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FEBRUARY 14, 2003

Is PDA OK?

Gay men and lesbians weigh in on their comfort — or lack of comfort — with public displays of affection. Page 15



INSIDE



The Greater Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce hands out honors to allies including former state Rep. Debra Danburg.

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Leaders of the Montrose Softball League plan Recruitment Day for this weekend.

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Thai Cottage adds a welcoming atmosphere and overall tasty foods to the choices in the Greenway Plaza area.

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Gay activists ready to fight



David Peavy of Houston Gay & Lesbian Parents said it is imperative that gay parents and their supporters write to their state representatives to oppose H.B. 194, which would disqualify gay men, lesbians and bisexuals from serving as foster parents in Texas. (Photo by Penny Weaver)

As Rep. Garnet Coleman files non-discrimination bill, gay parents mobilize against anti-gay foster care measure

By PENNY WEAVER

Gay parents and their supporters gathered this week to organize the fight against an anti-gay foster care bill, while one Houston state representative filed a new gay-friendly anti-discrimination bill.

In November, State Rep. Robert Talton (R-Pasadena) filed House Bill 194, which would disqualify gay men, lesbians and bisexuals in Texas from serving as foster parents. Last week, the bill was referred to the Juvenile Justice & Family Issues Committee.

On Tuesday night in Houston, led by Houston Gay & Lesbian Parents (HGLP), about 30 parents and supporters gathered to rally opposition to H.B. 194. Among speakers at the session was Randall Ellis, executive director of

Houston-area battle over school Gay-Straight Alliance heats up. Page 4

Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas.

Talton has proposed an anti-gay foster care measure in past legislative sessions, Ellis noted.

"This is not a battle that is new to us," he said.

On Wednesday, State Rep. Garnet Coleman (D-Houston) filed a bill that would protect Texas students from discrimination based on characteristics including race, religion and sexual orientation. The proposal, H.B. 862, is titled "The Dignity for All Students Act."

"Every Texas student has a right to a public education," Coleman said in a press release. "When students are discriminated against in school and the school does nothing about it, we are failing them in a very fundamental way."

"When we say, 'Leave no child behind,' we do not footnote that statement with 'unless they are gay, lesbian or transgender,'" he added. "The Dignity for All Students Act will help set a tone in Texas that no type of discrimination will be tolerated in this state."

Please see **ACTIVISTS** on Page 4

New calls for 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' repeal

Policy's 10th anniversary triggers gay group protest

By RHONDA SMITH

WASHINGTON — Leaders at the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network recently marked the 10th anniversary of the U.S. military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy by unveiling a five-year strategic plan they said could help repeal "the last great wall of anti-gay discrimination in our country."

"Ten years, more than 7,500 discharges and a quarter billion dollars after implementation of this policy, we have a mountain of evidence showing the real damage of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,'" said C. Dixon Osburn, executive director of SLDN in Washington, D.C. "Harassment and discharges continue unabated and, just as important, talented Americans continue to be turned away from service to our country."

Steve E. Ralls, an SLDN spokesperson, said the plan will enact "more proactive in our outreach to members of Congress and the Bush administration."

A White House spokesperson recently told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution that President Bush "supports the policy and believes it is up to the nation's military leaders to determine the best way to implement that policy."

SLDN officials hired Christopher Neff in November as the policy associate in charge of coordinating the organization's outreach efforts on Capitol Hill.

Ralls said the strategic plan also puts into place a revitalized focus on grassroots organizing at a level SLDN has not done before.

SLDN is not alone in renewing calls for an end to the ban. The New York-based Human Rights Watch released a report in January titled "Uniform Discrimination: The 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' Policy of the U.S. Military."

The report cites the U.S. Army's discharge between October 2001 and September 2002 of 10 trained linguists based on their sexual orientation, seven of whom are proficient in Arabic.

Elaine Donnelly, president of the Michigan-based Center for Military Readiness, a public policy organization that supports barring gay men and women from the military, endorsed the discharges.

"The most important question to ask about

the homosexual students dismissed from the Defense Language Institute is why they were allowed to enter in the first place," Center officials said in a written statement. "For many months, they occupied spaces that could have been offered to eligible trainees who could have been learning Arabic, Korean, Farsi, and other languages valuable in the war on terrorism. Instead, DLI tolerated a situation that was an unconscionable waste of time and resources."

The Center for Military Readiness would like the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" regulations eliminated, Donnelly said, and a 1993 statute enforced that fully excludes gay people from the military.

The 54-page Human Rights Watch report notes that although the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy was intended to allow gay, lesbian and bisexual service members to remain in the military, discharges have steadily increased since its adoption by Congress in 1993.

Figures from the U.S. Department of Defense show that 8,529 men and women have been discharged under the policy since 1993. A spokesperson for the Department of Defense said this week that discharges related to violating

Please see **DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL** on Page 5



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around houston

Martinez steps down as director of Center for AIDS

L. Joel Martinez, director of the Center for AIDS: Hope and Remembrance Project, is stepping down this week after eight years of leading the agency he helped found in 1995, according to a press release from the center. Citing reasons of personal health, Martinez will step down as founding director effective Feb. 15 to focus his efforts on the medical and research advocacy component of his work at the center. In this capacity, he will act as a liaison and representative from the center to the HIV/AIDS research and medical communities and maintain the agency's ties to the many decision-making organizations that lead the fight against this epidemic. "It has been a privilege to act as director of this wonderful agency," Martinez said. "We have a terrific staff and board members of unequalled dedication. At this point in my career I would like the opportunity to concentrate my efforts on my true loves — basic science and medical advocacy." Margaret O'Donnell, chair of the center's board of directors, noted, "We're so grateful to Joel for creating such a critical piece in the ongoing fight against the epidemic. And we're honored to be entrusted with carrying this important work forward." Thomas Gegeny, editor at the center, has been appointed interim director through the end of June 2003. Gegeny said, "The Center for AIDS is at an important crossroads as the premier source of HIV treatment and research information in the region. I am happy to act in this capacity for the organization, which has become such an important part of my life's work." Gegeny joined the Center for AIDS in 2000, focusing his attention on the center's publications. He earned a master's of science degree in Biomedical Sciences from the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston in 1997. Before joining The CFA, Gegeny was employed as the Publications Specialist for the Houston Academy of Medicine-Texas Medical Center Library. He is the president of the Southwest Chapter of the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) and administrator of the Department of Publications for AMWA nationally. The Center for AIDS is a nonprofit, community-based organization that provides the latest treatment and research information to persons with HIV/AIDS and their caregivers with the goal of improving the healthcare of patients and the quality of their lives.

Gays divided on execution of man convicted in gay killing

The Houston chapter of the Log Cabin Republicans applauded Republican Gov. Rick Perry and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for the successful execution of Henry Dunn by lethal injection on Feb. 6, the group said in a press release. In 1993, Dunn and two accomplices abducted Nicholas West, 23, from a gay cruising area in a Tyler park. They drove him out to an unpopulated area, forced West to strip, robbed him, and shot him 15 times, killing him. Dunn and the other two men confessed that they kidnapped, robbed, and murdered West because he was gay. One of the other men is also on death row, while the other received a life sentence. Although Dunn argued ineffective assistance of counsel during his trial and appeal, he was given consideration and then turned down by the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in New Orleans, and finally the U.S. Supreme Court. Dunn was one of the prisoners who broke out of death row during Thanksgiving 1998, but was recaptured shortly thereafter, resulting in death row being moved to a more secure facility. Democrat and former executive director of LGRL, the Lesbian & Gay Rights Lobby of Texas, Diane Hardy-Garcia spoke out against Dunn's death sentence: "I just believe that you never show people that killing is wrong by killing them." LCR-H stated in its press release that its members believe in strong enforcement of criminal laws against perpetrators of hate crimes, including the death penalty where appropriate.

Activists prepare for annual AIDS Walk Houston next month

AIDS Foundation Houston presents its annual AIDS Walk Houston, in partnership with JPMorgan Chase, on Sunday, March 9. The 3.5-mile event is designed to raise awareness throughout Houston and benefit AFH and 13 local HIV/AIDS service organizations. Registration begins at 8 a.m. on March 9, followed by the kick-off at 10 a.m. at Sam Houston Park in downtown Houston. "The AIDS Walk Houston continues to be such an important event in Houston because it raises awareness throughout the community," said Kelly Adels Hess, vice president of development for AFH. "With the ongoing support of JPMorgan Chase as the title sponsor, AIDS Foundation Houston is anticipating the most successful walk event thus far." After 20 years, HIV/AIDS continues to be a staggering epidemic in our communities, according to the foundation. In the United States, nearly one million people currently live with HIV and approximately 40,000 new infections occur each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. In addition, the face of AIDS has changed, with African-American women comprising almost 30 percent of newly reported HIV infections in Houston/Harris County, AFH officials note.

PENNY WEAVER

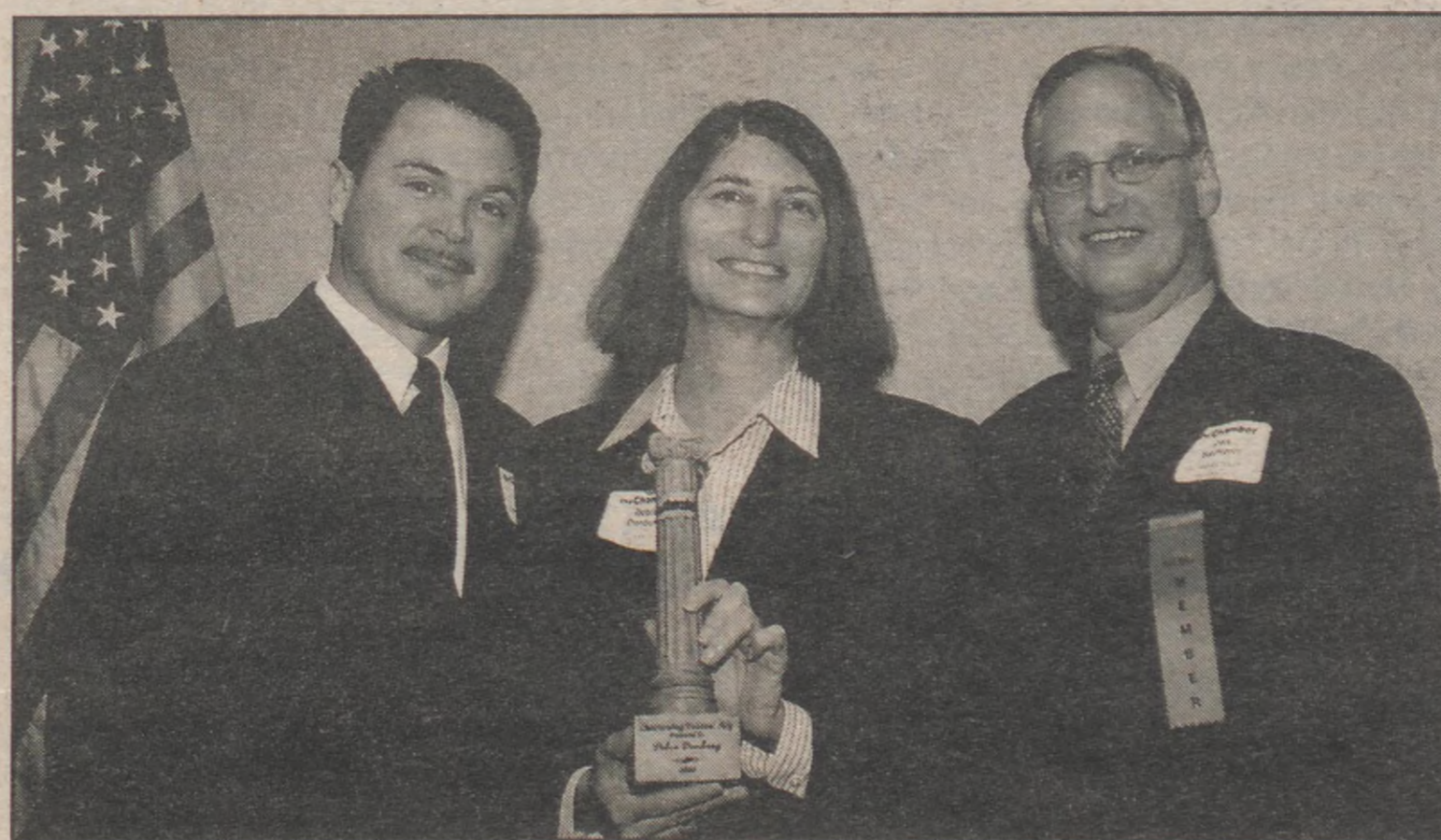
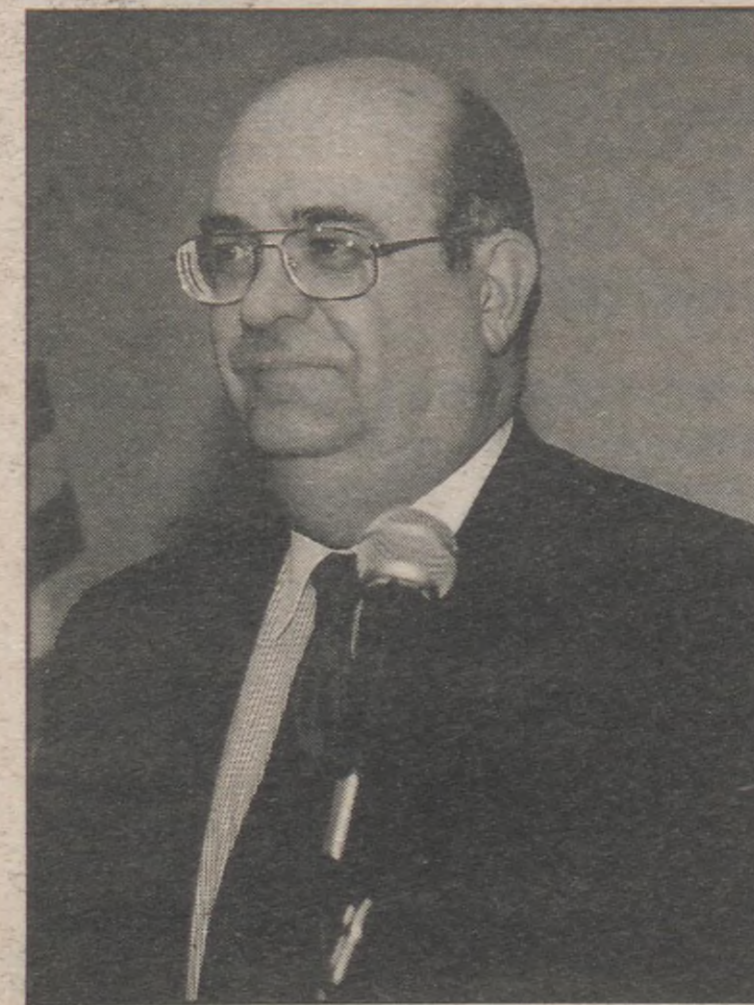
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local news

Honoring our allies

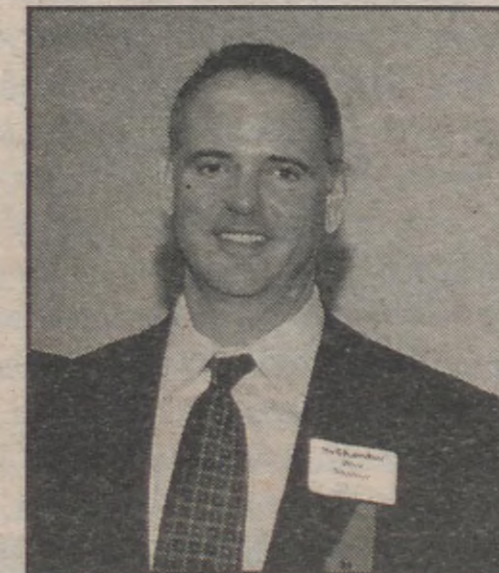
The Greater Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday held its 'Honoring Our Allies' awards luncheon. Chamber leaders handed out kudos to a number of people and businesses that assisted the group during 2002. Keynote speaker for the event was Steve Miller, former president and CEO of Shell Oil Co. Honorees included: Outstanding Corporate Ally, Steve Miller; Outstanding Political Ally, Debra Danburg; Outstanding Business Ally, Houston Voice; Outstanding Non-profit Ally, Gay Men's Chorus of Houston; Outstanding Business Support, James W. Doyle Investments; Rookie of the Year, Hillary Woest and Mattison Grey; President's Award, Rick Taylor; Coy Tow Leadership Award, Gary Baumann; Outstanding Member of the Year, Whit Sanders. Also honored, and receiving certificates of recognition, were all Chamber committee chairs and board members; Outstanding Corporate Support: Hewitt Associates, Hewlett Packard, JP Morgan Chase and Shell Chemical; and Outstanding Business Support: OutSmart Magazine and the Gay & Lesbian Yellow Pages. (Photos by Dalton DeHart)



Chamber Executive Director Coy Tow (left) and board President Gary Baumann presented former state Rep. Debra Danburg with the 'Outstanding Political Ally' award.



Above left: Steve Miller, retired president and CEO of Shell Oil Co., accepted the award for 'Outstanding Corporate Ally' from Tow and Baumann.



Chamber member Whit Sanders accepted the 'Outstanding Member of the Year' award from Baumann and Tow.



Baumann accepted the 'Coy Tow Leadership Award' from Tow and Chamber member Rick Taylor, who also was honored with the 'President's Award.'

local news

Fight over Gay-Straight Alliances heats up

Klein parents urge district to fight lawsuit; Bellaire GSA members offer support for Klein teens

By PENNY WEAVER

While parents and some local residents this week voiced opposition to a Gay-Straight Alliance at Klein High School, students at a nearby school urged officials to allow a GSA for Klein teens.

The American Civil Liberties Union on Jan. 22 filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Houston against northwest Houston's Klein Independent School District and two school officials, alleging that the district is biased because it has not approved an application for a Gay-Straight Alliance.

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

The lawsuit, filed in federal court, is against the district, Superintendent Jim Surratt and Principal Pat Huff. It alleges that the decision not to approve the club application led by student Marla Dukler "violates the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and the Equal Access Act because their prohibition of the club is based on the content and the viewpoint of the

speech of the clubs and its members."

On Monday, a few dozen people rallied against the proposed GSA at the KISD board meeting — the first since the lawsuit was filed, the Houston Chronicle reported Wednesday. Some protesters addressed trustees during the meeting's public comment period, but no one spoke in favor of the club, according to the newspaper.

"I am concerned about the proposal," Damon Shook, senior pastor at the Champion Forest Baptist Church, told the board, the Chronicle reported. "This type of organization neither fits with the rules and regulations of the district, nor with the educational mission of the Klein Independent School District.

"I personally stand with you to oppose this and see that it does not come to pass," Shook added.

Jeff Lohey, a parent of Klein students, echoed those sentiments, according to the Chronicle.

"I don't think this club has any place on our children's campuses," he said. "The decision to challenge the ACLU lawsuit is absolutely warranted."

Liz Johnson, assistant superintendent for community relations, told the newspaper that the school district does not intend to rule on the GSA application. Since the issue now is before the court, she told the Chronicle, the district's lawyers will handle the matter.

"These people have the right to protest anything they want," David George, presi-

dent of the ACLU's Houston chapter and Dukler's attorney, told the Chronicle. "But they don't have a right to stop the club because the law says it must be allowed."

George said he expects a hearing date in Dukler's case to be set for Feb. 21, the Chronicle reported.

Also this week, student members of Bellaire High School's GSA sent a letter to Klein officials in support of a GSA.

In the letter, the students state, in part: "The recent controversy surrounding students' attempts to establish a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) has made Klein High School an infamous target of various civil rights groups. As a principal, this is surely not the reputation you wish upon your school. However, given the controversial nature of homosexuality in your conservative community, your hesitation to allow the club is understandable. Unfortunately, in the heated debates around the decision, the facts and statistics, as well as the ultimate well being of your students, have been overlooked.

"According to the 1999 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (MYRBS), one of the most prominent surveys concerning this subject in the nation, nearly 6 percent of high school students identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (GLB)," the students state in the letter. "The 1999 MYRBS revealed that nearly one-third of all GLB students have attempted suicide within the last year; over

four times the rate of heterosexual students. They are also much more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs in order to escape the hatred they perceive.

"In addition to the damage inflicted on students' health, the entire high school suffers because of perceived intolerance. An intolerant school climate contributes to a diminished academic performance for the entire school.

"One common fear associated with GSAs is the promotion of 'sexual deviancy.' However, this fear is an inaccurate one. In our experience running and participating in the Bellaire High School GSA, sexual activity has neither been promoted nor significantly discussed.

"GSAs offer incredible experiences for the entire school. Our work has focused on ending intolerance, prejudice, and discrimination for all minorities, whether based on race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation," the letter states. "We have promoted work and community service, helping with various HIV/AIDS programs, among other projects. By providing a message of acceptance, we have helped to reverse the statistics that plague GLB students.

"While some citizens of your community have accused GSAs of being clubs about sex, our work has clearly shown that this accusation is far from the truth," the students said in the letter. "For the safety and health of all Klein students, the Bellaire High School GSA urges you to end your hesitation and allow a GSA in your school."

Coleman proposal is second pro-gay TX bill

ACTIVISTS, continued from Page 1

Gay parents, supporters mobilize

To fight Talton's H.B. 194, gay parents and their supporters have started the Web site www.StopHB194.org. The site offers advice for opponents of the bill to write to their state representatives, allows them to follow progress of the bill, and gives arguments against the measure.

Now that the bill has been referred to committee, the next step is for the chair of that panel to set a hearing date, Ellis noted. The public will have at least a five-day notice prior to the hearing, at which citizens may testify either in favor of or against the measure.

Chair of that committee is Harold V. Dutton Jr. of Houston, a Democrat.

Another anti-gay bill filed for the current legislative session, H.B. 38, which is a Texas Defense of Marriage Act, was referred on Jan. 30 to the State Affairs Committee. Chair of that panel is Rep. Kenny Marchant of Carrollton, a Republican.

Dozens of legislators have signed onto the DOMA proposal, H.B. 38, which was filed by Rep. Warren Chisum (R-Pampa). The measure would prohibit the state from recognizing same-sex marriages or civil unions.

Ellis said it might be an advantage to gays that H.B. 194 was not also referred to State Affairs.

"Juvenile Justice & Family Issues is comprised of more legislators that are sympathetic and understanding about the thoughts and concerns of the GLBT community," he said.

To date, no other lawmakers have signed on as co-authors or joint authors to Talton's

foster care bill.

Gay activists argue that the anti-gay foster care bill is detrimental to children in Texas. They say the state already has a shortage of foster parents without eliminating qualified gay, lesbian or bisexual Texans from taking in foster children.

"This is bad No. 1 for child welfare," Ellis said. "We have a foster care system that is overburdened and doesn't have enough money as it is. There are children already slipping through the cracks.

"If we reduce the pool of foster parents further, it's only going to hurt the children," he added.

Ellis also pointed out that the bill, if made law, would cost the state money within a budget already projected to have a shortfall of nearly \$10 billion.

"You're looking at extra money for the state to take those children back into care. You're looking at administrative costs," Ellis said. "You're looking at investigation costs."

H.B. 194 requires state officials to ask foster parent applicants or foster parents whose performances are being evaluated "whether the applicant or foster parent is homosexual or bisexual."

If the person answers "yes," the bill would prohibit that person from being a foster parent or continuing as a foster parent.

But the bill also states that applicants or foster parents who say they are not gay should be investigated to determine if they are indeed heterosexual.

"Notwithstanding a negative answer to the inquiry required... if the department determines after a reasonable investigation that an applicant

who is applying to serve as a foster parent or a foster parent whose performance is being evaluated is homosexual or bisexual," then that person also is prohibited from becoming or continuing as a foster parent, the text of the measure states.

"That's one of the most scary things about this bill," Ellis said. "It talks about conducting investigations. It authorizes child protective services to conduct investigations [into potential foster parents' private lives].

"That should make the hair on the back of your neck stand up," he told gay parents Tuesday.

Another major concern of gay activists regarding the foster care bill is that it might lead to an attempt to ban on adoption by gays in Texas.

"We believe that...they could push this bill through committee and, on the House floor, slap adoption on it," Ellis said. He urged the parents present at the meeting to encourage all gay Texans to mobilize against H.B. 194.

"[Some gays say] 'It doesn't affect me; I'm not going to have children,' and that complacency is a battle that our community fights on many levels," he added.

Pro-gay bills watched

Coleman's Dignity for All Students Act, H.B. 862, is the second pro-gay measure filed during this 78th session of the Texas Legislature.

On Jan. 27, State Rep. Jessica Farrar (D-Houston) filed H.B. 574, which would prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. That measure was referred to the Business & Industry Committee of the House on Tuesday.

Farrar's District 148 includes the heavily gay Houston Heights and Near Northside neighborhoods north and northwest of downtown Houston.

"This is an extremely important issue," Farrar said. "Employment discrimination strikes at a fundamental American value: the right of each individual to do his or her job and contribute to society.

"Gay, lesbian and transgender people face pervasive discrimination across the state of Texas," she added.

No federal law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. According to the LGRL, it is legal to fire someone based on their sexual orientation in 37 states, including Texas. In 48 states, it is legal to do so based on gender identity.

Farrar's bill would extend employment discrimination protection currently provided based on race, religion, gender, national origin, age and disability to sexual orientation and gender identity.

MORE INFO

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national news

Activists unveil five-year plan to keep gays in military

DONT ASK, DONT TELL, continued from Page 1

"Don't Ask, Don't Tell" have remained steady for more than four years, "at just six tenths of 1 percent of all discharges" from 1998 to 2001.

SLDN officials said in 2001, a record 1,256 military members were dismissed, which was almost double the homosexual separation rate of 730 in 1992, before "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was enacted.

Aaron Belkin, a political science professor and director of the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military, a think tank at the University of California, Santa Barbara, said "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" will be difficult to overturn in the current political and legal climate. (Osburn of SLDN is a member of the center's board of advisers.)

Ralls at SLDN said officials there predict it would take 10 years to get the policy repealed.

"Our plan is to put in place the grassroots program and outreach and education programs that will be necessary for Congress to take another look at the policy," he said.

A major obstacle, Belkin said, is that military leaders do not want the policy changed. He also noted that courts and members of Congress have expressed reluctance to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

"We don't know how long it will take to get it overturned because the ban is locked in place by the courts, which have not signaled any willingness to do anything about the policy," Belkin said.

"The Republicans always appear to be



C. Dixon Osburn, executive director of the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, said the U.S. military 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy forces talented Americans away from service.

unfair to gay people when they talk about this issue," he said, "and Democrats look weak on defense when they bring it up."

As a result, Belkin said, neither political party is pushing to have the policy repealed.

But Belkin said proponents of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" recently appeared to be on the defensive about the policy for the first time.

"Because of the story about the linguists, the public now understands in a much more profound way how the ban is hurting the military," he said.

The discharge of the linguists prompted

members of Congress and the media to complain late last year that the Army was expelling qualified service members at a time when it faces a severe shortage, especially of Arab linguists, as the nation prepares for possible military action in the Middle East.

Donnelly at the Center for Military Readiness disagreed.

"Gay activists and their allies in the media are trying to wrap their radical agenda in the flag of 'national security' and 'military necessity.' This should fool no one who supports the armed forces," she said in a written statement. "The Department of Defense has a critical need for expert linguists and translators who are eligible to serve, not men or women who are not. In the interests of national security, social engineering must be brought to an end."

The Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military is working with the Liberty Education Forum, a gay-friendly organization, on a study that evaluates "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and addresses whether the policy has enhanced or undermined the U.S. military in the past decade. It is scheduled to be available next month, Belkin said, noting that the report's authors conclude that the policy has hurt the military in five ways.

The report states that the U.S. armed forces have been hurt by the policy because of a loss of knowledgeable and talented service members, the ban's financial costs, and the wedge it has caused between the public and the military. Belkin said this wedge exists because studies

show most of the public supports lifting the ban.

In addition, the study concludes that the ban undermines the military because it contributes to violence against women and creates a climate of fear in the workplace. Officials at SLDN and the Human Rights Watch said, because of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," female service members are subjected to "lesbian-baiting" in the military, which involves their male counterparts labeling them as lesbians if they rebuff their sexual advances or do not act "feminine" enough.

The Human Rights Watch report states that "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" has had a much greater adverse impact on women than men. In 2001, women comprised about 14 percent of the armed forces but 30 percent of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" discharges, it states, based on information provided by SLDN. The report also states that the overall discharge rate of women under the policy has been increasing.

In the past decade, 24 countries, including the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada and Israel have eliminated restrictions on gays serving in the military without impairing their armed forces' effectiveness, the Human Rights Watch report states.

The SLDN's five-year strategic plan includes six goals, the first of which is to lift the ban and allow gay military members to serve open and honestly. Other goals include providing free legal services to military members harmed by the policy and protecting men and women from harassment based on perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

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national news

Partially effective AIDS vaccine raises new concerns

AIDSVAX results due next month, stirring fears of complacency

By RHONDA SMITH

Leaders of AIDS service organizations nationwide said positive results next month of a large-scale study by a company working to develop the first vaccine to prevent HIV transmission could pose major challenges for the populations they serve.

One reason for the anticipated challenges are recent news reports that the U.S. Food & Drug Administration might be willing to approve the vaccine, called AIDSVAX, even if it reduces the HIV infection rate only about 30 percent of the time. An FDA spokesperson told the Blade Wednesday that the agency might be willing to grant approval if it could be demonstrated that the vaccine effectively reduces the HIV infection rate "in the range of 50 percent" of the time.

A spokesperson for VaxGen said the California-based company that manufactures AIDSVAX would need "an observed efficacy rate" of 45 percent to 67 percent to gain FDA approval of the vaccine.

"Even a vaccine which only protects half of the people from getting HIV infection could save thousands, if not millions, of lives," said Dan Cohen, associate medical research director at Fenway Community Health in Boston. "However, if people who are at risk for HIV increase their risky behavior because they're no longer concerned and don't practice safe sex anymore, we could see a paradoxical increase in the number of new cases of HIV."

Cohen said he would not object to an HIV vaccine gaining FDA approval if it were only 50 percent effective as long as systems were in place that required the vaccine to be administered along with risk-reduction counseling that addressed sexual behavior.

Fenway is one of 60 sites VaxGen is using to gather information about participants enrolled in the Phase III clinical trial of AIDSVAX. There are 300 women and 5,100 men who have sex with men from the United States, Canada, the Netherlands, and Puerto Rico enrolled in the study. VaxGen officials plan to announce the study's results before the end of March.

Two products on FDA's 'fast track'

In December, VaxGen announced that the FDA designated two AIDSVAX candidates as "fast track products" for the prevention of HIV infection. This speeds up regulatory review of AIDSVAX by as much as six months and could mean that if it gains FDA approval, the vaccine might be



Gregg Gonsalves, director of treatment and prevention advocacy at the Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York City, worries that an AIDS vaccine might lead people to feel like they have a license to engage in riskier sexual behavior. (File photo by Clint Steib)

available in early 2005 instead of the middle of that year.

VaxGen is working to complete a similar study of AIDSVAX in Thailand and plans to unveil those results later this year. VaxGen officials also are working to develop a vaccine that targets an HIV strain frequently found in South Africa, India and China.

Various advocates for people with HIV and AIDS applauded the idea that a vaccine that blocks the transmission of HIV might be available in the next few years, though some predicted that this is unlikely.

"I don't put a lot of hope in the VaxGen product, but would be terribly glad and surprised if it did show a 30 percent or 50 percent efficacy," said Gregg Gonsalves, director of treatment and prevention advocacy at the Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York City. "We're in the vaccine-research phase for the long haul and must not be disappointed if the results are not what we would like. There will likely be many, many more Phase III trials before we find an effective vaccine."

Like Cohen, Gonsalves and other AIDS service providers across the country said a central concern is that an HIV vaccine might lead people to incorrectly assume that HIV is no longer a threat.

"People may feel like they have the license to engage in riskier behavior," he said.

Cornelius Baker, executive director of Whitman-Walker Clinic, the largest AIDS service organization in metropolitan Washington, D.C., agreed.

"Even with anti-retroviral therapy, we're seeing complacency and people engaging in riskier sexual behavior

because of the widely held perception that the treatment we currently have is an answer to the HIV epidemic," he said. "But we are a long way from a cure."

Baker said the FDA should establish a level of effectiveness for AIDSVAX that they believe is in the public's best interest.

"They should weigh this intervention by that standard," he said. "And in the meantime, what we should remind ourselves is that for people who are HIV-negative, the best protection is a condom. We should not have any intervention that is less effective than that."

David Pieribone, associate director of education at AIDS Project Los Angeles, said a 50 percent efficacy rate for AIDSVAX could possibly slow down the spread of HIV, especially in places like Africa, where large segments of people in certain countries are HIV-positive or have AIDS.

"The problem is, if the vaccine is only 50 percent efficacious we will be looking at a possibly negative effect from people who are vaccinated and then go engage in risky [sexual] behavior," he said. "That could actually increase the infection rate and make the vaccine pretty much ineffective."

Ethical concerns raised

Terje Anderson, executive director of the National Association of People with AIDS, said he has ethical concerns about HIV vaccines.

"Mathematical calculations can show that a vaccine that is 20 percent, 30 percent or 40 percent effective will have a significant impact on the transmission of new infections," he said. "Then the ques-

tion becomes, 'If it does not provide that much protection for an individual, is it ethical to put it out there and if we do, what do we tell people and communities about it?'"

Anderson said his central concerns involve how AIDS service organizations conduct HIV prevention in a vaccine era, and whether they make sure the vaccine is available and affordable to everyone who needs it.

Paul Kawata, executive director of the National Minority AIDS Council in Washington, D.C., said he is excited about the possibility of a new vaccine to block HIV transmission.

"But anything that does not stop the spread of HIV within our communities in an effective way, we have real concerns about" he said. "And would need to see the data to make a final determination about whether we would support its use within our community."

George Bellinger Jr., an associate executive director at AIDS Action in Washington, D.C., which represents 185 AIDS service organizations nationwide, echoed Kawata.

"The reality is, we have nothing out there and we need to start someplace," he said of AIDSVAX. "But we want something out there that's effective for several communities and not just for one type of population."

Bellinger said AIDS Action leaders would like to make sure there is better recruitment and retention of various people in vaccine trials "and not just a focus on gay men or a small population of women."

"We want the vaccine to be the best fit for as many populations as possible," he said.

Reg Norton, a spokesperson for the San Francisco AIDS Foundation, said that organization would not comment on AIDSVAX until VaxGen releases its results next month.

Philippe Chilliade, medical director at Whitman-Walker Clinic, said if AIDSVAX is only effective for a certain percentage of the population, AIDS service organizations would have to provide "very strong risk-reduction services" for individuals who are inoculated with the vaccine.

"A combination of the vaccine plus a risk-reduction approach would have a major impact on the epidemic," he said. "But just vaccinating alone could really be very dangerous without combining that with behavioral modification."

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around the nation

Minn. legislature weighs gay rights law repeal



Minnesota Gov. **Tim Pawlenty**, a Republican, said he does not support an effort to strip the state's human rights law of its gay protections. (Photo by Jim Mone/AP)

ST. PAUL, Minn. — A bill to remove sexual orientation from Minnesota's human rights law was introduced Feb. 6 in the state House of Representatives, according to the Associated Press. Supporters of the bill argued that the law discriminates against people who consider homosexuality a violation of God's law. "I know a lady who was fired from her job because she disagreed with homosexual activities in her school," said Rep. Arlon Lindner (R-Corcoran), the bill's chief author. But the legislation drew a harsh response from the Senate's only openly gay member, Sen. Scott Dibble (DFL-Minneapolis). "Extremists in the Republican Party are overplaying their hand," he said. Minnesota's new Republican governor, Tim Pawlenty, said he would not support Lindner's legislation. "He has not seen the bill, but he would not wish to repeal such a law," said Pawlenty spokeswoman Leslie Kupchella. "He's about fairness for all Minnesotans." As a freshman legislator, Pawlenty voted in 1993 in favor of the gay-inclusive measure. But during his campaign last year, he told Republican activists that he regretted that vote.

Cincinnati adds gays to hate crimes law

CINCINNATI — An expanded hate crimes law passed by the Cincinnati City Council on Feb. 5 may result in a lawsuit by the legislation's opponents, the Associated Press reported. The law allows additional penalties for misdemeanor crimes against a person based on sexual orientation. Opponents said they would challenge the measure because a 1993 charter amendment, approved by voters, forbids enactment or enforcement of laws based on sexual orientation. But Cincinnati's city law department has said the expanded hate crimes law would not violate the charter because the ordinance would not create a legal basis for any claim against the city. "It is an issue of tolerance ... and, ultimately, it's about being proud of our city," said Council member John Cranley, who introduced the amendment. The expanded hate crimes law also includes crimes based on gender, age or physical or mental disability. The law already covered race, color, religion and national origin.

Ala. Supreme Court ends radio defamation lawsuit

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — The Alabama Supreme Court ruled Feb. 7 in favor of Birmingham sports talk radio personality Paul Finebaum in a defamation lawsuit filed against him by a rival sportscaster, the Associated Press reported. The justices, in an 8-0 ruling, reversed a trial judge's decision not to grant Finebaum's request for an order dismissing the suit filed by Matt Coulter over on-air comments made by Finebaum on Dec. 15, 1998. Describing a segment on Coulter's weekly show "Tide Talk," Finebaum said Coulter and an unnamed guest "slobbered over each other." "I really thought they were going to start performing oral sex on one another," said Finebaum, who hosts a syndicated talk show on WERC. The court found that Coulter didn't prove that Finebaum intentionally implied that he was gay or that the statements were made with "actual malice."

Gay attorney selected to argue Texas sodomy case

WASHINGTON — The Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund recently selected gay attorney Paul M. Smith to argue a Texas sodomy case before the U.S. Supreme Court. The high court has set oral arguments for March 26 in the case of John Geddes Lawrence and Tyron Garner v. State of Texas. A decision is expected in the summer. "The court knows who I am and is familiar with seeing me," Smith said. "The view was that if we could have a person who makes the argument who has that kind of relationship with the court, that's an added benefit." Smith, 47, has been a partner in Jenner & Block's Washington office since 1994. He co-chairs the company's appellate and Supreme Court practice. Lawyers for Garner and Lawrence — arrested in Houston in 1998 after sheriff's deputies discovered them having anal sex in a private residence — argue that the Texas sodomy law violates the men's guarantee of equal protection and fundamental liberties safeguarded by the Fourteenth Amendment.

Activists want vote on Fla. school policy

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — Activists want the Palm Beach County school board to schedule a vote on a measure that would ban harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation, the South Florida Sun-Sentinel reported. "Why are you holding these policies hostage when a majority of school board members have already voted in favor of protecting gay and lesbian students from harassment and discrimination?" attorney Rand Hoch wrote to Superintendent Art Johnson. The school board has not scheduled a final vote for the policy, which received preliminary approval at board meetings last year. Joe Orr, chief academic officer for the school system, said last week the delay was not intentional and he would ask for an immediate vote to be scheduled.

From staff and wire reports

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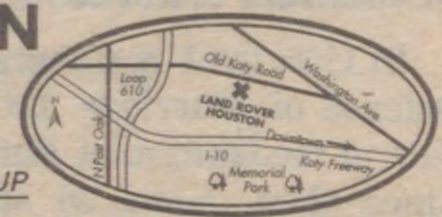
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national news

Belgium becomes second country to let gays marry

European Parliament also votes to recognize gay partners; U.S. activists struggle for support

By LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN

American activists celebrated National Freedom to Marry Day Feb. 12 faced with the challenging reality that the United States "is lagging behind" other Western countries when it comes to recognizing same sex relationships.

On Jan. 30, Belgium became the second country in the world — following the Netherlands — to offer full marriage rights to gay couples, when the Belgian parliament's House of Representatives voted 91-22 in favor of a measure already approved by the Senate.

Less than two weeks later, the European Parliament — the democratically-elected legislative body for the 15-country European Union — voted Feb. 11 in favor of recognizing gay registered partnerships, civil solidarity pacts and marriages across national borders.

"Three years ago, there was no country in the world where gay people could marry, and now there are two, with Belgium joining the Netherlands — plus a whole range of other countries on several continents moving in direction of marriage," said Evan Wolfson, executive director of the Freedom to Marry Collaborative, which lobbies for gay marriage rights in the U.S.

"It's clear that we are riding a wave here, and it is ours to seize," Wolfson said. "But the fact is, the United States is lagging behind."

Momentum towards marriage

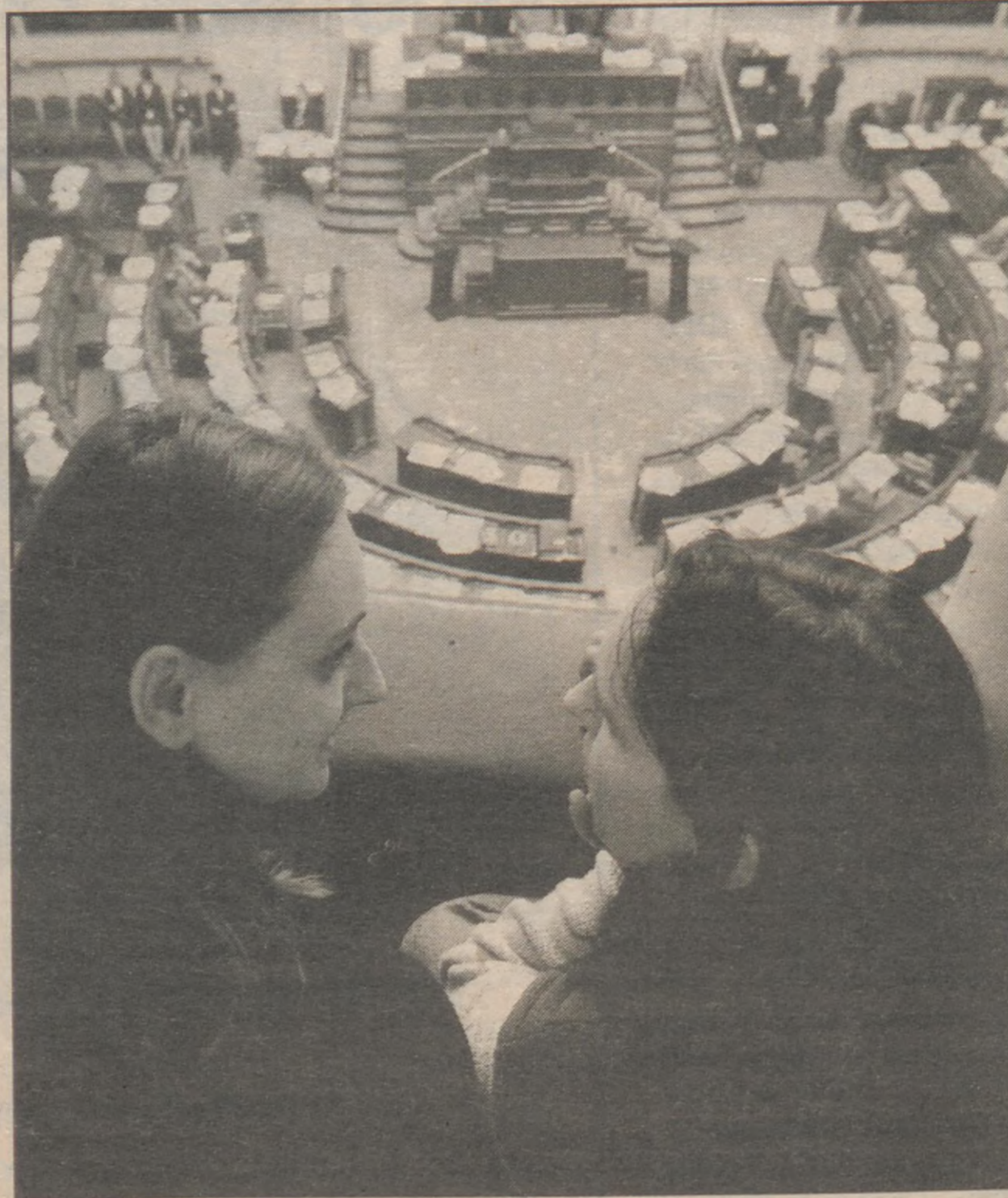
In 1996, the U.S. Congress approved the Defense of Marriage Act, which banned federal recognition of same-sex marriage. Since then, some 36 states, including Georgia, approved their own bans on same-sex marriage.

In 2000, Vermont became the only U.S. state to offer gay couples all of the same state-level rights as heterosexual spouses through the separate legal status of "civil unions." But the law confers no federal rights and hasn't been recognized by any other state.

The European Parliament, meanwhile, took steps this week to ensure that gay couples won't lose their legal status if they travel from country to country within the European Union.

In addition to Belgium and the Netherlands allowing gays to marry, at least six other European countries grant national recognition to same-sex partners through separate legal statuses like registered partnerships or France's "civil solidarity pacts."

To help avoid problems when same-sex



Lesbian couple Marina Frans and Ingrid Geldof joined dozens of other gay Belgians who turned out Jan. 30 to watch the country's federal parliament approve same-sex marriages. (Photo by Geert Vanden Wijngaert/AP)

couples who have legal status in their home nation travel to other European Union countries, the European Parliament voted Tuesday in favor of "broadening the concept of family and the introduction of safeguards against the loss of existing residence rights," according to the Daily Notebook, an official publication of EP actions.

The legislation, approved by a vote of 269-225, with 46 abstentions, allows European Union citizens and their "family members" to stay for six months in any member country, and longer if they have financial resources to support themselves. After four years of legal residence, the citizens and their families will be granted permanent residence rights.

Parliament members "include the spouse of the same sex, the registered partner and the unmarried partner, irrespective of sex, in that definition of a family member, if the host and/or home country treat those couples in the same manner as married couples," the Daily Notebook reported.

The EP gave members until July 1, 2004, to comply with the directive, which basically requires that legal recognition of gay couples be granted across borders within the European Union.

"This, of course, is another step toward full marriage equality in [the United State's] largest trading partner and closest set of allies," Wolfson said.

Belgium's 'strong symbol'

The European Parliament vote came just days after Belgium's parliament voted to allow gays to marry under the same

laws as heterosexual couples.

"It means the end of a discrimination between heterosexual and homosexual people," Kristien Grauwels, the Green Party legislator who sponsored the measure, told Southern Voice. "It is a strong symbol that indicates that the authorities are convicted that homosexual and heterosexual relationships have the same value."

Although Belgium already offered registered partnerships to same-sex couples, gay activists began pressing for full marriage rights six years ago, according to Anke Hintjens, spokesperson for Halebifederatie, Belgium's federation of gay groups.

"We think it is important that it is not a separate institution because it makes it more clear that it's an issue of equal rights," Hintjens said. "We argued that [since] the aim of marriage [is] the celebration of a long lasting love-relationship, the gender of the partners was not relevant, and neither was another name for the institution."

Belgium's new law will take effect four months after it is published in the national newspaper. Activists expect the first marriages to take place in July or August, Hintjens said.

Unlike the Netherlands, which opened marriage to gays in 2001, the legislation passed in Belgium did not automatically grant gay couples the right to jointly adopt children.

But because gay individuals are not prohibited from adopting in Belgium, both Grauwels and Hintjens said they are optimistic that the Belgian Parliament will

eventually approve expanding the law to gay couples.

"We believe that the politicians will be very soon obliged to change the law, because now you can adopt as a single person but not as a couple, which is not in the interest of the child," Hintjens said.

In order to marry in Belgium, one member of the gay couple must be a resident of the country. The other member of the couple must be from Belgium or another country that allows gays to marry — in other words, at this point, "only someone of the Netherlands," Grauwels said.

U.S. battles loom

Grauwels, the Belgian legislator, said she hopes activists in other countries, like the United States, will be inspired by the success in Belgium to push for marriage rights in their own nations.

Practical issues that will arise when married gay couples from Belgium or the Netherlands try to immigrate to the United States will also add fuel to the fight here, according to Wolfson, a longtime leader in the U.S. marriage battle.

"I'm not saying [other countries] alone will drag the U.S. across the threshold of marriage, but they certainly add to the momentum we are building here," he said.

Vermont adopted its "civil unions" law after the state's Supreme Court ruled that under the state constitution, gay couples are entitled to the same benefits and protections as their married heterosexual counterparts.

Lawsuits seeking legal rights for gay couples are now pending before state courts in Massachusetts, New Jersey and Indiana.

But the fight for marriage for American gays won't be won if the battles are limited to those states, Wolfson said.

"For us to win the freedom to marry, we have to engage in public education and organizing alongside legal and legislative work," he said. "While we pursue litigation in well-chosen places, individuals across the country need to reach out to non-gay people, person-to-person, to lay the groundwork. That's the nuts-and-bolts of social change."

While full marriage rights may seem a far-off dream for many in the United States, "before 1989, not a single country in the world recognized same-sex relationships," Wolfson said.

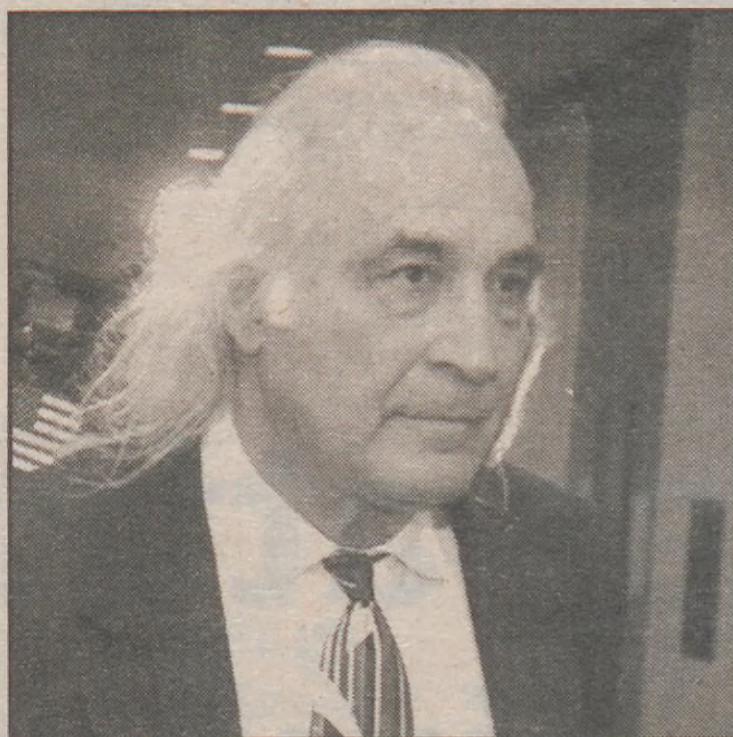
"Beginning then, countries began to create one form of another of 'gay marriage,' and within 14 years, we have two countries already allowing gays to marry — not separate, not different, just marriage."

"This is fast in terms of historical progress, even though it seems exquisitely slow to the couples who are forced to wait for the recognition they deserve."

police beat

Alleged killer in Calif. trans case gets famed counsel

NEWARK, Calif. — J. Tony Serra, one of the country's most well-known defense attorneys, agreed to represent a man accused of killing transgendered teen Gwen Araujo, according to the Associated Press. Serra, whose list of clients included Hells Angels and Black Panthers, is representing Jason Cazares, one of four men charged in the October 2002 killing after they discovered Araujo was a biological male. Serra, who often works for free, refused to say if he is being paid. "Publicity in this case is adverse to us," Serra said. On Feb. 7, a judge approved bail for Michael William Magidson, a second person charged in the case. Cazares, Magidson, Jaron Chase Nabors, 19, and Jose Antonio Merel, 23, are all charged in the incident. Cazares, Nabors and Merel are in jail awaiting the conclusion of a preliminary hearing that resumes Feb. 18.



Defense attorney J. Tony Serra took the case of one of four men accused in the killing of transgendered teen Gwen Araujo. (Photo by José Luis Villegas/AP)

Convicted killer executed in Texas gay bashing case

HUNTSVILLE, Texas — An apologetic Henry Dunn Jr. was executed Feb. 6 for participating in the fatal shooting of a man who was abducted and targeted for robbery because he was gay, according to the Associated Press. "I hope you can find it in your heart to find forgiveness and strength, to move on and find peace," Dunn, 28, said to relatives of Nicholas West, kidnapped and shot 15 times in November 1993. Dunn said a companion, also sent to death row, was primarily to blame for the murder. "I don't hate homosexuals," Dunn said. Donald Aldrich, 38, also received a death sentence for his role in the murder. David Ray McMillan received a life prison term. The U.S. Supreme Court refused Feb. 6 to review the case and halt the execution.

Ariz. man sentenced to life in beating, dragging death

PHOENIX — A man convicted of beating and dragging to death a 54-year-old man because the victim was gay was sentenced Jan. 27 to life in prison, according to the Associated Press. Aaron Ray James Miguel, 26, was convicted of second-degree murder in October by a jury that found the crime was motivated by the sexual orientation of Justin "Pete" Enos. During the trial, prosecutors said Miguel lured Enos out of a party in October 2000 before beating him and dragging him behind a horse. "I apologize to my family and ... friends and loved ones for putting them through this struggle," Miguel said during sentencing. Dorian Brown pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in the same case and will be sentenced March 14. Enos was hit with a shovel 10 times before he was buried with his genitals exposed.

Teen killer in Fla. testifies he had sex with alleged molester

PENSACOLA, Fla. — Confessed teenage killer Alex King testified Feb. 11 that a convicted child molester had oral sex with him about 10 times in the months before he and his brother murdered their sleep-

ing father with a baseball bat, according to the Associated Press. King, now 13, said he first had sex with Ricky Chavis, 41, at the family friend's Pensacola home in the summer of 2001. "He said things like, 'We were gay — no one would understand,'" King said of Chavis. "We took off our clothes, went over to the couch and had oral sex," King testified at Chavis' trial on charges of kidnapping and molesting the boy. Chavis faces a possible life sentence if convicted. Under cross-examination, King was unable to recall the size of Chavis' sex organ. King also recalled how he and his brother, Derek, now 14, carried out a plot to kill their father, Terry King, 40, in November 2001. The boys ran away from home 10 days before the killing and stayed at Chavis' house, Alex said. He said that he and Chavis also had sex during that time. Alex is serving seven years and Derek is serving eight years in separate juvenile facilities for the killing. The cases have drawn national attention, including a pledge from lesbian entertainer Rosie O'Donnell, who said she would provide legal representation to Derek and Alex.

Suspect sketches garner response in South Africa killings

CAPE TOWN, South Africa — Police received "hundreds" of calls after the release of composite sketches of two men wanted in connection with gay massage parlor murders here last month, chief investigator Mike Barkhuizen told the Cape Times. During the early hours of Jan. 20, 10 men were tied up with duct tape and their throats slit before they were shot in the head. One survived. No arrests have been made, but the sketches are aiding the investigation, Barkhuizen said. Gays rallied immediately in response to the killings, and the Gay & Lesbian Equality Project of South Africa's director Evert Knoesen said his group met police to discuss issues surrounding the incident. "It was apparent that the police are making every effort to investigate and resolve this matter as quickly as possible," Knoesen said.

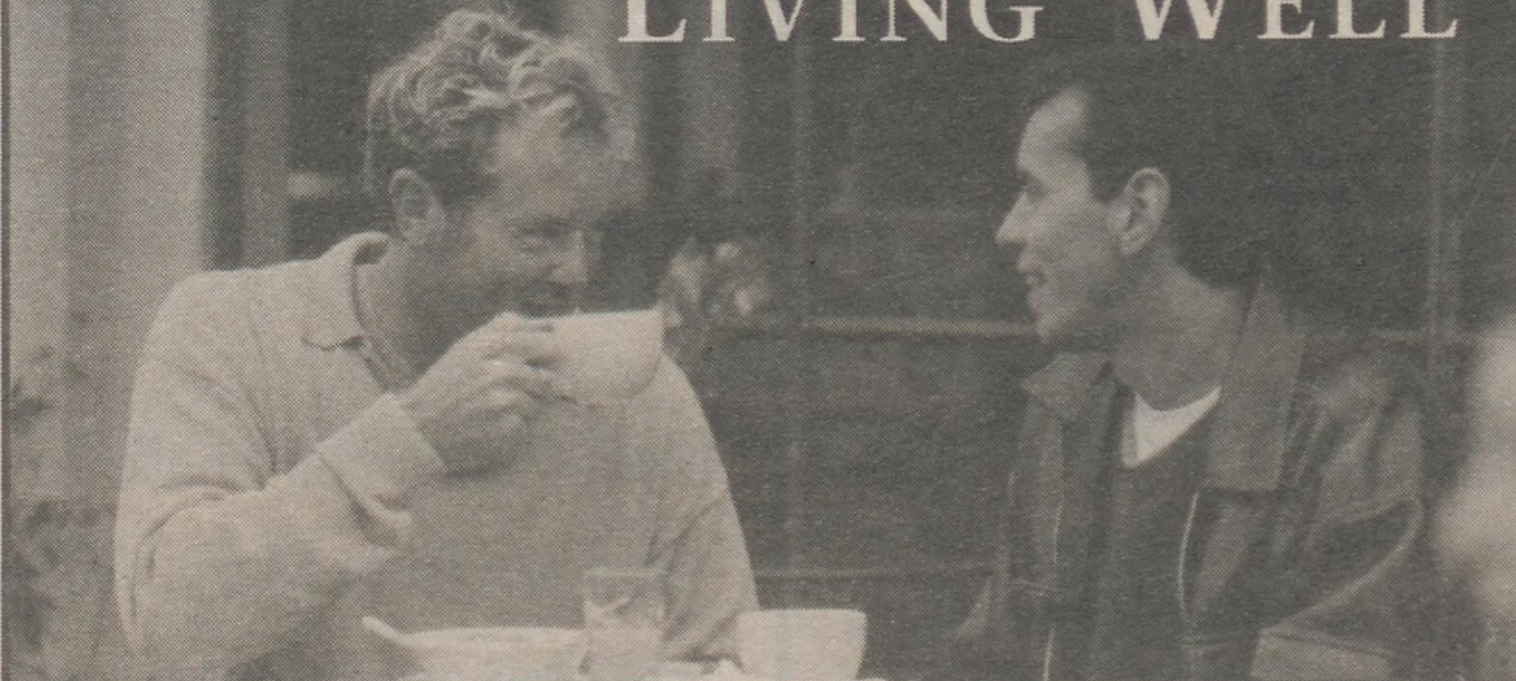
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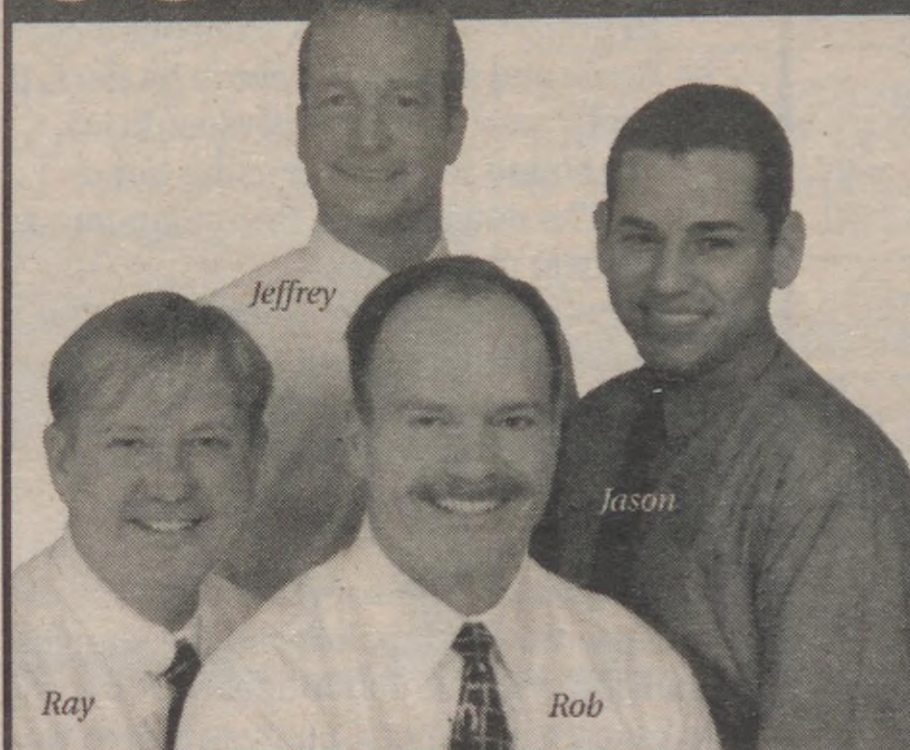
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Issue 1164

Forum

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viewpoint

Opposites attract if you're similar

Gay couples don't have to worry about how 'Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus.' It's 'Men are from Mars and You're a Tramp.'

By MARC ACITO

IT'S INEVITABLE. AS SOON AS someone finds out my partner and I have been together 16 years, they always say the same thing: "Wow! How do you do it?"

I hope they're expressing admiration for us instead of simply wondering how we could possibly put up with one another for so long.

Over the years I've come up with a number of pithy responses. "We go out dancing twice a week," I'll say. "I go on Fridays, Floyd on Saturdays." Or "We have sex almost every day of the week: almost on Monday, almost on Tuesday. ..." I got a million of 'em.

Since I'm asked this question a lot, I've made something of a study of the mating habits of successful long-term couples: people who, after a decade or two, still seem to actually like one another.

In honor of Valentine's Day, I thought I'd share these observations with you. If your longest relationship was with a triek who stayed for breakfast, then read on; you might learn a thing or two.

Tip # 1: Opposites Attract

In every relationship, someone's got to be Ernie and someone's got to be Bert. If you both have the same personalities, you're bound to have the same blind spots. The downside of this balancing act is that you may argue.

Fortunately for gay couples, we don't have to contend with all that "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus" crap. With gay guys it's more like "Men are from Mars and You're a Lowdown Cheating Tramp."

Floyd and I are so well-balanced because we can't make even the simplest decision without major debate. It's going to require an act of Congress before we

can decide on a new cell phone plan.

Sometimes I think the only reason we're still together is because we can't agree on how to break up. Here's a transcript from an actual argument, circa October 1996:

Floyd: "Why don't you just leave?"

Marc: "Why should I leave? You leave."

Floyd: "No, you leave."

Marc: "No, you leave."

If we ever resolve this one, we're done for.

Tip #2: Birds of a Feather Flock Together

OK, I know this sounds like I'm contradicting Tip #1, but I never said relationships were easy. You see, as important as it is to not have the same blind spots, it's equally important to have enough in common to build a life together.

The best couples I've known are pretty much cut from the same cloth. In terms of background, beliefs and values, they share a common frame of reference. So when one partner says "Stop acting like Bette Davis in 'All About Eve,'" the other one knows without asking to cease being a booze-guzzling bitch on toast.

Interestingly, the single largest deal-breaker I've seen in gay relationships has been mismatched intellects. If one guy is a Rhodes scholar and the other so dumb it takes him two hours to watch "60 Minutes," then one of you is bound to start cheating intellectually. And there are plenty of gay men out there happy to screw with your mind.

Tip #3: Let's Get Physical

If you're truly interested in mating for life, then you best make certain you've chosen someone who makes you want to do it like monkeys in the zoo.

Unfortunately, I know a number of gay men who've settled for such severe bed death you want to send them a wreath.

Here's the deal: the temperature in the bedroom will go down over time. So you want to make sure the thermometer starts all the way at the top.

Tip #4: Make 'em Laugh

Long-term relationships are hard work; you need someone who'll lighten the load. Trust me, this is especially helpful when you back your car into your partner's.

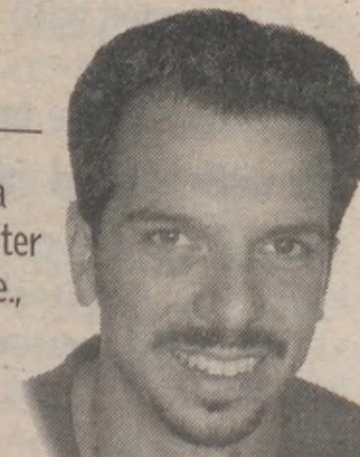
Lastly, if you're in doubt about a potential mate, I suggest you try the Patented Smile Test, which was developed by my friend Emily as a shopping tactic. You know how when you're trying on clothes and you're standing in front of the mirror saying, "I don't know. What do you think? I like the color, but ...?"

Forget it. You'll never wear the thing.

If, on the other hand, when you look at yourself your face broadens into a grin, then whip out that credit card, honey; the outfit's a keeper.

The same is true for people. If the mere mention of someone's name makes you smile like a beauty queen, that's a good sign. If you start a conversation that takes a week to finish, even better. If you fit in bed like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, then hold on tight. This one may be the keeper.

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viewpoint TERRY LONARIC



When a lover forgets flowers, she'll say she's 'not romantic,' but romance isn't a trait; it's the fearless way we love the right one.

Romance for non-romantics

MAYBE I LIKE ROMANCE BECAUSE IT taps into the best part of my creative soul. I am a writer. I am passionate about everything I do. That is my strength. Sometimes, when I get dumped, it is my downfall.

But when I have scraped myself off the pavement and learned to love again, I have always felt glad I took the risk. Now, for the first time in 48 years, I realize I am spending Valentine's Day with the woman I wish to spend the rest of my life.

It isn't a hearts-and-flowers-candy day for me. Certainly, Debbie, my girlfriend, will do something sweet and romantic and lovely. She doesn't know I am going to serenade her with a song I have written myself, and she will receive seven notes, leading up to Valentine's Day, that reveal the special ways she has touched my life.

This day is a miraculous reminder I have finally met someone who believes in love and romance as much as I do. Debbie is not relationship-phobic. She wears her heart on her sleeve and needs me every bit as much as I need her.

This is a joyous revelation after failing

at way too many relationships. Let's just say if I had a party for my ex-girlfriends, I'd have to rent a banquet hall, and I'd have to close the bar before I went broke.

IT'S ALWAYS AMAZED ME THAT ALL lesbians aren't romantic. You would think that women who love women would be in touch with their softer side. I don't know if it's the secret life that some gay women lead.

But in almost every one of my relationships before Debbie, I was always the romancer, the one who sent the flowers, wrote the poems, gave the massages, did the comforting. One woman I dated for two years rarely sent me a card, she only gave me a massage when I asked for one, she never gave me keys to her apartment, and she broke up with me in the middle of a vacation. Her excuse was always, "I'm just not a romantic person."

But if finally dawned on me — romance isn't really a component of someone's personality — it is the fearless way people love when they truly are right for each other.



Romance is never a one-way street. It is sweet surrender. It is fireworks. It is pure joy. Often, in its most quiet moments, it is the sweetest. Resting in one another's arms at the end of the day — remembering, in a single glance, why you love that person so much. That is true and lasting romance.

ROMANCE IS A STATE OF MIND, A spirit of hope, a belief in life's greatest possibilities. Romance is not about Hallmark holidays.

It is the tender moments we share with our partners each and every day, the confidences we exchange, the shared humor. It is really not needing an excuse to do something nice for someone you love.

It is the kiss on the back of your neck your lover did not expect when she was hurrying out of the shower — the note

she dropped you on the pillow — the way you made love to her when she thought she was going to do housework.

Romance is a daily adventure. It is knowing that if you think of 50 reasons you love your partner, you can immediately think of 50 more. It is learning as much in love as you teach. It is being on the same wavelength.

Debbie is my teacher of love and life, the woman who has softened my raggedy edges and made me believe that anything is possible after being badly bruised in love.

She can give me candy and flowers on Valentine's Day if she wishes, but she has already given me the greatest gift — the gift of love.

@ Terry Loncaric is a Chicago freelance writer and can be reached at artsimmersion@aol.com.

The Mostly Unfabulous Social Life of ETHAN GREEN

by Eric Orner

TRUDGING THROUGH YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD IN MID FEBRUARY, YOU HAPPEN TO NOTICE YOUR FLORIST GIGGLING MANIACALLY AND PALMING A PAIR OF PLANE TICKETS TO ST. BARTHS.

"NOW WHAT'S ALL THAT ABOUT?" YOU WONDER, GUILLESSLY... AND THEN, IT HITS YOU..

VALENTINE'S DAY. IT'S BACK. IT'S UHGLY. IT'S GONNA EAT YOUR SELF ESTEEM FOR LUNCH AND SPIT IT BACK UP ALL OVER YOUR NEW SKETCHERS

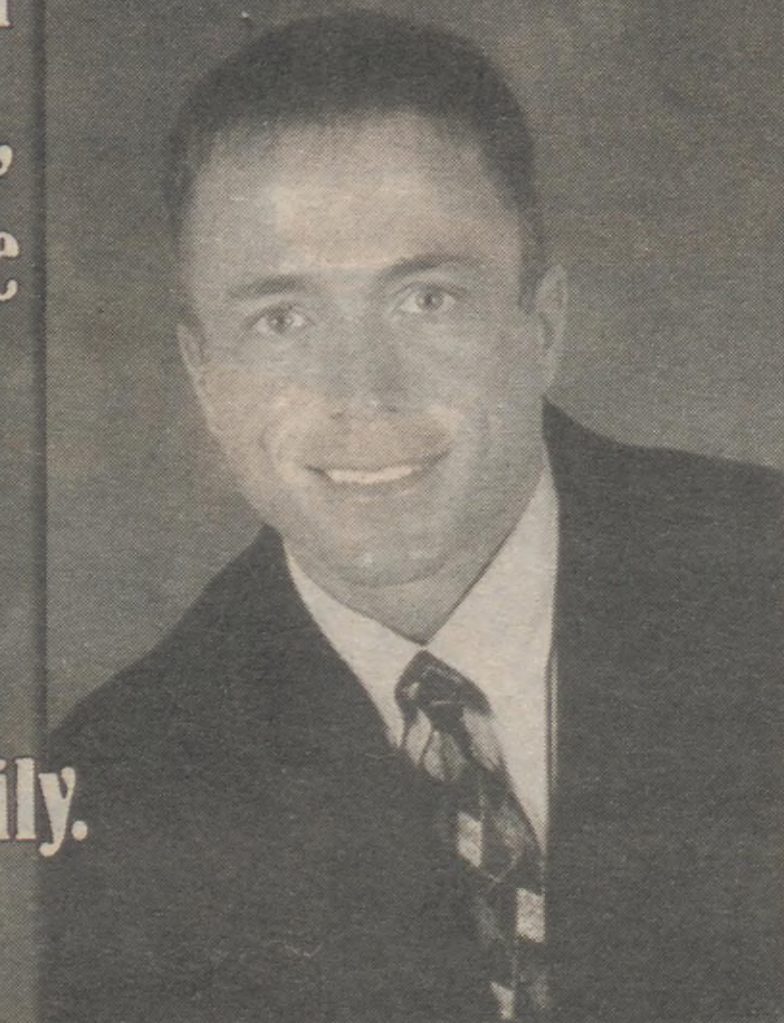
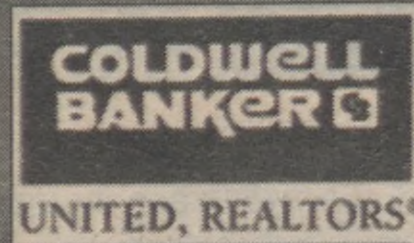
GREEDY HALLMARK EXECUTIVES, FRIENDS WHO SEND THEIR MOMS MORE EXPENSIVE ARRANGEMENTS THAN YOU DO, GIANT CANDY HEARTS SPORTING DATED SALUTATIONS, all, CHASE YOU DOWN YOUR STREET.

YOU GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE. YOU'RE RACING TO THE AIRPORT. ALL AROUND YOU HAPPY LOVING COUPLES ARE EXCHANGING FAT-FREE CHOCOLATES.

YOU BOARD A PLANE TO A FARAWAY HIMALAYAN KINGDOM. ONE IN WHICH THEY NEVER EVEN HEARD OF VALENTINE'S DAY. ONLY YOU GET IT WRONG... OH SO DREA&FULLY WRONG...

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on the record

"I am terribly sorry for what happened to you. As a member of the church, I ask you to forgive the church."

District of Columbia Superior Court Judge Mildred Edwards, declining to sentence three gay Catholic activists from the group Soulforce who were arrested last November when they knelt in the lobby of a hotel hosting the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and asked to be given communion (Catholic News Service, Jan. 31)

"Liz, didn't you know? Everybody seemed to think I was gay for years. I didn't — and don't — care, but I had a long string of gentlemen friends before the press picked up on those they cared to be interested in — in all colors and sizes. A good man is a good man, honey."

Actress Whoopi Goldberg to lesbian gossip columnist Liz Smith (New York Post, Feb. 6)

"If I own a local doughnut shop, I need to think of the public consequences for showing my support. I may get more gay people into my shop, and that's great, but it also may keep some people away."

Scott Fearing, education director for Outfront Minnesota, on the reasons some businesses give for not wanting to be included in a new gay resource directory for Sioux Falls, S.D. (Associated Press, Feb. 6)

"Children suffer if they feel different, especially if they have two men or two women for parents. I am not in favor."

Ana Botella, wife of conservative Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, who is running for Madrid City Council (Gay.com UK, Feb. 11)



"Taking stupid sexual risks — even if risk turns you on — is reckless; anal sex on the first date — even with condoms — is a bad idea; giving someone HIV — even if he wants it — is immoral; being a huge fucking slut — as popular as that might make you — has physical and emotional consequences. Gay men need to be told that stupid decisions don't deserve anyone's respect."

Syndicated sex columnist Dan Savage, who is gay, in a January filing

"When I first ran, it was like I was 'Ellen.' Today, it's like 'Will & Grace.'"

Washington State House Rep. Ed Murray, who was the state's first openly gay legislator, on the subsequent election of three other gay men to the state house (Associated Press, Feb. 8)

"Our country shares several similarities with Iraq: We both possess weapons of mass destruction, we both have recently had nearly unanimous elections and both countries consider supporting gay rights to be an offense roughly equivalent to child molestation."

Columnist Tim Kearns, arguing that the U.S. should enact gay rights legislation as an easy way of distinguishing this country from Saddam Hussein's regime (Iowa State Daily, Feb. 10)

"If her hubby fakes it, surely she can."

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, on "Worst-Dressed List" nominee Liza Minnelli, who often wears leather and fur ("Page Six" gossip column, New York Daily News, Feb. 10)

"Right here in New York City, we are in the middle of a historic cold snap. In fact, it was so cold last night that David Gest actually got into bed with Liza Minnelli."

Talk show host Conan O'Brien (NBC's "Late Night with Conan O'Brien," Feb. 9)



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*Based on IMS National Prescription Audit Plus for Protease Inhibitor Class. July 2002 - December 2002

KALETRA is indicated for the treatment of HIV infection in combination with other antiretroviral agents in patients 6 months of age or older. This is based on analyses of plasma HIV RNA levels and CD₄ T-cell counts in a controlled study of KALETRA of 48 weeks duration and in smaller, uncontrolled, dose-ranging studies of KALETRA of 72 weeks duration. **KALETRA does not cure HIV infection or AIDS and does not reduce the risk of passing of HIV to others.**

Safety Information

Taking KALETRA with certain drugs could create potential for serious and/or life-threatening side effects. Do not use KALETRA with Cafergot[®], Ergotrate Maleate, Methergine, Migranal[®], D.H.E. 45[®], Halcion[®], Hismanal[®], Orap[®], Propulsid[®], Rythmot[®], Seldane[®], Tambocor[™], and Versed[®]. Discuss all medicines, including those without a prescription, and herbal preparations you are taking or plan to take with your doctor or pharmacist. Do not take KALETRA with St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) or products containing St. John's wort.

KALETRA should not be taken if you have had an allergic reaction to KALETRA or any of its ingredients.

Pancreatitis and liver problems, which may cause death, have been reported in patients receiving KALETRA. Tell your doctor if you have or have had liver disease such as hepatitis. Your doctor may want to monitor your liver function. In patients taking protease inhibitors, increased bleeding (in patients with hemophilia) and diabetes/high blood sugar have occurred. Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients receiving antiretroviral therapy. Some patients receiving KALETRA have had large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol.

In clinical trials, the most commonly reported side effects of moderate or severe intensity were: abdominal pain, abnormal bowel movements, diarrhea, feeling weak or tired, headache, nausea, rash and vomiting. Children most often reported diarrhea, rash, taste aversion, and vomiting. This is not a complete list of reported side effects.

KALETRA oral solution contains alcohol.

Please see adjacent page for Patient Information.

KALETRA™
(lopinavir/ritonavir) capsules
(lopinavir/ritonavir) oral solution

ALERT: Find out about medicines that should NOT be taken with KALETRA. Please also read the section "MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA."

Patient Information

KALETRA™
(kuh-LEE-tra)

Generic Name: lopinavir/ritonavir
(lop-IN-uh-veer/rit-ON-uh-veer)

Read this leaflet carefully before you start taking KALETRA. Also, read it each time you get your KALETRA prescription refilled, in case something has changed. This information does not take the place of talking with your doctor when you start this medicine and at check ups. Ask your doctor if you have any questions about KALETRA.

What is KALETRA and how does it work?

KALETRA is a combination of two medicines. They are lopinavir and ritonavir. KALETRA is a type of medicine called an HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) protease (PRO-tee-ase) inhibitor. KALETRA is always used in combination with other anti-HIV medicines to treat people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. KALETRA is for adults and for children age 6 months and older.

HIV infection destroys CD4 (T) cells, which are important to the immune system. After a large number of T cells are destroyed, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) develops.

KALETRA blocks HIV protease, a chemical which is needed for HIV to multiply. KALETRA reduces the amount of HIV in your blood and increases the number of T cells. Reducing the amount of HIV in the blood reduces the chance of death or infections that happen when your immune system is weak (opportunistic infections).

Does KALETRA cure HIV or AIDS?

KALETRA does not cure HIV infection or AIDS. The long-term effects of KALETRA are not known at this time. People taking KALETRA may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV infection. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, and *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infections.

Does KALETRA reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

KALETRA does not reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination. Continue to practice safe sex and do not use or share dirty needles.

How should I take KALETRA?

- You should stay under a doctor's care when taking KALETRA. Do not change your treatment or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.
- You must take KALETRA every day exactly as your doctor prescribed it. The dose of KALETRA may be different for you than for other patients. Follow the directions from your doctor, exactly as written on the label.
- Dosing in adults (including children 12 years of age and older): The usual dose for adults is 3 capsules (400/100 mg) or 5.0 mL of the oral solution twice a day (morning and night), in combination with other anti-HIV medicines.
- Dosing in children from 6 months to 12 years of age: Children from 6 months to 12 years of age can also take KALETRA. The child's doctor will decide the right dose based on the child's weight.
- Take KALETRA with food to help it work better.
- Do not change your dose or stop taking KALETRA without first talking with your doctor.
- When your KALETRA supply starts to run low, get more from your doctor or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to KALETRA and become harder to treat.
- Be sure to set up a schedule and follow it carefully.
- Only take medicine that has been prescribed specifically for you. Do not give KALETRA to others or take medicine prescribed for someone else.

What should I do if I miss a dose of KALETRA?

It is important that you do not miss any doses. If you miss a dose of KALETRA, take it as soon as possible and then take your next scheduled dose at its regular time. If it is almost time for your next dose, do not take the missed dose. Wait and take the next dose at the regular time. Do not double the next dose.

What happens if I take too much KALETRA?

If you suspect that you took more than the prescribed dose of this medicine, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

As with all prescription medicines, KALETRA should be kept out of the reach of young children. KALETRA liquid contains a large

amount of alcohol. If a toddler or young child accidentally drinks more than the recommended dose of KALETRA, it could make him/her sick from too much alcohol. Contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately if this happens.

Who should not take KALETRA?

Together with your doctor, you need to decide whether KALETRA is right for you.

- Do not take KALETRA if you are taking certain medicines. These could cause serious side effects that could cause death. Before you take KALETRA, you must tell your doctor about all the medicines you are taking or are planning to take. These include other prescription and non-prescription medicines and herbal supplements.

For more information about medicines you should not take with KALETRA, please read the section titled "MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA."

- Do not take KALETRA if you have an allergy to KALETRA or any of its ingredients, including ritonavir or lopinavir.

Can I take KALETRA with other medications?*

KALETRA may interact with other medicines, including those you take without a prescription. You must tell your doctor about all the medicines you are taking or planning to take before you take KALETRA.

MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA:

- Do not take the following medicines with KALETRA because they can cause serious problems or death if taken with KALETRA.
 - Dihydroergotamine, ergonovine, ergotamine and methyle-rgonovine such as Cafergot®, Migranal®, D.H.E. 45®, Ergotrate Maleate, Methergine, and others
 - Halcion® (triazolam)
 - Hismanal® (astemizole)
 - Orap® (pimozide)
 - Propulsid® (cisapride)
 - Rythmo® (propafenone)
 - Seldane® (terfenadine)
 - Tambocor™ (flecainide)
 - Versed® (midazolam)
- Do not take KALETRA with rifampin, also known as Rimactane®, Rifadin®, Rifater®, or Rifamate®. Rifampin may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood and make it less effective.
- Do not take KALETRA with St. John's wort (hypericum perforatum), an herbal product sold as a dietary supplement, or products containing St. John's wort. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or planning to take St. John's wort. Taking St. John's wort may decrease KALETRA levels and lead to increased viral load and possible resistance to KALETRA or cross-resistance to other anti-HIV medicines.
- Do not take KALETRA with the cholesterol-lowering medicines Mevacor® (lovastatin) or Zocor® (simvastatin) because of possible serious reactions. There is also an increased risk of drug interactions between KALETRA and Lipitor® (atorvastatin); talk to your doctor before you take any of these cholesterol-reducing medicines with KALETRA.

Medicines that require dosage adjustments:

It is possible that your doctor may need to increase or decrease the dose of other medicines when you are also taking KALETRA. Remember to tell your doctor all medicines you are taking or plan to take.

Before you take Viagra® (sildenafil) with KALETRA, talk to your doctor about problems these two medicines can cause when taken together. You may get increased side effects of VIAGRA, such as low blood pressure, vision changes, and penis erection lasting more than 4 hours. If an erection lasts longer than 4 hours, get medical help right away to avoid permanent damage to your penis. Your doctor can explain these symptoms to you.

- If you are taking oral contraceptives ("the pill") to prevent pregnancy, you should use an additional or different type of contraception since KALETRA may reduce the effectiveness of oral contraceptives.
- Efavirenz (Sustiva™) or nevirapine (Viramune®) may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood. Your doctor may increase your dose of KALETRA if you are also taking efavirenz or nevirapine.
- If you are taking Mycobutin® (rifabutin), your doctor will lower the dose of Mycobutin.
- A change in therapy should be considered if you are taking KALETRA with:**
 - Phenobarbital
 - Phenytoin (Dilantin® and others)
 - Carbamazepine (Tegretol® and others)
 These medicines may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood and make it less effective.

- Other Special Considerations:** KALETRA oral solution contains alcohol. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or planning to take metronidazole or disulfiram. Severe nausea and vomiting can occur.

- If you are taking both didanosine (Videx®) and KALETRA:** Didanosine (Videx®) should be taken one hour before or two hours after KALETRA.

What are the possible side effects of KALETRA?

- This list of side effects is not complete. If you have questions about side effects, ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. You should report any new or continuing symptoms to your doctor right away. Your doctor may be able to help you manage these side effects.
- The most commonly reported side effects of moderate severity that

are thought to be drug related are: abnormal stools (bowel movements), diarrhea, feeling weak/tired, headache, and nausea. Children taking KALETRA may sometimes get a skin rash.

- Blood tests in patients taking KALETRA may show possible liver problems. People with liver disease such as Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C who take KALETRA may have worsening liver disease. Liver problems including death have occurred in patients taking KALETRA. In studies, it is unclear if KALETRA caused these liver problems because some patients had other illnesses or were taking other medicines.
- Some patients taking KALETRA can develop serious problems with their pancreas (pancreatitis), which may cause death. You have a higher chance of having pancreatitis if you have had it before. Tell your doctor if you have nausea, vomiting, or abdominal pain. These may be signs of pancreatitis.
- Some patients have large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol. The long-term chance of getting complications such as heart attacks or stroke due to increases in triglycerides and cholesterol caused by protease inhibitors is not known at this time.
- Diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) occur in patients taking protease inhibitors such as KALETRA. Some patients had diabetes before starting protease inhibitors, others did not. Some patients need changes in their diabetes medicine. Others needed new diabetes medicine.
- Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients taking anti-retroviral therapy. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The cause and long term health effects of these conditions are not known at this time.
- Some patients with hemophilia have increased bleeding with protease inhibitors.
- There have been other side effects in patients taking KALETRA. However, these side effects may have been due to other medicines that patients were taking or to the illness itself. Some of these side effects can be serious.

What should I tell my doctor before taking KALETRA?

- If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant:** The effects of KALETRA on pregnant women or their unborn babies are not known.
- If you are breast-feeding:** Do not breast-feed if you are taking KALETRA. You should not breast-feed if you have HIV. If you are a woman who has or will have a baby, talk with your doctor about the best way to feed your baby. You should be aware that if your baby does not already have HIV, there is a chance that HIV can be transmitted through breast-feeding.
- If you have liver problems:** If you have liver problems or are infected with Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C, you should tell your doctor before taking KALETRA.
- If you have diabetes:** Some people taking protease inhibitors develop new or more serious diabetes or high blood sugar. Tell your doctor if you have diabetes or an increase in thirst or frequent urination.
- If you have hemophilia:** Patients taking KALETRA may have increased bleeding.

How do I store KALETRA?

- Keep KALETRA and all other medicines out of the reach of children.
- Refrigerated KALETRA capsules and oral solution remain stable until the expiration date printed on the label. If stored at room temperature up to 77°F (25°C), KALETRA capsules and oral solution should be used within 2 months.
- Avoid exposure to excessive heat.

Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. Be sure that if you throw any medicine away, it is out of the reach of children.

General advice about prescription medicines:

Talk to your doctor or other health care provider if you have any questions about this medicine or your condition. Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Patient Information Leaflet. If you have any concerns about this medicine, ask your doctor. Your doctor or pharmacist can give you information about this medicine that was written for health care professionals. Do not use this medicine for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not share this medicine with other people.

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Out on the Bayou

Showing affection in public is an act of empowerment for some, too risky for others

By MIKE FLEMING

AS LOVERS GET TOGETHER ON VALENTINE'S Day for special celebrations made for two, entwined hands and pecks on the cheek are part and parcel of the day's romantic dinners and walks in the park.

Swept up in the moment, who would miss the opportunity to put hand to knee or steal a kiss, even if people are around?

But gays split on the answer to that question — whether to withhold outward expressions of love or to succumb to a little public display of affection, or PDA. Sometimes, an innocent hand on the knee or a kiss is difficult for gays who still carry internalized fears of disapproval as well as a very real risk of backlash.

Even as public opinion sways in favor of gay acceptance, there is still a threat of harassment, ridicule or even violence from disapproving observers of same-sex PDA.

The decision to hold hands or kiss in public becomes much more than a casual personal gesture. It becomes a politically charged statement, whether it is intended or not, says Randall Hall, a gay writer with a master's degree from Duke University's Program in the Study of Sexualities.

"The moment becomes transformed from a gentle gesture to a moment of indecision, where we have to disassociate ourselves from the moment and gauge how the people around us will react," Hall says.

"The spontaneity is gone, we are rendered confused and sometimes helpless by our own internalized homophobia and our perception of the homophobia in others."

IF THERE IS ANY DOUBT ABOUT THE POLITICAL power of gay PDA, reactions to the video for pop princess Christina Aguilera's song "Beautiful" should set the record straight, so to speak.

The video's release in January set gay jaws dropping and conservative tongues wagging about its depiction of a male make-out session on a public bench, complete with glaring passersby.

"In one fell swoop, the video displayed PDA in front of the whole country at one time and said, 'This is a normal part of life,'" says Pamela Murphy, an RCA Records spokesperson. "Sometimes 'in your face' is good."

Murphy said that Aguilera herself decided what she wanted in the video, which serves as a rallying cry for misunderstood factions of society, including an anorexic girl, a punk rocker, a weakling kid, a drag queen and the kissing couple.

Several real-life gay couples auditioned for the PDA segment of the video, and Justin Croft, 23, and Jordan Shannon, 22, who were boyfriends at the time of the shoot, were cast, according to Murphy.

"I like controversy," Shannon told the Advocate.

Croft and Shannon did not respond to repeated interview requests from Houston Voice.

The stir isn't hurting sales, Murphy says.

"We think it came off really well, and while you may find random comments against the content, it is one of the most requested videos on MTV today, and the song is soaring up the charts," she said.

GAYS TEND TO FALL SQUARELY INTO TWO DISTINCT factions on the question of PDA: those who wouldn't purposely signal their orientation, and some who would jump at the chance to either make a political statement or just



Girlfriends **Aline Cristesco** (left) and **Amy Poel** don't refrain from expressing affection because 'the world needs more public displays of love,' Cristesco says. (Photo by R.O. Youngblood)

The politics of PDA

show the world how much they care.

"I love my partner and want all the same rights afforded heterosexual couples," says Lara Blackford, 34, about her relationship with fellow Atlantan Peg Holt, 44. "If I feel like holding Peg's hand while walking through the mall, then I should be able to without fear of ridicule."

If everyone practiced a little more PDA when the mood struck, the gay civil rights movement would be advanced, Blackford says.

"The longer we remain in the closet, the longer it will take for reform of laws, public opinion, etc.," she says. "I think if people actually knew the percentage of the population who labeled themselves part of the GLBT community, we would see change."

Aline Cristesco, a 27-year-old from Paris who now lives in Atlanta, agrees.

"Most of the time, I act with a conscious thought that same-sex affection visibility in the public sphere will make same-sex love more mainstream, and that acceptance in the public sphere will force the private sphere to take those mentality changes into account," Cristesco says.

Toska Palmer, a 32-year-old gay Chicago resident, sees the issue differently.

"My sexuality doesn't define who I am as a person," Palmer says. "I'm very proud of who I am, [but] I also know that I will be judged by my peers if I am open and out with my sexuality."

"I am Toska Palmer the woman, mother, sister and aunt

— not Toska the lesbian," she adds. "When I'm in relationships, I don't practice public display because I don't want to be judged by my sexual orientation or lifestyle."

Gays have been staging "kiss-ins" for causes from legal protections to recognition as fans of professional women's basketball, but politicizing something so personal is a mistake gays can't afford to make, says Stephen Dooley, 29, also from Atlanta.

"I think it is disgusting to trivialize such an important thing as a relationship," he says. "Maybe once we learn that militant political statements need to be kept out of the personal realm, people will respect our personal choices, decisions and lifestyles."

"If we keep dragging politics into the bedroom, it justifies the right's interference in the bedroom," he continues. "We keep telling the right that we are a people and not a sexual act, yet we seem to want to prove them right."

Miki Ashton, 44 and from Atlanta, says that PDA is a natural behavior, but that it is also necessarily political.

"To make a point of not showing affection would make me feel very restricted," Ashton says. "I would have to be on my guard all the time to stop myself reaching for my girlfriend's hand, or giving her a peck on the cheek. That would be impossible and totally go against how we live the rest of our relationship."

But it comes down to rights, she says.

"Anyone, straight or gay, has the right to show affection

out on the bayou

Fine line between PDA and public lust, theorist says

PDA, continued from Page 15

in public," she says. "If I stopped to think about it, then I do feel that it is a political responsibility ... to make a point that gay and straight people are the same and have the same rights in all areas of their lives."

THE CHOICE TO PRACTICE PDA CAN BE situational.

"There have been times when I have felt uncomfortable about being openly affectionate, and as I value my safety more than I want to 'make a point,' I would probably tailor my actions to the situation," Ashton says. Dooley notes that rural areas and other

less accepting environs might affect the decision to express affection.

"Of course there might be ridicule or violence," he says. "There will always be some fear as long as people feel they have the right to judge others and act upon these judgements."

And the choice of when, where and how far to go comes down to personal tastes, according to queer theorist Hall.

"It's a fine line between what we'll accept from anyone, straight or gay," Hall says. "Generally, displays of affection should be OK, while displays of lust are less tolerated by even people who accept gay PDA in general."

Speaking out about PDA

"Although I do not have a significant other at this time, I greet my friends with a hug and sometimes a kiss. I do not consider it to be a political statement, but merely a way to show my friendship for that person."

— Jackie Thorne, 63, Houston

"[I practice PDA] because I want to be affectionate. As well, visibility goes a long way. However, I have been known to display PDA just to piss someone off, like a man looking my girlfriend up and down."

— Jeri Trice, 34, Houston

"Kiss when you want to kiss. The responsibility for PDA is between the two sharing the moment, not your policing neighbor. PDA tackiness happens when things are taken too far at inappropriate times and moments. And inappropriate is politicizing a relationship."

— Stephen Dooley, 29, Atlanta

"[PDA] doesn't strike a chord in the African-American gay and lesbian community because a lot of brothers and sisters want to keep their jobs and don't want to be judged by our sexuality but by our work ethic and who we are as people — not by who we choose to share our lives with."

— Toska Palmer, 32, Chicago



Justin Croft, 23 and Jordan Shannon, 22, exercised a bit of same-sex PDA in front of the world in the video for Christina Aguilera's song 'Beautiful,' which is in heavy rotation on MTV. (Photo courtesy HSI Productions)

February 16 •
"The Ripple Effect of Sin"
Rev. Janet Parker

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autos JOE PHILLIPS



Economical and environmental, entry-level SUVs are also easy on the wallet.

SUVs with spunk

AS WITH MADONNA AND Britney, sometimes to be popular is to be reviled.

Sport-utility vehicles and other light trucks make up more than half of all new-vehicle sales. But environmental groups blast large SUVs because they eat up more fuel than cars. Other groups argue that such behemoths deepen America's need for foreign oil.

Enter entry-level SUVs.

Built on small-car platforms, they ride better than larger, truck-based SUVs. They use less fuel. They cost less. And with today's tech advances, their small engines often pack plenty of punch.

All the mini SUVs listed here offer all-wheel or four-wheel drive, so let it snow, sleet, ice — whatever. They can handle it.

Few provide anything more than limited off-road abilities. But fantasy aside, that is rarely part of day-to-day driving plan. For four-wheeling, go test-drive a \$100,000 Hummer H1, and get it out of your system.

Ford Escape/Mazda Tribute

Price: \$19,500-\$28,000
Spunk: 4 cylinder (127 hp), V6 (201 hp)
Mpg: 23 city/28 highway (4 cylinder)
18 city/23 highway (V6)
Cargo room: 65 cubic feet

Built on the same platform, these sister vehicles are roomy enough for Michael Jackson, Joan Rivers and three plastic surgeons. But nix the pokey 4 cylinder.

The V6 can pull a small trailer — the only small SUV with enough oomph to do so. Three trim levels are on offer: base XLS, midlevel XLT and new luxury Limited — with polished aluminum wheels, sensor system when backing up, heated seats/mirrors and leather.

There were recalls galore when introduced in 2001, but newer versions seem a lot better. Antilock brakes, side airbags are standard on some models, options on others.

Honda CR-V

Price: \$19,000-\$23,000
Spunk: 4 cylinder (162 hp)
Mpg: 21 city/25 highway
Cargo room: 72 cubic feet

Fully revamped last year, the new model offers basketball-player legroom, seating for five and two trim levels: LX and high-end EX. Both offer mega storage



Hyundai Santa Fe

and features, including power windows/locks, cruise control, air conditioning, CD player and rear heat ducts.

The CR-V is comfortable even in the reclining back seats, and rates very high in crash tests. Antilock brakes and front side airbags standard on the EX.

Hyundai Santa Fe

Price: \$18,000-\$24,500
Spunk: 4 cylinder (138 hp), V6 (173 hp)
Mpg: 25 city/33 highway (4 cylinder),
19 city/26 highway (V6)
Cargo room: 78 cubic feet

This one has a quirky exterior, but it's what's on the inside counts in this case.

The interior is extremely quiet with the most room of any compact SUV for passengers and cargo. Standard features include side airbags, air conditioning, power windows/mirrors/locks, CD player, 16-inch wheels and full-size spare. Antilock brakes are optional.

The Santa Fe offers a smooth ride, except for body roll when cornering, which could be a good thing on first dates. Hyundai offers a bargain price for the four-wheel-drive version.

Kia Sorento

Price: \$20,000-\$24,500
Spunk: V6 (192 hp)
Mpg: 15 city/20 highway
Cargo room: 66.4 cubic feet

Great looks, rugged and well-equipped: Is there anything more to life?

In the case of the Sorento, two trim levels are what's more. Both come with air conditioning, CD player, full-size spare and power windows/doors/locks. High-end options include keyless entry, power driver seat, sunroof, auto-dimming rearview mirror, 6-disc CD changer and automatic four-wheel-drive.



Honda CR-V



Ford Escape

Antilock brakes are optional.

Complaints: Low fuel economy and meager towing capacity.

Mitsubishi Outlander

Price: \$18,500-\$22,000
Spunk: 4 cylinder (140 hp)
Mpg: 21 city/26 highway
Cargo room: 60 cubic feet

The Outlander provides aggressive, sleek styling with a bold snout. Think Stallone in a Versace cocktail dress.

It has comfortable seats, user-friendly controls and very solid handling in two trim levels: LS — with usual list of power everything, air conditioning and cruise control — and XLS. Upscale XLS offers standard two-tone color scheme, white-faced gauges, upgraded cloth interior, side airbags and antilock braking.

As with Bob Dole, Outlander could use a bit more staying power. With only 140 horses, the engine offers a quick start, then drops off.

Saturn VUE

Price: \$17,000-\$23,000
Spunk: 4 cylinder (143 hp), V6 (181 hp)
Mpg: 23 city/28 highway
20 city/26 highway (V6)
Cargo room: 63.5 cubic feet

The VUE has large doors for easy entry/exit and a roomy interior, but offers a 1980s-looking dash. Pop-up grocery bag holder in cargo area is great.

Saturn offers the choice of two powerful engines with decent gas mileage. Base model lacks power windows, locks and mirrors, but offers tilt steering wheel. The high-end model has leather seats, 6-disc CD changer, sunroof and OnStar satellite-based communications system for directions to trendy

dance clubs, among other things.

Antilock brakes and head-curtain airbags are optional.

Suzuki XL-7

Price: \$20,000-\$25,400
Spunk: V6 (183 hp)
Mpg: 18 city/20 highway
Cargo room: 75 cubic feet

Boxy outside, the XL-7 is the only compact SUV with a third-row seat — a feature mainly in larger sport-utes priced \$30,000 and up.

Upside: Room for seven passengers. Downside: Cramped second- and third-row seating. Off-road handling is better than most, and there's a long list of standard features, many of which are pricey options, if offered at all, on the competition: antilock brakes, automatic climate control, daytime running lights and stereo/cruise controls on the steering wheel.

Side airbags not available.

Toyota RAV4

Price: \$17,000-\$19,500
Spunk: 4 cylinder (148 hp)
Mpg: 25 city/31 highway
Cargo room: 68.3 cubic feet

The mother of all mini SUVs first arrived in 1996 and was completely redesigned in 2001. For 2003, the well-built RAV4 gets an optional sport package with a new grille, hood scoop, color-keyed door handles, heated mirrors and roof rack.

But there is a distinct lack of standard features, so expect to pay for options — including antilock brakes (side airbags not available), power/windows/doors/locks, aluminum wheels, air conditioning, remote keyless entry, cruise control, CD player, power sunroof, heated mirrors, tinted glass and foglights.

Well, at least the tires are included.



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sports LEE DAVIS

Montrose Softball League readies for spring
season, more gay sports opportunities ahead

Athletes get ready

8-ball?

The Independent Billiard League of Houston (IBL) requests that teams call in scores to 713-942-0781 by 8 p.m. Friday following play.

Congratulations to B. Arnold, the Break & Run Champ, and to S. Santifer, the Rack & Run Champ, during the opening week of play. For the convenience of members, the Sub List page on the Web site will now include sub phone numbers. To obtain a password to access the Sub List, players must contact their team captain or any IBL board member.

For more information regarding IBL, log on to the league Web site at <http://iblhouston.com>.

Batter up

The Montrose Softball League (MSL) has a new home for the upcoming spring season. All games will be played at P.J.'s Park in Spring, Texas. Although the location means a longer drive for most members, the fields are said to be exceptional and park officials are welcoming the MSL with open arms.

MSL's Recruitment Day is scheduled for Sunday, Feb. 16, from 9 a.m. to 3p.m. at Memorial Park Fields No. 4 and 5. All players interested in joining the league are welcome to stop by and get acquainted.

Coaches and managers will be present and pickup games will be played. Clinics will also be held. No matter what your skill level, male or female, stop by and learn about MSL. Food and drink will be available. If anyone would like to assist with Recruitment Day activities, please contact Sam Wilson at the MSL Web site: www.montrosesoftballleague.com. Help is needed with registration, coaching, clinics, food, flyers, etc.

Volley & Conquer

The Lone Star Volleyball Association announces The Houston Classic XIV Tournament, set for April 17-19. Registration begins on April 17 from 7-11 p.m. The beneficiary of this year's tournament is the Houston Buyer's Club. Housing accommodations have not yet been determined.

Players must have a current NAGVA membership to play. Photo ID and current NAGVA Registration is required to complete the registration process and become eligible to play. For eligibility/rating concerns, contact the VP of Eligibility at eligibility@nagva.org. Check Ratings. USAV Rules will be used unless superseded by NAGVA Rules & Regulations. Pool play will be Friday. Championship play will be on Saturday. All matches will be played at Willowbrook Sports Complex. Divisions being accepted are AA, A, BB and B.

The event features free T-shirts, a sit-down banquet, local gay events in conjunction with the tournament, and glass trophies. A \$299.95 Tournament Fee is all that's needed besides meeting the eligibility rules. For more information, contact the LSVA at www.lsva.org.

Gay conference

The National Gay & Lesbian Athletics Conference will take place in Boston from

March 28-30. For more information, contact me, Lee Davis, via e-mail at editor@houstonvoice.com.

Softball tees

The Montrose Softball League recently announced its first Golf Tournament will be held on Saturday, April 12, at Waterwood National Resort & Golf Club. The shotgun start time is 9 a.m. The entry fee is \$65 and monies will benefit league charities. The fee includes greens fees, shared carts, and range balls.

Prizes will be awarded to the first-, second- and third-place finishers. For more information, contact the MSL at www.montrosesoftballleague.com.

Women's soccer

Women's professional soccer returns to Houston with the Atlanta Beat/San Diego Spirit exhibition game.

Because of the sellout crowd at last October's WUSA exhibition, Houstonians proved their love of women's soccer. The pre-season exhibit will kick off at 7 p.m. on March 26 at Rice University Track/Soccer Stadium.

The San Diego Spirit team roster features 2002 Chevy Athlete of the Year Shannon MacMillan, U.S. national team captain Julie Foudy, 2003 No. 1 draft pick Aly Wagner and Houstonians Amy Sauer and Susan Bush. The Beat features World Cup goalkeeper Briana Scurry, Olympic gold medallist Cindy Parlow, Canada's leading scorer Charmaine Hooper and Texas A&M grad Melanie Wilson.

For more information, log on to www.hwsa.org/wusa2003.htm.

Gay basketball

Is anyone interested in a gay men's basketball league? If so, please e-mail me here at the Voice (editor@houstonvoice.com). I'd like to receive a lot of replies to match the number of inquiries so far!

Ice follies

Have a taste for great fun and an opportunity to skate like Tai & Randy, Dorothy Hammill, Rudy? Whomever your skating idol is, join the Lambda Roller Skating club while getting great cardio stimulation. The group can be found at <http://www.neosoft.com/lrsc>. E-mail: lrsc@neosoft.com.

Lanes to spare

Don't forget: There are many opportunities out there for all bowling levels of play.

Contact Tom O'Dell at 713-861-1187 or 713-220-5700, extension 331, for information on the Inner Loop Alternatives (four-person mixed teams) at Palace Lanes on Sundays at 7 p.m. Tom's also in the know for the 9 p.m. Monday, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, and 9 p.m. Thursday leagues. He's just a Roman fountain of information!

Call Pat at 281-437-6218 for information on the Monday Night Women's League. Bowling begins at 6:45 p.m. at the Dynamic Lanes, 6121 Tarneff. Go roll a few.

music ARJAN TIMMERMANS



Gay '80s duo hopes covering pop songs from radio's past will rekindle American interest in talented electro sound.

Erasure re-covers

AFTER NINE ALBUMS WITH MOSTLY original material, the pop uncles of Erasure decided to try something different.

On their latest record "Other People's Songs," which hit stores in January, Andy Bell and Vince Clark chose to cover some of their favorite pop tunes.

The production includes songs from Peter Gabriel ("Solsbury Hill"), the Righteous Brothers (You've Lost That Loving Feelin'), Elvis Presley ("Can't Help Falling in Love") and Buddy Holly ("Come Up and See Me"). Clark's melodic electro-wizardry paired with Bell's moving, resonant vocals give the songs on this album a renewed glow of brilliance and true craftsmanship.

After a string of hits, including "Sometimes," "Stop" and the EP "Abbaesque," Erasure's last two albums were commercial disappointments. "Other People's Songs" appears to revive their glory, and the single "Solsbury Hill" debuted at number ten on the British pop chart.

"It is really nice to be back in the top 10," says lead singer Andy Bell, who is gay. "People ask me if this is a come-back. I guess they had forgotten about us."

THE BAND HAS BIG PLANS FOR the U.S. with the release of a single DVD of "Solsbury Hill," plenty of press engagements, college radio appearances and a tour beginning in March.

"I hope we still have a lot of fans here," Bell says. "It appears that most of our fans are in San Francisco and Texas. Don't ask me why we are so popular in Texas, perhaps they need some reactionary element in that place."

"Other People's Songs" is a collection of timeless ditties.

"The songs need to have passion, melody, something uplifting or pathos for a ballad," Bell says. "It needs to touch people. That is also what we looked for when we selected songs to cover for this album."

The song "Goodnight" has a special meaning to the singer.

"My boyfriend Paul chose this song actually," Bell notes. "It is one of those tunes that really breaks your heart and is inspirational as well. It reminded me of when I was a kid and I used to sing myself to sleep in bed."

"Erasure was on the forefront of the exciting gay '80s pop generation in England that also included other gay acts like Soft Cell, the Pet Shop Boys and Frankie Goes To Hollywood. Looking back, it might well be that Erasure's gay visibility was a driving force behind the band's initial success.



Gay band Erasure's Vince Clark (left) and Andy Bell pool their talents again in an effort to put themselves back on the musical map. (Photo by Jason Evans)

"It definitely helped," Bell agrees. "The whole gay pop thing got a lot of attention. It gave me a lot of strength, and it was very inspiring to me. Some people were a bit wary of us, but they got used to it. I was never put down by homophobia."

"If people had a problem, I just put my ass in their face and was as queenie as I could," he laughs.

THE MUSIC INDUSTRY HAS CHANGED much in the last 15 years, according to Bell.

"There are still a lot of closeted people in the music industry, which is odd if you consider that this business is run by the gay Mafia," he jokes. "They still feel that you are easier to market if you are not gay."

One might hypothesize about a gay duo comeback conspiracy with not only Erasure but also Soft Cell and Pet Shop Boys releasing new work in the last 10 months.

"There is no conspiracy," Bell laughs. "It is all cyclical really. I have wanted to make this record for a long time, and I am glad it is successful. You just have to work for it and be patient."

MORE INFO

'Other People's Songs'
Erasure
Mute Records, \$16.98

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dining TRAYCE DISKIN

New Thai Cottage serves up overall successful dishes in a pleasant atmosphere and convenient location

Thai food excels

ONE OF THE BEST CONSOLATIONS for watching a long, overwrought film is the pleasure of tearing it apart with friends over a hearty meal at a neighborhood restaurant. While the inviting and impeccable Epicure Café serves this purpose for hungry patrons of the River Oak's Landmark Theatre, locating such an establishment in the Greenway Plaza corridor is far more difficult.

Even with the massive Edwards Cinema looming behind it, the new Thai Cottage (other locations are Sugarland and Bellaire) manages to create an atmosphere that is refreshingly anti-conglomerate, and anti-strip mall. From the moment we stepped into the foyer, which is packed with cheery ferns and ficus trees, rustic-chic furniture, and brightly painted crafts and folk art, we appreciated the distinctly café-like ambience and friendly greeting.

The brick wall provides a cozy-intimacy that's easily complemented by the adjacent sage and coral walls, and the sleek cherry wood tables. Hung from the exposed black ceiling, subtle but colorful track lights lend a stylishly minimalist effect, and the steady electronics of Thai pop music add a unique and upbeat touch.

The Vegetable Tom Kha Soup (\$3.25), like its shrimp and chicken counterparts, offers a heady combination of coconut milk, ginger paste, and red pepper.

ALTHOUGH WE WERE RELIEVED TO change venues and have a chance to chat about the film we saw, our dining didn't get off to a great start with the Fried Calimari (\$5.95). Maybe it was our fault for ordering a non-traditional, ubiquitous appetizer from a menu that otherwise keeps its creativity within confines of standard Thai cuisine, but the dish was surprisingly disappointing. Instead of a textured coating, these huge squid rings were deep fried in a greasy, doughy batter that slid off each chewy ring with the first bite. The odor and texture were reminiscent of limp, overcooked french fries, and unfortunately the taste was similarly insipid.

The Sate (\$6.25), however, featured sizzling, succulent strips of marinated beef and chicken on skewers, and even the vegetarian in the group couldn't resist repeated samplings of the spicy peanut and cucumber dips. The Shrimp Mermaid (\$6.25) provided the same grilled smokiness with crabmeat and shrimp. And the Thai Dim Sum, dumplings with shredded pork and shrimp, (\$5.25) proved that fried needn't be synonymous with greasy and dull.



The Vegetable Tom Kha Soup (\$3.25), like its shrimp and chicken counterparts, offers a heady combination of coconut milk, ginger paste, and red pepper. In addition to silky mushrooms and fresh green beans, the slabs of raw ginger intensify the dizzyingly rich broth.

In addition to full noodle, grilled entrees and seafood sections, the menu offers a variety of mix and match curries. I tried the green curry with shrimp, where the watery consistency didn't seem to dilute the flavor of sauce or plump, rosy shrimp. Texture aside, the curry achieved a near perfect balance of spices and coconut milk, so that the entire dish, served with fragrant, steamed rice, was simultaneously spicy and sweetly mild.

The tropical Pineapple Curry (\$8.95) makes a festive mixture of juicy pineapple chunks, shrimp, chicken, and savory "Gang Kua" curry in coconut milk. The Red Curry (\$7.95) was surprisingly salty, and the bamboo shoots, peas, and carrots didn't mingle as harmoniously as the ingredients in the other curries.

IF YOU HAVEN'T YET OVERDOSED ON a particular staple of Thai cuisine, the Coconut Ice Cream (\$2.95) makes for a refreshingly light finale, as does the Fried Banana (\$2.50). The bananas are more grilled than fried, and a thin coat of syrup helps seal in the ripeness of the fruit.

Even with some uneven moments, the food is certainly more hit than miss, and the proximity factor can't be overlooked. No matter how you feel about the film you see across the street, Thai Cottage makes a great place in which to enjoy an inviting meal and discussion.



Thai Cottage

3995 B Richmond
 713-623-0707

Food: ●●●●●
 Service: ●●●●●●●●
 Value: ●●●●●●●●
 Scene: ●●●●●●●●

● = Stay home and eat cereal
 ●●● = Well, if you really must
 ●●●● = Fine for all but the finicky
 ●●●●● = Worth more than a 20-minute drive
 ●●●●●● = As good as you'll find in this city

community calendar

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15

Classic Chassis Car Club. Winter Video Party. www.classicchassisclub.org. 713-797-8615.

Houston Outdoor Group. Potluck dinner, 6 p.m. Peter. 281-448-5533. HOGLine: 713-KAMPOUT.

EVERY SATURDAY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16

Houston Big Men's Club. February social, 5 p.m. Baba Yega, 2607 Grant St. www.houstonbigmensclub.com. Dominic, 281-534-8743.

EVERY SUNDAY

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

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

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

Community of Kindred Spirits in Beaumont. Worship at 6 p.m. 1575 Spindletop Ave., Beaumont, Texas. 409-813-2055. E-mail: cksrev3@netzero.net

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17

EVERY MONDAY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • HRC PAC, 7 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Center for AIDS. Mer's mixer, 7 p.m. 1407 Hawthorne. 713-527-8210.

EVERY TUESDAY

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

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

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

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

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

Helping Cross Dressers Anonymous. Support group. 7 p.m. Houston Women's Rugby Team. No experience necessary.

Practice, 6:30-8:30. Westland YMCA. Kay, 713-208-1529.

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

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

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • Pride Committee of Houston general meeting, 7 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19

EVERY WEDNESDAY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Gulf Coast Archives & Museum. Meeting, 7 p.m. 713-227-5973.

EVERY THURSDAY

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

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

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

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

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

FrontRunners. Running club. 6:30 p.m. 713-522-8021. Web site: http://home.swbell.net/larathon/houfr.htm. E-mail: larathon@swbell.net.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Eye Candy Party. Women's monthly party and charity event held the third Friday of each month. \$10 cover charge, a portion of which goes to the charity selected by popular vote at the previous party. 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. 1415 Bar & Grille, 1415 California. 713-977-3777.

EVERY FRIDAY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • In Our Own Write, poetry night, 8 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

VOLUNTEER/SELF-HELP

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

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

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

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

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

appts

a weekly guide to arts & entertainment activities for gay Houstonians

SPECIAL FRIDAY, FEB. 14

"A Celebration of Love" Valentine's Day Dinner Dance is sponsored by the Lesbian Health Initiative as a fund-raiser. Dinner, dancing and entertainment by comedienne Suzanne Westenhofer will be included in the event. Holiday Inn on Katy Freeway at the Silber exit. For more info: 713-603-0023. www.lhihouston.org. E-mail: lhi@lhihouston.org.

UPCOMING

Silent Moon, the annual fund-raising gala of the Gay Men's Chorus of Houston, is set for Friday, Feb. 21. The Ronnie Renfrow Big Band will entertain, with special guest emcee Sharon Montgomery. Tickets: \$75 per person. 6:30 p.m. cocktails and silent auction; 8 p.m. dinner; 9 p.m. entertainment. Warwick Hotel, 5701 Main St. 713-355-6559. www.gmch.org.

THEATER

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, FEB. 14 & 15

Theatre New West offers a Valentine special in conjunction with its production of "Fruit Cocktail." Those who bring a can of fruit cocktail receive \$5 off the ticket price. Canned goods go to the non-profit Stone Soup. Tickets: \$20. 8 p.m. 1415 California St. 713-522-2204.

DANCE

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, FEB. 14 & 15

Dominic Walsh Dance Theater offers "Moving Bodies, Moving Minds" in two performances. Included on the program are works by Walsh and Houston Ballet Artistic Director Ben Stevenson. Tickets: \$18 and \$36. 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, Zilkha Hall. 713-652-DWDT or 713-315-2525. www.dwdt.org.

MUSIC

THIS WEEKEND

Trinity Jazz Festival runs all weekend. The second annual event includes trumpet great Marvin Stamm, saxophone legend David "Fathead" Newman, the Marsha Frazier Trio and more. Tickets: \$30 or \$55 for both Friday and Saturday nights. Trinity Episcopal Church, 1015 Holman. 713-528-4100. www.trinityjazzfest.net.

GALLERIES

THROUGH FEB. 22

Scott Teplin's "Lubricious" is the New York-based artist's first Texas exhibition. Teplin's offbeat collection of drawings, wallpaper and video obsessively and humorously explores the malleable nature of lubricants. Free admission. Gallery hours: Noon-6 p.m. DiverseWorks, 1117 East Freeway. 713-223-8346. www.diverseworks.org.

THROUGH MARCH 9

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

ONGOING

Gulf Coast Archives & Museum of GLBT History Satellite Exhibition. The first exhibition from the GCAM collection presented at the Houston GLBT Community Center honors the NAMES Project Houston. Community Center, 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

Positive Art Workshop Photography Exhibition. Artists living with HIV/AIDS created these pictures with accompanying text. Houston GLBT Community Center, 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

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

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THE ROUNDUP CAMPGROUND gay campground just opened! Check us at www.roundupcampground.com or call (361) 588-6954. Get your reservations in today!

TRAVEL / U.S.A.

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CLASSIFIEDS

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FRANK

I love your humor, strength & heart. You are intelligent, funny & gorgeous. I love you.

DAVID

HEY BEAUTIFUL

Bill, meeting you has been the best thing to happen in my life. I love you with all of my heart & soul. I'm so glad we decided to get Remy. Will you marry me?

NATHAN

RAY HERNANDEZ

U made love so easy
U made life fun
U love me and I love U
12 years and going strong

LOVE, DANIEL F. FARIAS

RAÚL

Gracias por un año
Lleno de felicidad.
Espero que celebremos
Mucho más juntos.
Te quiero.

TU MAX

RICK

It's been 172 days of happiness. Thank you for all of the things you have done & all the things you have brought to my life. You have a special place in my heart. I look forward to spending many more days with you.

KENNY

SWEETIE

You are my life, my love, my everything!
Happy Valentine's Day!

LOVE, SHARK

AED

The girls & I agree
You're sweeter than the sweetest chocolate
Happy Valentine's Day from your bunnies.

DIVA

ALFRED

Finally met you 2 months ago. Talked about independence & coming out. Love to talk more.
ONE INTROVERT TO ANOTHER.

ALLIE

Roses are red
Violets are blue
I love you & your kitty callie too!
Happy Valentine's Day
All my love

MICHELE

ANNA & MAIA

We're so happy to have met two new friends such as you this year! Let's enjoy Chinese food & crying worms w/fins for many years to come.

LOVE YA!

SWEETIE DARLING

Happy Valentine's Day to the way cutest
Smartest & sexiest girlfriend in the world!
I Love You (more than alpacas!)
XOXOXO

YOUR HYACINTH GIRL

WAYNE

Once in a lifetime
we find that special person
who makes us laugh & smile,
who is there for us in good times & bad times
who we trust w/ our hearts & our soul
who is our best friend, as well, as our lover
I am so happy I have found you
I am so proud to have you as my lover

LOVE, RUSSELL

CAN CAN GIRL

Our love...Strong
Yet soft as a feather.
Today, tomorrow
Til the 12th of never.

XO

CAROL

Happy V-Day silly. You are the most amazing person I have ever know. How could I ever find anyone more perfect? Be mine forever?

LOVE COURTNEY

SONDRA

A lifetime would not be enough
time to spend with you.
Happy Valentine's Day, my love.

LOVE ALWAYS, CAROL

STEVE

To the hottest Gye I know, Thanks for being my guy this Valentine's day. Love & kisses.

MARK

MOOPBEATS

Hey Moopbeats! Take notice. You've been glanced. You're the best & I love you! Happy V Day.

Love, Marcheese

MUPPET

Like stars in the sky, possibilities float above us. Numerous, individual, & reassuring to our journey.

LOVE, McCHICKEN



Q Puzzle

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
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61						62						63		

"Appropriate Rhymes"

Across

- Gay video directory
- Mapplethorpe setting
- Gay Jodie's sitcom
- "The Jungle Book" star (1942)
- Pop singer Cleo
- Bear that roams the night
- Singer Fure
- Former Minnesota state senator
- Milk, for example
- Master's underlings
- Christine Baranski's guest spot on "Frasier"
- "___ she blows!"
- Stands next to Hockney
- Kopay's field
- Press the flesh with
- Shakespeare's Andronicus
- Nero's "Of God"
- Will of "The Waltons"
- Rhyme word for this puzzle
- Get off the breast
- It bit Cleopatra
- Object of Smithers' affection on "The Simpsons"
- Cut out
- Mame portrayer Russell
- "Midnight in the ___ of Good and Evil"
- Small balls
- Like a virgin

- Instrument of the Phantom of the Opera
- Soft-core porn magazine
- Lobe prepared for a stud
- Current currency of Sitges and Ibiza
- Served perfectly, to Mauresmo
- Lech of Greek lore
- Historic Stonewall event
- Bad bottom-line news
- On the wide side
- Tongue of Wilde's land

Down

- Nick was his master
- Military cross-dresser Jeanne
- Help a hood
- Marlon Brando, in "The Bounty"
- Styles
- Music style for Martin
- Pinball wizard foul
- "Cat ___ Hot Tin Roof"
- Walt Whitman's tool
- Dandy
- Bicolor bite
- Straight ___ arrow
- Average scores for Patty Sheehan
- Fop's footwear
- Vibrator measure
- Drags along
- "The Children's ___"
- Samantha not of "Bewitched"
- Joe Cocker's "You ___ Beautiful"
- Drips out slowly
- Anthony Perkins played one in "Psycho"
- Beat ___ horse
- Rent
- Dirty stuff aired by Ted Casablanca
- Attends, with "out"
- A pound of Rupert Everett
- Start of a slogan
- Rev. Mel to Renee Vivien?
- Rainbow flag sticker sites, often
- Tony and Oscar
- Bonheur's war
- Says a "Hail Mary," e.g.
- Lesbian character in "She's Gotta Have It"
- Vieques, Puerto ___
- Bee ___ (disco pioneers)
- Human Rights Campaign fundraiser, e.g.
- Gay beach near San Francisco
- Love of Lesbos
- One on Bernstein's staff?
- Kahlo's that
- Small quantity of lube, e.g.

Answers on Page 24

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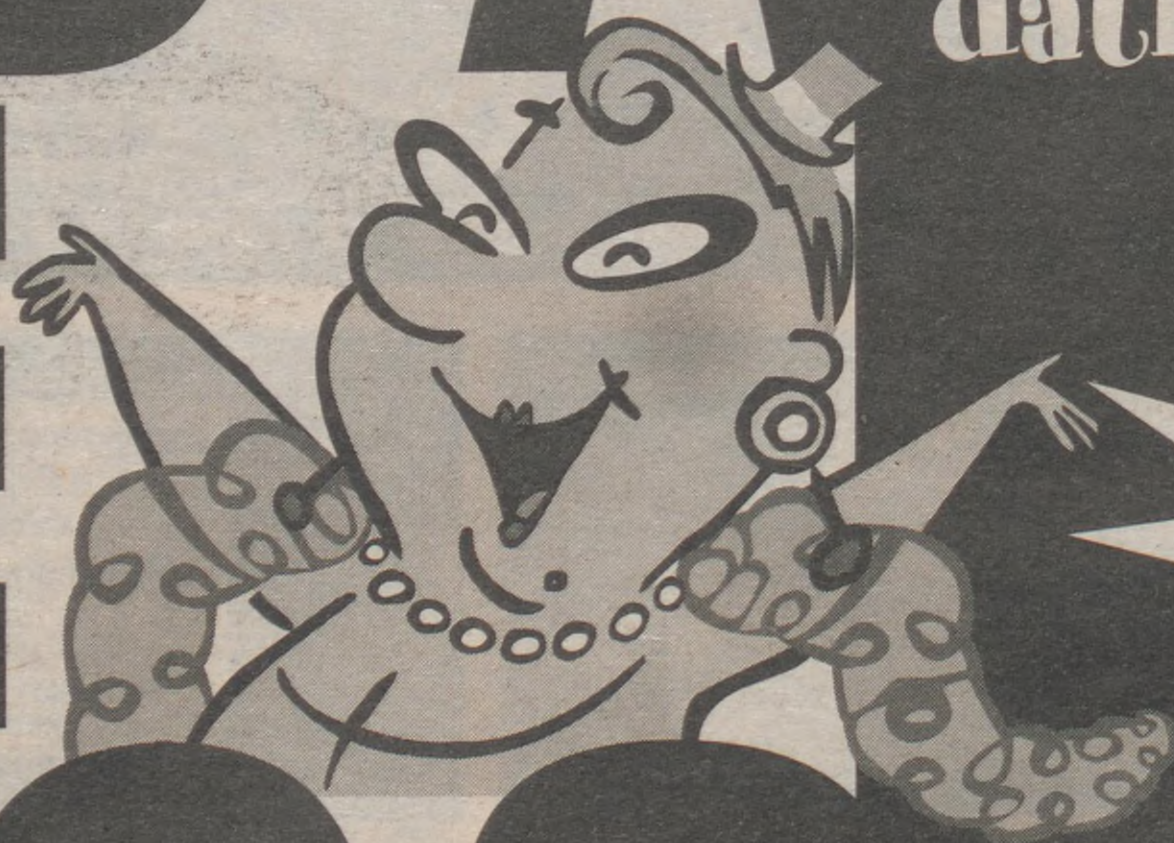


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My Stars!

February 14 — 20



ARIES (March 21 to April 20)

Saturn retrograde in your social sector makes this a tense week for mixing business and pleasure. Separate the two and delegate responsibilities. A Gemini wants to do your bidding — before, during, and after the work day.



TAURUS (April 21 to May 20)

Jupiter opposite Neptune and Mercury may push you to take more of a creative risk in your career. If you stick to what's safe, lucrative clients may not necessarily stick with you. A Cancer inspires you to go the distance.



GEMINI (May 21 to June 21)

Your ruler, intelligent Mercury, gets very close to imaginative Neptune this week. You should get close to a notebook and consolidate your best ideas into one streamlined thesis, pitch, or diatribe. You're able to blend the eclectic with the esoteric. Another Gemini connects to your mind and is drawn to your body.



CANCER (June 22 to July 22)

It's easy for you to improve your mind this week. Study a subject that mystifies you. An intellectual obsession leads to a sexual obsession with an Aquarius. Luckily, it's only dangerous in theory, darling.



LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22)

The Sun moves into your house of serious relationships on Feb. 19. If the person of your dreams can't commit, get real and get someone new. A Taurus is willing to be your transitional love as you move toward what you really want.



VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22)

The Sun enters your house of love on Feb. 19 and brings you the attention you crave. But you're going to have to give love to get it. Holding back your true feelings is not the way to go. Express your deepest longings to a Sag.



LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22)

Children are drawn to you now because they sense how playful and mischievous you are. You can learn a lot from the kiddies by watching how they respond to you. A Virgo wants to play with you.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21)

This is a fabulous week for you to wear bright colors, stalk the paparazzi before they stalk you, and just make a huge deal over yourself all around town. An Aries is a sucker for your charisma.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21)

Don't be too sure of a sure thing where love is concerned. Better to keep a new relationship under wraps and to yourself before announcing it to the world. A Pisces wants to spend some alone time with you.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19)

This is a good time for you to network and connect with those who have always been your greatest fans. Now you can say, "Hey, could you help me out with this?" and still seem like the capable, high achiever you are. A Scorpio just wants to achieve a sexual high with you. Go for it!



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18)

This is a surprisingly cuddly and cute time of year for you, darling. You can improve your state of mind and your physical state of being by moving closer and closer to a receptive partner. A Virgo builds you up. Avoid those who tear you down.



PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20)

One dream may die but another comes to life. Put your faith in something bigger than you, and bigger than you and an Aries together. The world needs you to work as a lean, mean machine of a team.

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

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