said. "We're standardizing so everyone is doing it the same way. You really can't make informed decisions without sound data."

Thomas said there are also elective options in PEMS for AIDS service providers dealing with clients.

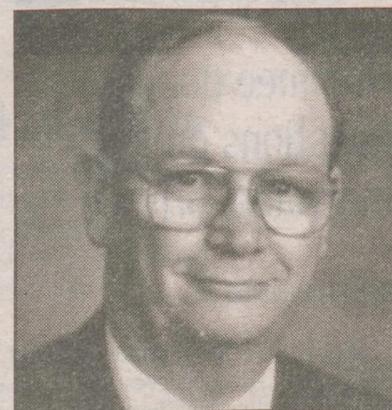
"In the system there are options that indicate this may not be the appropriate time to ask some questions," he said. "And the client can always refuse to answer."

Andrew Keegan can be reached at akeegan@sovo.com.

national news

'Pro-family' groups take aim at Ford Motor Co. again

TUPELO, Miss. — A coalition of 42 conservative groups issued a joint statement Jan. 11 demanding Ford Motor Co. abandon its support for gay organizations. In a letter to Ford written by American Family Association Chair Donald Wildmon, the groups accused the nation's second largest automaker of going back on a promise to the AFA to disengage itself from gay causes. "After meeting with seven homosexual leaders and without any input from thousands of their dealers who stand to be adversely affected by Ford's decision, Ford made their decision to renege on actions they told AFA they would take," Wildmon wrote. Ford issued a letter Dec. 14 reaffirming its commitment to diversity that includes sexual orientation and pledging to advertise all of its brands in gay publications. The letter came two days after Ford officials met with gay groups who were upset by earlier reports that Ford made a deal with the AFA to cease some advertising in gay publications and support for gay organizations to avoid a boycott. "We cannot, and will not, sit by as Ford supports an agenda aimed at the destruction of the family," Wildmon wrote in the Jan. 11 letter, which asked Ford to respond by Jan. 20. Ford officials did not immediately return calls for comment. The gay groups that met with Ford agreed not to comment on the AFA letter.



Donald Wildmon, president of the American Family Association, said Ford Motor Co. decided to 'renege' on promises made to his group.

Utah theater refuses to show 'Brokeback Mountain'

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — A movie theater owned by Utah Jazz owner Larry Miller abruptly changed its screening plans and decided not to show the film "Brokeback Mountain." The film was supposed to open last week at the Megaplex at Jordan Commons in Sandy, a suburb of Salt Lake City. Instead it was pulled from the schedule. Cal Gunderson, manager of the Jordan Commons Megaplex, declined to comment on the theater's decision. The film, starring Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal, is about two cowboys who discover feelings for one another. The movie's distributor, Focus Features, said that hours before opening, the theater management "renege on their licensing agreement," and refused to open the film. "Transamerica," a film starring Felicity Huffman as a male-to-female transgender person, was also pulled from its schedule.

N.J. legislature approves two gay rights measures

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) — Two gay rights bills were sent Jan. 9 to Democratic New Jersey Gov. Richard J. Codey, whose signature is expected on both. The Assembly approved a measure that would give same-sex couples the same rights as married couples regarding inheritances and funeral arrangements. It passed 67-6, with five abstentions. The bill would amend the law so a domestic partner has the same funeral rights as a spouse in case their partner dies with no will. It passed the state Senate, 39-0, last week, and was called a "major milestone" by gay rights advocate Steven Goldstein, chair of Garden State Equality. The other bill would allow municipalities and other public entities at the local level to extend health benefits to domestic partners. The measure passed the Assembly on Jan. 9, 63-7, with eight abstentions. It was approved 34-0 the state Senate on May 12.

Mass. city council elects gay African-American mayor

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — By a vote of 8-1 last week, the Cambridge City Council picked Ken Reeves, an openly gay man who also is African-American, as its mayor. In Newsweek reported. Reeves, who held the position twice previously in the early 1990s, becomes only the second African-American mayor in the nation who also is openly gay. "I am pleased to be elected," he told reporters after he was sworn in. "Here is a wider opportunity to represent all of Cambridge." In the city, nine city councilors choose from among their own ranks those who will serve as mayor and vice mayor or vice chair, after voters select the set of councilors. Reeves listed among his top priorities "the protection of gay marriage." He and his longtime partner, Greg Johnson, recently marked 36 years as a couple.

Cherokee high court refuses to block lesbian marriage

MUSKOGEE, Okla. — A suit filed by nine tribal councilors to nix the marriage certificate of a lesbian couple was dismissed by the Cherokee Nation's highest court late last month, the Muskogee Daily Phoenix reported. The Judicial Appeals Tribunal ruled that those who brought the suit had no standing because they failed to show that they were individually harmed by the May 2004 union. The two women, Kathy Reynolds and Dawn McKinley, were represented by the National Center for Lesbian Rights. The councilors alleged that allowing the lesbian marriage would harm the "reputation" of the Cherokee Nation. The suit was the second challenge to the marriage after the council's attorney also was found to have no standing to dispute the union, the Daily Phoenix reported.

From staff and wire reports

cover story

More expanded scale created to measure gay attractions

BISEXUALITY, continued from Page 4

scale from zero to six — where zero represents “exclusively heterosexual,” six signifies “exclusively homosexual,” with degrees of bisexuality in between.

People who experience “Brokeback Syndrome” could, say, be a one on Kinsey’s scale.

Klein created his own, more expanded, scale that measures attraction, fantasies and behavior toward both sexes, as well as emotional preference compared to social preference. Klein’s scale also measures the variables for the past, present and “ideal” as a way of recognizing that sexual orientation is “an ongoing dynamic process.”

But some researchers suggest self-reporting is unreliable. They turn to more physiological, and controversial, methods to determine sexual orientation. Researchers from Northwestern University recently published a study that implied bisexuality does not exist in men, after sensors attached to the penises of supposedly bisexual men didn’t detect arousal while the men watched heterosexual pornography.

“We looked at arousal, because I don’t think a person can change his sexual arousal to men and women over his lifetime,” says Gerulf Rieger, one of the Northwestern researchers. “Measuring arousal is more stable than self reports.”

But activists and other sex researchers lambasted Rieger’s research for using

“crude” and incomplete criteria.

“Sometimes we tend to focus only on the sexual part of [bisexuality],” Ferrer says. “We’re not looking at the emotional or affectionate component of it.”

Hawkins says she enjoys sexual relationships with men, but prefers dating other women because of the closeness and emotional connection she develops with them, she says.

“There was a point where I kind of identified as being completely gay, but the only reason I felt like that is because I felt like that was how people viewed me,” she says. “It’s hard for people to believe — both heterosexual and gay — that someone can be attracted to both men and women in the same capacity.”

Hawkins and Johnson both say they’re frequently accused of being confused, indecisive or going through a phase.

“As far as straight people are concerned, you’re queer, no questions about it,” Johnson says. “You get a similar bias from the gay community who says you’re too chicken shit to come out, or you’re greedy.”

Another popular misconception about bisexuals is that they want the best of both worlds by sleeping with men and women simultaneously — something Johnson says he is “too lazy to do.”

Like Ennis and Jack, Hawkins has never disclosed her bisexuality to her opposite-sex partners, but she says lesbians she knows struggle with her desires for men.

“I’ve found women who don’t identify as

bisexual usually find it to be very unappealing, because they assume that as soon as a guy comes along you’ll leave them, like you don’t take the relationship seriously,” Hawkins says. “But even though I’m still incredibly attracted to men, I won’t allow myself to act on that because I’m in a relationship with a woman.”

Bisexual activists have long searched for another label that doesn’t imply people who have relationships with both sexes are attracted equally to men and women, and seek relationships with both partners of both genders at the same time, Ferrer says.

“One definition I like is somebody that acknowledges and honors their potential for sexual and emotional relationships with more than one gender,” Ferrer says.

Trying to diagnose a “Brokeback Syndrome,” lumping characters Jack and Ennis — or anyone else — into a label goes against the spirit of the gay rights movement, says activist and blogger Keith Boykin.

“I think labels can be very limiting for a lot of people because when it comes to a community as diverse as ours, it’s not possible to find a label that suits everyone,” Boykin says. “It seems inconsistent to force people to accept or adopt a label for a movement that’s all about self-identification.”

One label Jack and Ennis rarely, if ever, get tagged with is “men on the down low,” even though they are married and have children, but still secretly sleep with men. Boykin, who is black and co-founder of the National Black

Justice Coalition, a black gay rights group, says this represents a “racial double standard” since the relationship between Jack and Ennis is heralded as an epic love story instead of a threat to other people.

“It’s not really the term [down low] that matters, it’s what the term implies — and when you hear ‘down low,’ you don’t think good things, you think evil and deceptive,” Boykin says. “We’re more willing to consider the nuances of why [Jack and Ennis] are doing this, instead of seeing them as pathological the way we do with black men.”

Marcus believes it’s unfair to apply modern terms to characters like Jack and Ennis.

“It’s more important to look at how people behave than what to label them,” Marcus says. “I think we worry too much about labels, and the labels we have don’t adequately cover the range of sexual experiences people have.”

It is sometimes important for people to label themselves bisexual, especially in medical settings, so they and their doctors can accurately assess their health risks, Ferrer says.

And having “bisexual” as a label to identify with was more important to Johnson’s sense of self-understanding as a young man, he says.

“The older I get, the more I think it really doesn’t matter what the hell you call yourself,” Johnson says. “The expression of love is what matters, not the gender.”

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Finding 'Strength in Numbers'

Online group links HIV-positive gay men for support, socializing

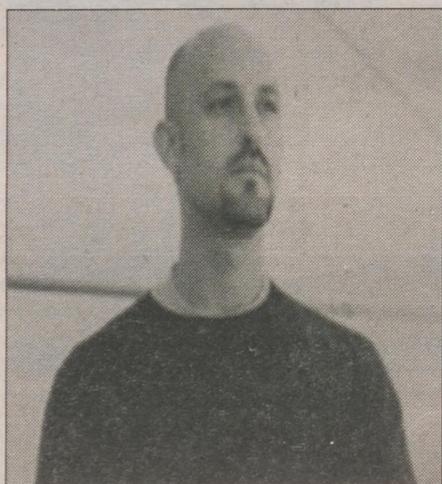
By ERIC ERVIN

Bryan Levinson is looking for a few good men, or at least just one to help organize the local chapter of the national online organization he started in 2002 to offer support and friendship to HIV-positive gay men.

Levinson is the founder of Strength in Numbers, a network of HIV-positive gay men who gather for social activities and also provide support and educational assistance to each other.

"Strength In Numbers Houston is actually looking for a new moderator to help manage this group and help get guys organized for local events," Levinson said. "It's a fun job that doesn't require a lot of time but can help provide positive guys a lot of great social support."

Originally started in Los Angeles, the organization has branched out and established chapters in 20 cities in the United States and Canada, including Houston and Dallas. Levinson said at least seven more chapters are scheduled to pop up in the near future, including ones in Birmingham, Ala., and Quebec City, Canada.



MORE INFO

Strength in Numbers
www.strengthinnumbers.org

Houston Chapter
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SINHouston>



Bryan Levinson, founder of Strength in Numbers, is looking for volunteers to help with the Houston chapter of the online support group.

But Houston, with around 65 members, is one of the smallest chapters with low activity and participation. Levinson said the Los Angeles chapter has about 650 members and Dallas more than 200. The organization has also partnered with other social groups and HIV/AIDS service agencies.

Levinson gives each chapter to freedom to operate the group the best way members see fit. There are no organization bylaws.

"I believe guys in Houston know what's best for us in Houston," he said.

Levinson said the group's mission is to establish chapters in cities where there are no similar organizations.

"If there's a group there already, then we don't need one," he said.

Finding support

Levinson, who is HIV-positive, said he believes it's better for gay men with HIV or AIDS to connect with others affected with the disease. He says it



offers a better support network because they can relate to what the person is experiencing. Drawing back on his own experience grappling with the reality of having the disease, Levinson says he started the group.

"I know how difficult it was to feel open about my status," Levinson said. "This gives guys a safe place to go to and talk. They don't have to go to a case worker."

Levinson said the group's earlier

activities included weekly potluck dinners, speed dating events and other activities. It has now evolved to include other events.

Believing that laughter is the best medicine for people with HIV and AIDS, Levinson plays on the organization's acronym, SIN, as a way of taking ownership of the misperceptions about people with the disease. He encourages members not to be serious and political when participating in the group.

"I think it's given guys a sense of empowerment," he says. "For a long time, queer was a bad word."

"I try to put humor in a lot of things I write for the group."

The group recently won Los Angeles' WeHo Award for Outstanding Community Organization for 2005 in a public poll. Levinson is sharing the achievement with other members.

"I feel amazed," he said. "For an organization that does not have a budget, it was a fantastic thing for us."

out in houston

(Photos by Dalton DeHart)



John Coulter, wearing a beaded necklace, recently celebrated his 50th birthday with family and friends at the Lovett Inn.



Janie Lopez hands a 'L Word' poster to Frances Ginn at a premiere party for the hit show's third season at Guava Lamp. Pictured with Ginn is Jolando Jones (left) and Michelle Rodriguez.



Chad Allen Carr (left), who played the 'Naked Maid' in the original Houston premiere of 'Naked Boys Singing', is now a cast member in the production of 'The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas', which recently opened at The Great Caruso Dinner Theater. (Above) Crew members of the popular play.



AIDS Foundation Houston held a kickoff celebration Wednesday at the Ensemble Theater for its annual AIDS Walk Houston fund-raiser event. In the top photo is Matt Rush, Julie Eberly with AIDS Foundation Houston, Kenneth Epting and Devin Moody.



The 'Misty's Blue Crew' (above) team will participate in this year's AIDS Walk. Misty Blue, who is organizer of the team, has been involved in the fund-raiser for several years.

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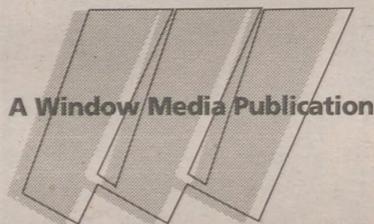
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National Advertising Representative

Rivendell Media • 212-242-6863



A Window Media Publication

Publisher- WINDOW MEDIA LLC
President- WILLIAM WAYBOURN
Editorial Director- CHRIS CRAIN
Corporate Controller- BARNETTE HOLSTON
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Forum

HOUSTON VOICE

JANUARY 13, 2006

PAGE 10

editorial

New war on gay families

First they came for gay marriage. Then they came for gay adoption. Now they want to stop kids like mine from even being born.

By LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN

A

MONTH AGO THIS WEEK, my family got an early Christmas present.

With our two little girls bundled into tights and dresses, my partner, Donna, and I stood before a Superior Court

judge who finalized Donna's adoption of seven-month-old Carter.

As we explained to Dylan, who at age 4 seemed to grasp the solemnity of the occasion if not quite the meaning, the judge's signature means Donna will always legally be Carter's mother, just like me.

In many ways, it was merely a technicality. Donna didn't become Carter's mother when the judge signed the papers making the baby that grew in my belly just as much her child as mine, any more than she became Dylan's mother when we stood before a different judge back in 2001.

Donna was there when our little girls were conceived, there for their births. She's changed diapers, bandaged boo-boos, soothed bad dreams.

She's Mama, no matter what.

But the reality for families like mine seems increasingly lost on lawmakers around the country, who appear to have little better to do than try to legislate us out of existence.

I already knew that there are people in the world, including some notoriously anti-gay state legislators here in Georgia, who would like to stop my partner from adopting our daughters.

Now, in what may be the next wave of attacks on gay families, it appears some lawmakers would stop them from being born at all.

EVEN IF DONNA WERE BANNED FROM being our children's legal parent, she would still be their mother in every practical sense.

The adoption just gives the kids the added security of knowing they would stay with her if something happened to me, and added support like Social Security benefits if something should happen to her. Rights like these are important, critically so, but without them, my family would still exist.

Bans on gay adoptions hurt us, but they are really designed to target gay parents who are adopting children who were not born to them. And of course, the people the bans hurt the most are those children, who languish in foster care while good potential parents who are gay pine for kids to love.

Adoption made my family more secure, but donor insemination created it. So I am particularly horrified by a bill introduced in the Virginia legislature last week that would prevent lesbians like me from having children through what is often known as "assisted reproduction."

Rep. Robert Marshall (R-Manassas) sponsored the measure that would forbid medical professionals from providing to unmarried women "certain intervening medical technology" that "completely or partially replaces sexual intercourse as the means of conception." The bill provides a list of medical procedures, including "artificial insemination by donor" and invitro fertilization.

Equality Virginia, the state's gay political group, accurately denounced the measure as a "direct attack" on gay families. But unfortunately, it isn't a novel idea.

A similar, even more extensive measure was introduced in the Indiana state legislature last year by state Sen. Patricia Miller (R-Indianapolis). Her bill would have required all "intended parents" using assisted reproduction to be married, and also to go through a complicated assessment process conducted by agencies that normally place children for adoption.

In addition to information such as education and employment, the assessment would have included data on subjective issues like the "family lifestyle" of the parents and their participation in religious activities.

Needless to say, gay rights advocates were outraged. So were many heterosexual women — unmarried and married — who turned to fertility doctors when they were unable to conceive with their male partners. They argued that their medical problems shouldn't force them to jump through additional hoops not required of anyone else who wants to have a baby.

Surprised by the level of criticism the bill generated, Miller withdrew it in October.

By narrowing the scope of the Virginia bill to focus only on whether women using

assisted reproduction are married, Marshall may have hoped to avoid some of that controversy. But while his bill is less intrusive, it is also more obvious in its bias.

At least by requiring assessments — however fraught they might have been with the potential for discrimination based on education, religion or otherwise — Miller's bill acknowledged that some married straight people won't be good parents.

According to Marshall, married women are automatically deserving of having children, and the rest of us automatically aren't.

ON FIRST GLANCE, THE INDIANA AND Virginia bills seem blatantly unconstitutional. In *Roe vs. Wade*, the Supreme Court held that the right to privacy includes a woman's decision to end a pregnancy with the help of her doctor; surely the decision to start a pregnancy should be covered, too.

But with the Supreme Court in flux and *Roe* under attack from conservative groups, we can hardly sit back and assume that a bill like Marshall's is too stupid to pass, or would be struck down by the courts if it did.

That makes bills like this a win-win for gay rights opponents: If the measures pass, they've found yet another way to hurt gay families. But even if they don't, they've managed to keep us so busy with what we are fighting against that we don't have time or money left to actually fight for anything.

We saw it first with state constitutional amendments to ban gay marriage. By the end of 2005, 18 states had enacted such amendments, including many like Georgia that already had laws banning gay marriage.

Then, emboldened by the federal courts' refusal to overturn Florida's stringent law banning gay adoption, conservative lawmakers began attempting to pass similar measures in other states — the Human Rights Campaign noted an "exponential" increase in bills targeting gay adoption and foster parenting last year.

So far, the measures haven't had much success, as none of the bills introduced last year won approval, but gay rights groups have still been bruised by the fights.

Now we have to wonder how long it will be before assisted reproduction measures like the bills in Virginia and Indiana spread to other states.

And how long it will be before "pro-family" ideologues like Marshall and Miller recognize our families, too.

@ Laura Douglas-Brown is news editor of Southern Voice and Window Media. She can be reached at lbrown@sovo.com.



letters

A bittersweet victory for council elections

To the Editors:

Like many in our community, I was very happy to see Sue Lovell win the recent runoff election. However, as a community we should be ashamed that she only won by about 600 votes.

In a runoff election that generally gets 5 percent to 10 percent general turnout maximum, this should have been a slam-dunk for Lovell. If our community really cared about who speaks for us and who fights for us, she should have won by many thousands of votes.

It was a chance for our community to show Houstonians we are here, we care what happens in Houston politics and we vote. Sadly, most didn't.

At this year's Pride Parade, look at the size of the crowd around you of 100,000 plus or minus. That's how many votes Lovell could and should have won by.

ALAN J. HURWITZ
Houston, Texas

Party logic wins rights battles

To the Editors:

In his editorial ("Parties defy 'cowboy logic,'" Jan. 6), Matthew A. Hennie tells voters to largely disregard party affiliation in gubernatorial races this year because "when it comes to same-sex marriage, it won't matter whether a Republican or Democrat gets elected."

Recent history proves this assessment wrong, and results of gubernatorial races between Republicans and Democrats in 2006 will directly impact the lives of LGBT Americans.

Governors dramatically influence both lawmakers and legislation. Democratic Gov. Jim Doyle of Wisconsin vetoed anti-marriage legislation in 2003 pushed through by a Republican legislature.

Democratic Gov. Tom Vilsack used his clout to help Democrats defeat an anti-marriage amendment in Iowa last year. Pro-marriage Democratic Gov. Ted Kulongoski of Oregon responded to a similar amendment enacted in 2004 by introducing a civil union bill that he helped the Democratically controlled state Senate pass.

Republicans this year are fielding anti-gay candidates for each of these gubernatorial seats, and Governor Kulongoski is working to help Democrats win control of the state House to ensure passage of the civil union bill.

Additionally, Democrats are fighting to retain control of legislatures in California, Washington, Colorado, New Mexico and Maryland, where their leadership defeated Republican anti-marriage amendments in 2005.

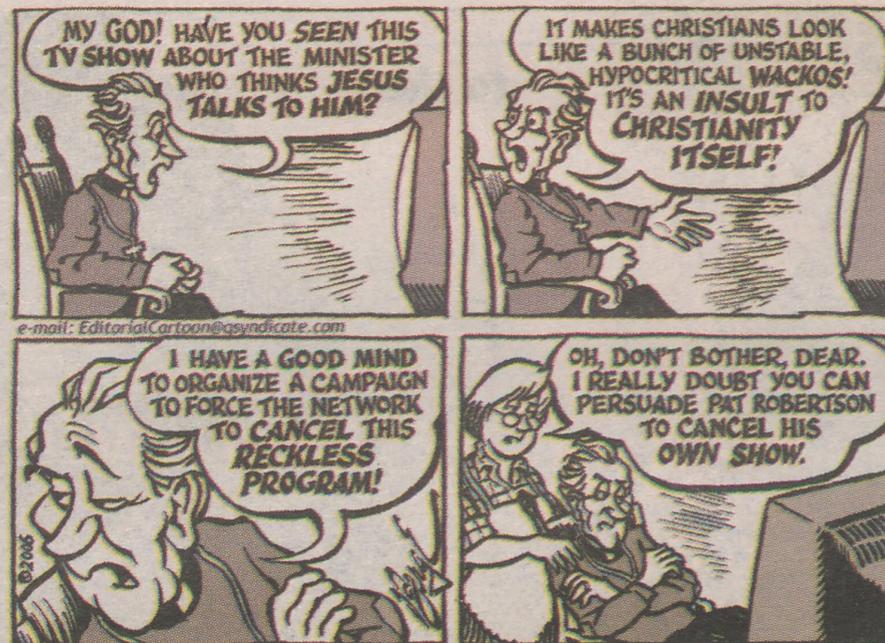
This year, a pro-marriage Democrat is running for governor in New York, and Democratic gubernatorial candidates in Florida are helping defeat an anti-marriage amendment before it even reaches the ballot there.

Voters have an opportunity to elect a Democratic governor in Colorado to sign into law anti-discrimination legislation vetoed by GOP Gov. Bill Owens. Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger this year became the first chief executive to veto marriage equality; however his two Democratic gubernatorial opponents vow to sign such a bill into law.

The Washington Blade echoed Hennie's assessment in 2002 with an editorial predicting little difference in the positions between the Republican and Democratic candidates for Maryland governor.

Yet, following his election, Republican Gov. Bob Ehrlich vetoed domestic partner legislation passed by the Democratically controlled legislature on the grounds that it undermined "traditional marriage." A Democratic defeat of Ehrlich this year would move similar legislation closer to law.

Hennie writes that the LGBT commu-



nity should not, "without pause, condemn Republicans as chief executives and praise Democrats." I agree. However, Republicans continue to give our community plenty to pause and ponder.

JOHN MARBLE
Communications Director
National Stonewall Democrats
Washington

A year of changing things for the better

To the Editors:

Re "A year of living dangerously" (editorial by Chris Crain, Dec. 30):

As the mother of a son who was gay, I want to commend Chris Crain for his poignant editorial. There is nothing worse than a society so full of homophobia, hate and injustice.

I, too, have a strong faith, but I certainly do not support the hypocrisy found in all religions when it comes to homosexuality. I was brought up to believe that any house of worship was a place of peace and love and everyone

was welcome. Unfortunately, this isn't the way it is today, so I confine my own worship to my home.

So many gay people also struggle with family over their homosexuality. I wonder what happened to unconditional love? Our children aren't brought into this world with conditions about when they should receive our love. My son went through this with some family members and even moved to lead a normal life.

With unconditional love and support from me and his sister, along with his very close friends, he was able to rise above the hurtful words and actions. He passed away last year at the age of 36 and was so very blessed during his journey here on earth.

I hope Chris Crain's editorial will be food for thought for many and I certainly agree with him about redoubling efforts to change the future for the better. I will continue to do my part, not only as a mother, but as a friend to all within the gay community.

BRENDA STOCKMAN
Panama City, Fla.

THE

Q

Which candidate for the Texas governor's race would be an ally for gay men and lesbians?



Chris Bell because he has been voting on the gay rights and equal rights side of things for quite a while. I like a man who sticks to his guns and convictions.

JESSICA BULLARD, 23
Spring
Student



Chris Bell is the premier candidate and absolute as such. He has proven track record that shows his support for our community.

SHELLEY KENNEDY, 48
Houston
Insurance



Chris Bell because I have worked first hand with him on behalf of GLBT causes such as Halloween Magic and I know he will continue to support our causes if he is governor.

BOB ALBAN, 48
Houston
Director of Marketing



Chris Bell because of his participation in the fight for equal rights within our community.

FELICIA BRADFORD, over 30
Houston
Data analyst



Chris Bell is the choice because he has always been a friend of the gay community. No matter who our choices end up being, I know the only way we are going to be completely represented is by each and every GLBT person showing up and voting.

JACQUI JONES, 43
Houston
Telecommunications

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Interviews and photos by Dalton DeHart

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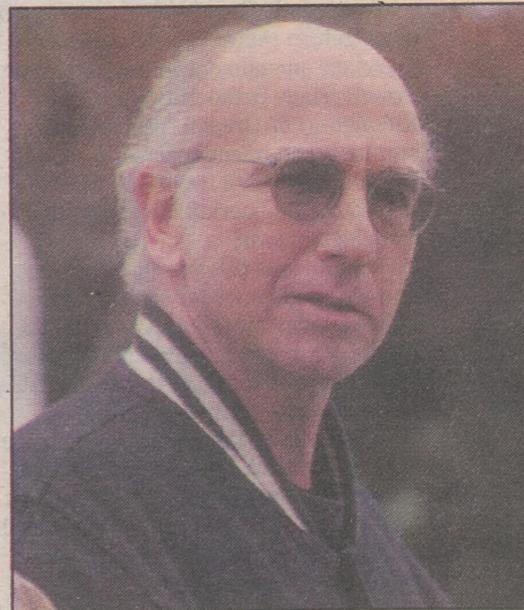
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on the record



Australian actor Heath Ledger, who has won critical praise and awards for his role as a gay cowboy in "Brokeback Mountain," on the decision by a Salt Lake theater to pull the film (Sydney Morning Herald, Jan. 10)

"I just know if I saw that movie, the voice inside my head that delights in torturing me would have a field day. 'You like those cowboys, don't you? They're kind of cute. Go ahead, admit it, they're cute.' Go ahead, stop fighting it. You're gay! You're gay!"

Comedian **Larry David**, creator of "Seinfeld" and star of HBO's "Curb Your Enthusiasm," on why he refuses to see "Brokeback Mountain" (New York Times, Jan. 1)

"Who gives a fuck? Personally I don't think the movie is [controversial], but I think maybe the Mormons in Utah do. I think it's hilarious and very immature of society. ... I think we should be more concerned if two people express anger in love, than love."

"I just think [pulling the movie] tells the young people especially that maybe there is something wrong with this show."

Gayle Ruzicka, president of the conservative Utah Eagle Forum, on why she supports the Salt Lake theater's decision to cancel "Brokeback Mountain" (Associated Press, Jan. 8)



"So I went to see 'Brokeback.' And I can report that it was as shattering and powerful as advertised. People were moved. Nobody threw up."

Miami Herald columnist **Leonard Pitts** on his reaction to "Brokeback Mountain" and the prediction by the American Family Association that theatergoers would leave the movie vomiting (Miami Herald, Jan. 9)

"I certainly had no intention of casting aspersions on anyone in the gay community or on the community itself. I regret any emotional hurt that may have resulted from my review of 'Brokeback Mountain.'"

"Today" show movie critic **Gene Shalit** in a letter to the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, which took issue

with his review for referring to Jake Gyllenhaal's character as a "sexual predator" (GLAAD.org, Jan. 10)

"It's an idea whose time has come. Only now are media and entertainment brands being created for the gay and lesbian audience following the success of brands for other minorities."

Matt Farber, Logo channel founder, on Sony Music's launch of Music with a Twist, a gay music label that is a joint venture with Wilderness Media & Entertainment, which is headed by Farber (Reuters, Jan. 11)

"The revolution has begun."

George Takei, Star Trek's Sulu, who came out as gay last year, during his first broadcast as Howard Stern's new announcer on his satellite radio show, which debuted this week (Howard Stern Show, Jan. 11)

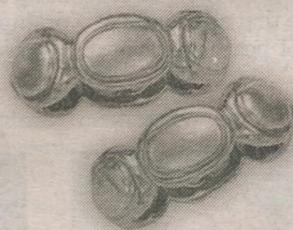
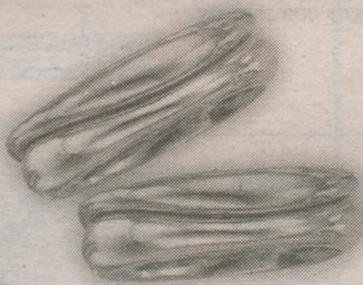
"People are chasing other people down the street, blowing people up in beds, scaling fences and all these butch things that I'd never written about. I never killed anyone in a play before — I mean, there's one character in one play who is maybe dead and isn't necessarily dead. Other than that, I had never written 'So-and-so-shoots someone.'"

Gay playwright **Tony Kushner**, on why he turned down writing the screenplay for Stephen Spielberg's "Munich" (Entertainment Weekly, Dec. 21)



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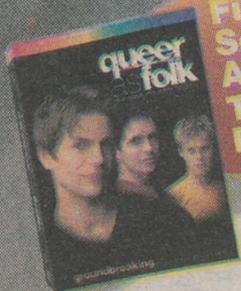
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BONDING TIME

Mid-Atlantic Leather Weekend explores the power of brotherly bondage

By GREG MARZULLO

NOW AND THEN A lot of people get tied up. No, not at work or in traffic. People are tied to bed posts, each other or, sometimes, anything that's nailed down. People get handcuffed, knotted up with ties and placed in restraints. For those leather fans out there, getting bound takes on all kinds of meanings and involves all sorts of props.

This year's theme for the Mid-Atlantic Leather Weekend, "Bound in Brotherhood," encompasses meanings from kinky to spiritual. From Friday, Jan. 13, through Sunday, Jan. 15, when the country's second largest leather convention takes over Washington, D.C., leather aficionados, admirers and the curious can delve into the practice of bondage.

Leather folk will descend on the Washington Plaza hotel for the weekend, transforming the lobby into a de facto gay bar. The famed Mr. Mid-Atlantic Leather competition, the highlight of the weekend, takes place Sunday afternoon.

Frank Nowicki, 49, won the title in 1993, and he's been emceeing the event for more than 10 years. According to this leather veteran, this year's theme is about much more than tying up your significant other.

"It's about camaraderie, the friendships, the different components of the leather community," he says. "[The weekend] is to touch base with each other and reaffirm our feelings about leather."

Each year's topic is chosen by an organizing committee, and themes have ranged from men in uniform to a leather spoof of HBO's "Sex and the City."

"We want to emphasize the importance of leather and motorcycle clubs in the leather community," says Larry Barat, 45, co-chair of the weekend party

and the current vice president of the Centaur Motorcycle club, which stages the event. "That notion of brotherhood is linked very strongly to the idea of how leather clubs work together."

The event's website and postcard image reflects the community's thematic ideals. A group of men in leather vests, emblazoned with the various leather clubs' images, are being lassoed together by a cowhide-clad stud. The picture is a representation of the D.C. area's leather organizations' ability to come together despite their different identities.

"We have lots of labels within the leather community, but we seem to all get along fairly well," says Mike Dembski, the event's publicity chair.

While the title of the weekend might seem to exclude women, Schelli Dittman, manager of the D.C. Eagle, says that "brotherhood" transcends gender.

"I'm a member of the [local leather club] Highwaymen, which is a brotherhood fraternity, but we have women members," Dittman says. "We use 'brotherhood' meaning a bond."

SOME MAY THINK THE PARTY LINE about the weekend's call for unity and a gathering of the tribes might be a hollow cover for a weekend of Bacchanalian pleasures. While bondage seems to be a fairly common practice in the leather community, many people view the experience as deeply spiritual, and there are other leather devotees who aren't interested at all.

"[Bondage] ranges from people who just like to wear leather and are quite vanilla in bed to serious

Please see **BONDAGE** on Page 19

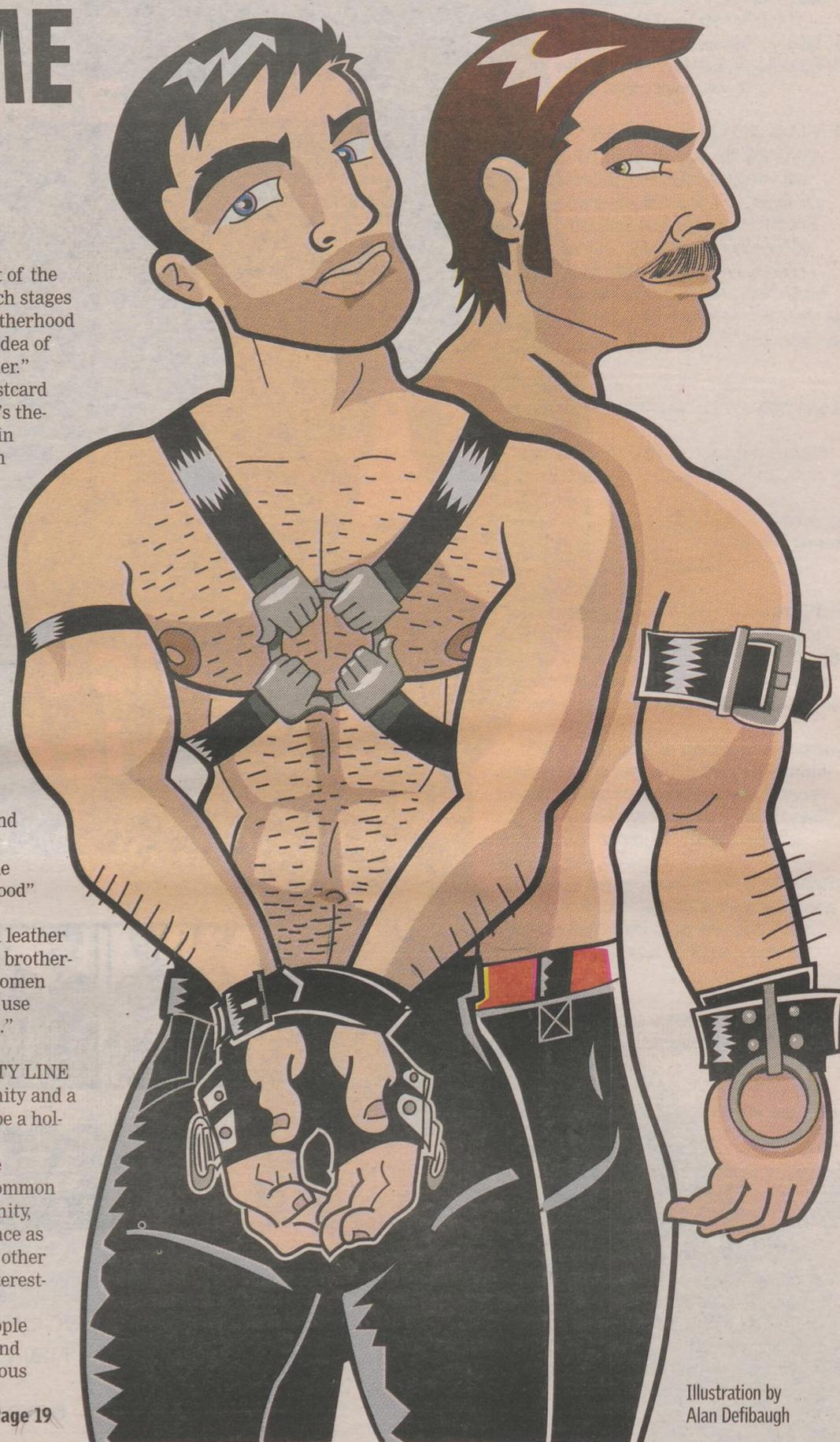


Illustration by Alan Defibaugh

BOOKS: Author Martin Moran tells of his sexual abuse at the hands of a 40-ish man. Page 16

NIGHTLIFE: Gay-friendly entertainer Kathy Griffin returns to Houston to make us laugh. Page 15

nightlife JOHNNY HOOKS



The new year brings a slew of events that are bound to get you out and about.

Marking your events calendar

WELCOME BACK TO HOVO ON THE Go-Go! With the craziness of the holiday season finally behind us, we can turn our attention to the months of January and February. There is so much happening in our fair city that early planning is essential to make sure you get to do and see it all.

FIRST UP IS SOMETHING FOR YOUR soul as well as your body. The Harbor Metropolitan Community Church of Galveston County is holding a potluck supper on Sunday, Jan 15 and you are invited. The supper runs from 4 p.m. until 6 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship building, 502 Church St. in Galveston. Bring your favorite dish, meet some great people and share some terrific food.

These potluck dinners are held every third Sunday of the month. For more information, call Pat Farnan at 409-789-9510.

AND SINCE WE ARE TALKING about food for the body and soul, how about some chicken soup? Temple Beth Tikvah will hold its fifth annual "Great Chicken Soup Cook Off" on the temple grounds on Sunday, Jan. 22. The cook off begins at 11 a.m. and runs till 1 p.m. and the winner will be awarded the coveted Golden Chicken trophy. All are invited to attend and taste, but if you are tasting all the soups, there will be a \$5 fee. Teams can enter for only \$18. Temple Beth Tikvah is the reform Jewish temple in the Clear Lake area, located near the University of Houston-Clear Lake. For more information, contact call 281-286-1717 or visit www.templebethtikvah.org.

NOW IF YOU BELIEVE THAT LAUGHTER is the best medicine, then get ready for not one, but two hilarious female comics that should have you feeling fine in February. First up is Kathy Griffin, one of HotGG's favorite entertainers, arriving just in time for Valentine's Day. After wowing the masses at last year's Black Tie Dinner, she's back on Feb. 14, at 8 p.m. at Houston's Hobby Center for the Performing Arts.

Ticket prices for this engagement are only \$35 and \$32! The Chicago native is perhaps best known for her four-year stint on the NBC sitcom "Suddenly Susan" as Vickie Groener, Brooke Shields' acerbic colleague. But it's Griffin's laugh-out-loud Bravo show "My Life on the D-List" and her stand-up shows where she lampoons



Entertainer Kathy Griffin, who has developed a following of gay fans, will be back in Houston for a performance next month.

HOVO on the go-go

Clay "Gay-ken" and Ryan Seacrest, and talks about "her gays" that have, in our opinion, put her on the A-list! To bone up on her hilarious comedy, check out her show "Allegedly," on DVD, which is in stores now.

For more information, call 713-629-3700 or visit www.ticketmaster.com.

THEN A REAL "QUEEN OF COMEDY" arrives at the Improv. That's right, Sommore is headlining four nights there in February. Most of what Sommore riffs on is too tart for print, so check out the DVD and make plans now to see her. All seats in the show-room are full menu with the first show each day being the dinner show. Seating for all shows is first come first serve. Guests with dinner reservations get priority seating. The Improv is located at 7620 Katy Freeway, in the Marq-E Center. Call 713-333-8800 or visit www.improv.com/houston.html

@ If you have any club announcements or events, e-mail them to jhooks@houstonvoice.com or call 713-529-8490. See you on the Go-Go!

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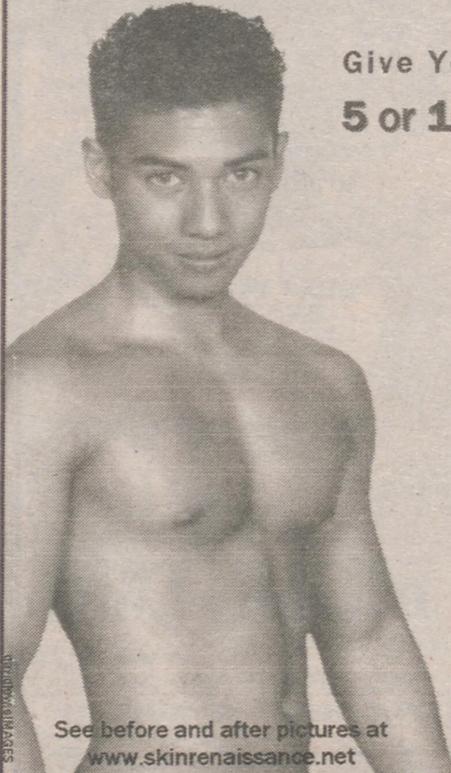


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Author **Martin Moran** opens up
and writes about his experience
of being molested by older man.

Innocence lost

AUTHOR MARTIN MORAN'S LATEST book, "The Tricky Part: One Boy's Fall from Trespass into Grace", is mindful, mischievous memoir of his childhood, in which his innocence was taking away by an older man.

At first, his friendship, at age 12, with 40-ish father figure Bob felt like nothing short of a miracle, especially for an Irish Catholic altar boy who had felt cloistered at Christ the King church and school in Denver, Colo.

Moran purred from the special attention he got from this virile Vietnam veteran who drove a six-wheel pickup truck, read starry skies like a map and even let him help deliver a calf.

It sure seemed like fun, he thought. Might it also be love? That's what Bob called it.

Then disaster struck when Moran's flesh-and-blood God dared to solve the question that haunted longings inside his questioning mind. On an overnight camping trip, Bob unzipped his sleeping bag and, the author writes, "at long last the burning question [had] a solid answer. Touch."

The tricky part of growing up for Moran was dealing with the creepy part—having his innocence not lost but taken away at an age simply too young to process. (It gets "ickier." Bob even makes Moran have sex with his girlfriend and eventually wife).

Good Lord, what is wrong with some people? It would take 30 years before Moran summoned the courage to confront Bob for his crime and the long-term affects it had on him.

Part of the healing process for Moran was writing the book. He separates his memoir into two parts: Falling and Waking.

The "Falling" part includes a sometimes-witty glimpse into his parochial education, intoning ancient Latin phrases, cringing at ominous paintings of saints, flinching beneath a foot-tall wooden sculpture of Christ nailed to the wall of his home's front wall.

The "Waking" part is about the author coming into his own in New York City, where he gets paid to pretend as an actor in, among other shows, the musical Doonesbury, an avant-garde opera directed by Anne Bogart, and his one-man show, The Tricky Part, for which he wins a 2004 off-Broadway prize.

This section also awakens Moran to the knowledge that he suffers from sexual compulsion in the form of anonymous sex with strangers in men's restrooms, something he ultimately confesses to his long-time lover.



Perhaps worst of all is the creepy feeling Moran gets when he hugs his pre-teen nephew. This asks readers to ponder the questions of is it true that molested children become child molesters.

But I'm getting far out of my league here, much less perhaps making this delicately, elegantly written story seem more tragic than the author intends and/or admits.

The Tricky Part is meant to bring a measure of redemption to the reader regardless of what past indiscretion one might think has damaged him. For Moran, the tricky part is a coming to terms with universal challenge of "letting go of the sense that the past should have been any different or better."

For soul searchers and the more introspective, there is a good chance the book will spark a degree of healing. For others, its content might seem a little too uncomfortable, something to be resolved in a simpler fashion, such as how one character reacts to details of Moran's crucial confrontation with an older, lesser Bob.

i MORE INFO

The Tricky Part: One Boy's Fall
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music BUCK C. COOKE



Maybe Ricky Martin should care about 'Life', his latest album, but gay fans won't because they'll just be happy to see the star on tour.

'Life' ain't no 'La Vida'

RICKY MARTIN SINGS "I DON'T CARE" on his new single. Unfortunately, many gay fans are likely to respond, "Neither do we!"

"I Don't Care" is the first single from Martin's new album "Life," a disappointing collection of mostly English-language tracks.

Tracks on "Life" are produced by some of hip-hop and rap's superstar producers like will.i.am (of the Black-eyed Peas), Luny Tunes and The Matrix, but the CD is as unlikely to capture hip-hop listeners as it is to capture gay ones.

The domestic release for "I Don't Care" features R&B vocalist Amerie and rapper Fat Joe with yawn-inspiring results. It is somewhat surprising that feminist groups don't raise a fuss due to some of the lyrics.

Fat Joe raps, "I can't believe you a sleaze, you a slut, a ho, now you wanna have a change of heart."

This does not seem like the housewife-friendly Martin who won hearts all over the globe almost six years ago.

You might think the big-name collaborators would lend Martin's work some industry cred, but it is hard to buy a rich, sensuous Latin rapper as "street."

Thankfully, the European CD single of "I Don't Care" offers slightly more enjoyable versions of the song. In addition to the L.E.X. Reggaeton Mix by Eddie X and Luigie Gonzalez, which features more of a hip-hop feel than the album version, the CD single includes remixes by Rishi Rich and an edit of the club mix by Ralphie Rosario and Craig J.

The Rich remix blends Martin's original with vocals from Amerie with Punjabi vocals by Juggy D. The result is a dance track with an Indian vibe similar to Rich's remix of "Me Against the Music" by Britney Spears and Madonna from 2003.

MOVING ON AND CARING A LITTLE more, "Til I Get To You" is one of the more enjoyable tracks on the album. With sweeping orchestration and Martin's trademark sing/speak, the up-tempo ballad is sweet and syrupy, just how most fans prefer Martin.

In the same vein, "I Won't Desert You," "Life," and "Stop Time Tonight" could have all been lifted from Martin's previous release, "Sound Loaded." The tracks contain the typical, mid-tempo beat with Martin's vocals pleading with the object of his affection to love him again, come back to him, etc. Again, "Yawn!"



Ricky Martin

"It's Alright" is one of the few truly up-tempo tracks on the CD. Produced by will.i.am, the track is radio- and remix-ready with horns and driving percussion.

"Drop It On Me," also produced by will.i.am, sounds like it should have been a Black-eyed Peas track. Perhaps that is because it features Daddy Yankee and Taboo from the group. Either track would be a better single than "I Don't Care."

"I Am" would be a disposable track except for the highly suggestive, almost inappropriate lyrics from the singer who always draws us with his sex appeal.

Martin sings, "Damn I want to come, but you come before me." Where do we get in line for that?

MARTIN HASN'T LOOKED BETTER IN years. His close-cropped faux-hawk and stubble give his face a humpy, edgy feel, but his eyes are as sweet and sexy as ever. Most of us could do without the naked woman tattooed on his left shoulder, but Martin's record label placed a close-up of the tattoo on his Web site.

No doubt this is to remind listeners that the Latin heartthrob is hopelessly "heterosexual." Whatever.

Martin caught America's eye when he performed "Cup of Life" at the 1999 Grammy Awards. Everyone, including Madonna, wooed the Latin pop star. His English language debut, "Ricky Martin," was released in 1999 with an enormous response.

His sexy videos, hip-gyrating dancing, and cover-boy good looks made him a hit with straight women, teenaged girls and gay men. These factions of the America audience discovered what the rest of the world already knew — Martin is h-o-t hot.

Martin's stateside star began to fade with the release of "Sounds Loaded," which failed to spawn a hit.

"Life," sadly, seems to be another cry for desperation. Hopefully, Martin's tour to promote the album will remind fans of how desirable his music was at one time.

If nothing else, "Life" gave the singer a smoldering new image and fans can at least see him on the press circuit promoting the album. Just be sure to hit the "mute" button when he starts to perform "I Don't Care," and you will be fine.

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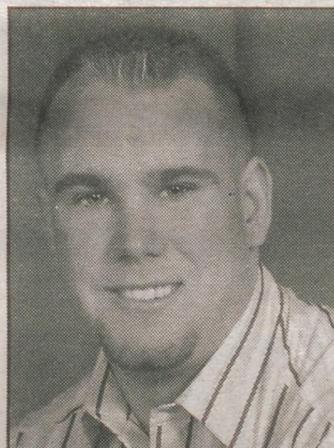
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dish There's a Fine Line Between Telling the Truth and Talking Trash

Spacing out

Gay actors, trans Barbies and hetero feats of strength



Academy Award-winner Kevin Spacey was cited as a good example for British teachers to mention when telling youngsters about gays — all funded by the British government.

Since enacting gay civil unions, the British government has gone from egalitarian to radical. It has started random outtings! The first newly dubbed gay guy is actor **KEVIN SPACEY**.

A program in Britain's Department of Education is funded by the government to help observe the country's gay history month this February. Teachers can access the website for teaching resources, including a list of famous gay people.

And Spacey has joined the pantheon of gay immortals. London's newspaper the *Mirror*, reports that Spacey appeared on the big list o' gays alongside **TENNESSEE WILLIAMS** and **OSCAR WILDE**.

The organizer of the Department of Education's history program apologized profusely for the "error."

"It's a complete mistake," said Paul Patrick. "We'd love to be able to explain how it happened but we can't."

How about it's not really a mistake?

Spacey used to deny the gay rumor until he was caught with his proverbial (and maybe literal) pants down in a London park at 4:30 a.m. in 2004. The actor was allegedly mugged in the notorious gay cruising park while walking his Jack Russell terrier, and he tripped over the dog when chasing the criminal who took his mobile phone.

And let's not forget the 1997 *Esquire* article that touted the gay rumors swirling around Spacey at the time, only to have the actor claim it was "malicious" after publication.

Subversive blonds

Beware of **BARBIE!** The popular doll is leading your child down the path toward lesbianism and gender confusion!

Concerned Women for America, a social conservative organization, has denounced Mattel's Barbie website.

The site has a poll that asks children

their age and sex.

The options for sex are "male,"

"female" and "I

don't know."

Robert Knight,

director of the

CWA's cultural

and family

institute says this

type of confusing

option leads

children down the road to bisexuality.

"That's the agenda here," Knight says

in a clip from the Concerned Women's

website. "[Transgender issues are] a very

big component of the homosexual

activist movement right now."

Granted, Knight has a number of

problems with Barbie including its

materialistic focus on cars and clothes.



Barbie

Woop Woo, Woo Hoo Hoo; Woop Woo, Woo Hoo Hoo,
Woop Woo, Woo Hoo Hoo; Woop Woo, Woo Hoo Hoo

People do Stupid Things!

"Eloy always looked for love in all the wrong places. What he got was mood-swings, acne at 53 and shrinking testicles. Eloy is still looking in all the wrong places (he is a man after all, he can't help himself) but now he wears protection."

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This sounds like a good observation out of context, but unfortunately, he keeps blathering on.

"It's steering girls away from the idea of womanhood, servicing the Lord, getting married, having kids," Knight says.

How refreshing — another fundamentalist man telling women how they should behave.

Butch up!

In response to being left out of the Pride circuit, pastor Tom Crouse of the Holland Congregational Church in Holland, Mass., has created the Mr. Hetero Contest.

"It's a celebration of God's design of heterosexuality," said Crouse told Dish. "I don't see how that's intolerant."

Part of what might be irking gay folks is that an "ex-gay" (read: glaze-eyed zombie) speaker will be talking about his renunciation of the "homosexual lifestyle."

That's just one tiny part of the competition's fun, though, during the upcoming February event. Contestants will display their manly strength by tearing Oprah magazines. No, that's not Dish wit. That's the real deal.

"There's no big meaning to the Oprah magazine," Crouse said.

There will also be a tasting event of guessing what food is being put into the blindfolded contestant's mouth. Dish suspects this is really a masters and slaves contest.

Crouse, who has a radio call-in show "Engaging Your World," says he's gotten lots of hate mail from gays about the upcoming event.

"A couple of things people said they wanted to do to me, I had to look up," Crouse said.

Dish suggests experiential research.

@ Send comments, suggestions to Dish@houstonvoice.com

eclipse

Leather devotees cite activism as part of culture

BONDAGE, continued from Page 14

SM [sado-masochism] players," says Barat. "With some people, this is very spiritual for them. There are others that it's more about power exchange."

Bondage can take many forms, from light to heavy, with or without adding the S/M components to it.

"Bondage is immobilizing another person physically," says Justin Sox, Colonel of D.C.'s Men of Discipline, a BDSM leather alternative club. The group dubs its leader a "colonel" even though its members — who presumably ask and tell — don't necessarily have any military affiliation.

Bondage includes tying someone up with plain old rope and "mummification," wrapping someone in cloth, or that handy kitchen staple, Saran Wrap. Sox has become a fan of Japanese rope bondage.

"It's a very specific manner of tying a rope on another person," says Sox. "[It has] sensuality as well as physical beauty."

Sox came to the practice of BDSM through a personal study in Buddhism and its central teachings about life and the inherent nature of suffering. In a way, the Buddhist mindset of simply noticing the sensations and mental patterns of anger, misery and love became synonymous with Sox's understanding of this particular sexual practice.

"It's sensation, but it's not painful," he says. "What is the physical suffering and



Leather Cocktails takes place on the Saturday night of the weekend and features attendees dressed in their formal leather finest. (Photo by Mike Dempski)

mental suffering in our daily lives? How can we reconcile all those things with the gay and leather community? The questions are somewhat intertwined."

THE SEDUCTIVE INTOXICATION OF control is also part of bondage's erotic appeal.

"A lot of it has to do with the idea of being able to trust someone else enough to make yourself vulnerable," says Barat. "At the same time, for the person who's doing the tying, [he or she] has the responsibility of taking someone as far as they can go — but no further."

Dittman, who's 37 and identifies as queer, jokes about the differences in intensity between the gay male and lesbian bondage scenes.

"We scare the shit out of the men," she laughs. "We play pretty hard and rough." Among the leather lesbians, Dittman says, they joke that the gay man's version of SM is "standing and modeling."

WHILE THE SUBGROUPS OF WOMEN, bears, BDSM folks and others tend to get along, the leather community as a whole can have a tenuous relationship with other gays. The celebratory nature of the leather culture's sensuality and overt veneration of masculinity doesn't always gel with the projected image of gay Tupperware-toting friends and dog-walking neighbors.

Leather-loving gays and lesbians cite their contributions to civil rights and to fighting the AIDS epidemic as proof of their having an equal place at the gay table.

"The leather community is in some ways a foundation of the gay and lesbian community," says Barat. "If you look back 20 years ago to the time of Stonewall and the early AIDS epidemic, the leather community was one of the parts of the gay and lesbian community that actually stepped up and took leadership."

Barat acknowledges that the weekend's sexual experiences don't get swept under the rug, but people are cognizant of the nature of their personal practices. He says the weekend is more about creating a space for people to socialize together. Afterwards they can return to their hotel rooms, play spaces or dungeons for whatever they like.

"We don't advertise our big parties as sex parties," Sox says. "There might be some legal aspect to advertising a sex party. There seems to be some reticence in the leather community to tie together BDSM and sex as in any way synonymous."

Dempski is quick to point out, however, that the sexual aspects of the leather scene are only part and parcel of the larger package.

"[The sex] does define us just like being gay and having sex with men defines yourself," says Dempski. "By the same token, if you walk around the Eagle on a Friday night, you'd be amazed about how people are not talking about sex, but about decorating their homes or going for a drive somewhere to the beach."

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POTLUCK SUPPER THIS Sunday! Jan.15th will be our first monthly potluck supper right after our 4:00 pm Worship Service. Bring a dish & bring a friend! No dish! No problem! Please come & enjoy the fellowship. There will be plenty of food for all. Future Potluck Dinners will be held the 3rd Sunday of each month. Coordinate with Angela Butler on what to bring, at harbormccofgalveston@gmail.com For additional information contact Harbor Metropolitan Community Church of Galveston, 504 Church St, Galveston, TX at (409) 789-9510, or email: harbormccofgalveston@gmail.com.

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OBITUARIES

STEVEN R. MARTIN, 35 known to many in Houston as "Sleepyboy" passed away on December 29, 2005 at his new home in Seattle with his parter Thad by his side. You were always up for fun, and always there for a good laugh. You will be missed. We love you. THilfiger, Ashke, Chaste, ZeroNT, Gumbeaux and Tenish.

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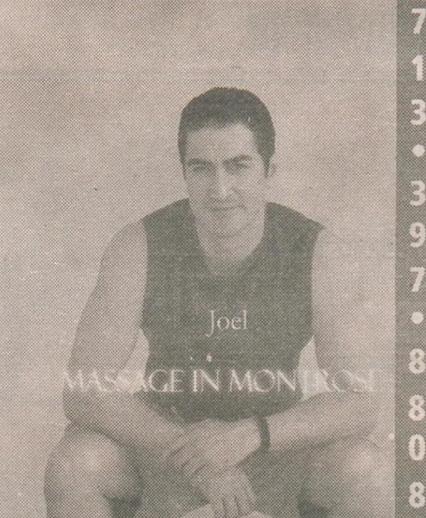
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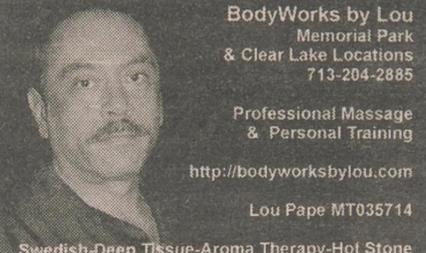
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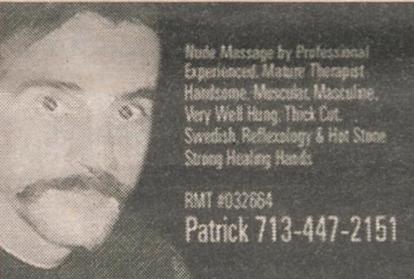
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Dykes To Watch Out For by Alison Bechdel

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In person: Bring completed order form with payment to the Houston Voice offices (M-F, 9-5 pm) 500 Lovett Blvd, Suite 200, Houston.

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bitch SESSION

You think I'm a slut. I think you're a prude. Who's having more fun?

IF YOU CALL SOMEONE EVERY DAY for a month and they never answer, maybe it's time to stop calling.

WHY DO PEOPLE ROUTINELY TRASH anyone with education, money or, heaven forbid, both? Anyone who was half as vitriolic toward people with beautiful faces or gym bodies would be declared a heretic. It's high time we asked ourselves why.

WHY IS IT THAT A PUBLICATION THAT claims to serve the LGBT community allows people to use this space to tear down transgender people?

Bitch Boy responds: It's called the First Amendment. Look it up, sometime.

WE NEED TO PROTEST VICTORIA'S Secret for never having large sizes. Don't they realize that we trannies would immediately improve their bottom line if they were to sell 1X, 2X and 3X sizes?

TO ALL YOU TRANNIES WHO GET MAD because I don't return your flirts: If I wanted a woman, I would be straight. I am a gay man who dates men, not female impersonators who don't look like women to begin with.

FOR THE LAST TIME: HAVING MY shirt off in the club is not an invitation for you to touch me. If I tell you twice to stop it in a nice way, don't complain if my third time makes you cry.

WHEN ARE YOU QUEENS GOING TO realize that in politics, we have no friends!

It's every man, woman and somewhere-in-between for itself! Following the right-wing blindly is stupid, but to hitch our star to self-serving bleeding heart hypocrites isn't very smart, either.

MY MOTHER USED TO TELL ME, "YOU don't have the sense to come in out of the rain." And my aunt always said, "You don't have the sense God gave an idiot." I hoped I could finally find acceptance coming out, but all I've found is the same crap.

WOULD YOU GUYS STOP FREAKING about having a threesome when my daughter's home? It's not like she can hear anything.

COMMON SENSE IS WHY I NEVER returned your calls, loser. You screamed at me and humiliated me in front of your friends. Now you think I am being unreasonable to not want anything to do with you?

THERE IS NOTHING EARTH SHATTER-ing or deathly important with your drama, issues and gossip. It's silly, just like you.

I'M SICK AND TIRED OF CUTESY BAR photographs where everybody's happy and getting along. Why don't you show it like it really is: like a pit of vipers.

I WAS FLATTERED AND THOUGHT YOU were hot until you started up with the attitude that it was an honor for me to date you. It really isn't.

BEING A QUEEN BEE AT THE CLUBS IS meaningless in the workplace. Your coworkers might actually respect you if you knocked off the name-dropping and stopped acting like a prima donna.

I DON'T NEED TO BE TOLD HOW TO act in public around your friends. I've always been pretty good with small children.

DON'T TRY TO TELL ME THAT BALD-ness is a sign of masculinity. In the animal kingdom, the alpha male is the lion with the thickest mane!

A NICE HOUSE, MERCEDES, YOUR OWN business, and you are still pure evil. I guess money really can't buy happiness.

YOU SAY IT WASN'T TACKY FOR YOU TO put "Please Bring Presents" on your birthday party invitations. Then why say

it was tacky for me to bring your fat ass a Jenny Craig membership as your gift?

YOU ARE SO OBSESSED WITH OTHER people's titles, income and status. Why don't you try accomplishing something on your own?

THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF GAY PEOP-le in bars: sheep, wolves and hyenas. The sheep are passive and the best ones are picked up by the wolves early on. The hyenas stick around and try to pick up the leftover sheep when all the wolves have left.

WHY DO SO MANY GUYS WHO DRESS badly think that they're cute? It's called "couture," so until you get some, no attitude please.

WE GUYS IN OUR 40S ARE TOO OLD FOR guys who like twinks and too young for guys into "older men," so give us a break!

WHY THE HELL DO SO MANY GAY MEN watch lesbian porn?

BEING GAY AND CATHOLIC IS HARD enough without watching you queens fight over who gets to do what during the service. Take it back to street where it belongs.

WHAT'S UP WITH GUYS PISSED OFF AT poz guys on disability? Do you really believe the myth that AIDS is cured? Those healthy hot guys in the drug ads aren't real!

I'VE BEEN OUT FOR 57 YEARS AND gone to gay bars all over the country, and I have yet to pay a cover. Anybody who pays a cover is stupid because the bars are all clones anyway.

TOO MANY GAYS THROW OUT ALL spirituality and end up filling the hole in their soul with meaningless sex and drugs. Tina, anyone? If you really want to piss them off, how about being happy and believing in what you want?

I HATE IT WHEN YOUR DRAMA FOL-lows you around. Can't you just leave it at home or at least deal with it?

I LIKE THAT YOU MADE EXCEPTIONS to your relationship rules, but since I

don't know what they are, why should I feel bad when I break them?

MY PARTNER SAYS HE LOVES ME, BUT the minute I leave town he's high on "Tina" and "X," and in the clubs!

EIGHTY-FIVE PERCENT OF MEN cheat? I'd be interested in knowing where you got that figure. Just because your boyfriend is a whore, doesn't mean we all are.

TO THE FREAK ADVISING US TO expect to be cheated on: It's evident you've been cheated on or cheated, and to expect it is a false sense of security. To the 15 percent of us who love and respect our boyfriends, hats off!

WHAT'S UP WITH THIS ANNOYING and freaky trend of meshing the names of hetero celebrity couples into what sounds as if their bodies have been fused together like a Frankenstein monster? First Bennifer and now Brangelina? Enough already. It's disturbing!

SOMETIMES I DON'T GO TO BARS looking for casual conversation. I only want action with hot men or maybe a date. So I only acknowledge the existence of strangers who I want to be with, rather than allow someone I'm not interested in to manipulate my time. That only makes guys I really want think I'm taken! So please stop taking offense and respect my feelings!

Bitch Boy responds: Would someone please cue the violins for this poor, sensitive soul?!

I HAVE GREAT RESPECT FOR STRAIGHT women who use a strap-on; after all, every time a straight man bottoms, a gay angel gets his wings!

"BITCH SESSION" IS FUNNY AND ALL but damn, what are you all doing with your lives? Find someone who makes you happy and cherish them, do something you're good at and blow everyone away, and give freely to those around you who are in need. Do that and life is amazing.

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



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