

HILL BOWS OUT: He's retiring from activism. **Page 3**



HIV VISIONARY: Houston mourns Michael Springer. **Page 4**



MARRIAGE & UNIONS: A tale of two states. **Page 6**



Judge blocks Maryland sexual education curriculum

Gay-inclusive Montgomery Co. plan temporarily put on hold

By **EARTHA MELZER**

A plan to add gay topics and instructions on condom use as part of a health education curriculum for students in Montgomery County, Md., has developed into a legal battle that is drawing national attention.

U.S. District Court Judge Alexander Williams Jr. issued an injunction May 5 against the Montgomery County Public School system, ordering officials to put on hold plans to pilot the county's new health education curriculum at three middle schools and three high schools.

The judge's ruling came in response to a lawsuit filed by the conservative groups Citizens for a Responsible Curriculum and Parents & Friends of Ex-Gays & Gays, which argued that the new curriculum violates their freedom of speech because it doesn't include discussion of "ex-gays" and that it violates the Establishment Clause by promoting some religions over others. The plaintiffs also claimed that the curriculum could endanger children by inducing them to become gay and to have unprotected sex.

Judge Williams found that "the imminent threat to Plaintiff's First Amendment rights constitutes irreparable harm." But the judge did not agree that the curriculum would lead to harm through increased sexual risk-taking and called the plaintiffs' reasoning, "highly speculative and attenuated."

"Indeed, as [the school board] points out," wrote Judge Williams, "many studies conclude that lesbians are in one of the lowest risk groups for a variety of STDs, including HIV/AIDS."

Montgomery County Schools Superintendent



Montgomery County's revised health education curriculum, which includes discussions of homosexuality and an instructional video on how to use a condom, was suspended May 5 when a federal judge issued a temporary injunction in response to a lawsuit filed by conservative organizations.

Jerry Weast responded to the ruling by canceling pilot testing of the new curriculum for the year. Weast also ordered that a video that demonstrates how to use condoms be removed from schools and asked the school system to look into questions raised about the curriculum by members of CRC and PFOX.

The school system removed its link to the new curriculum but www.teachthefacts.org, the Web site

Please see **SEX ED** on **Page 7**



State Rep. **Joe Moreno** (D-Houston) is being remembered as the one who reminded opposition legislators why they were in the fight.

Gay-friendly legislator killed in car crash

By **BINNIE FISHER**

State legislators went back to work late Wednesday in a session that drifted past Midnight, but it was hardly business as usual.

The House and Senate took a break Wednesday morning to attend the funeral of a colleague, State Rep. Joe Moreno (D-Houston), who was killed in a car crash May 6.

Moreno was one of 29 House members who recently voted against a proposed amendment to the Texas Constitution that would not only ban gay marriage but would also prohibit civil

Please see **MORENO** on **Page 5**



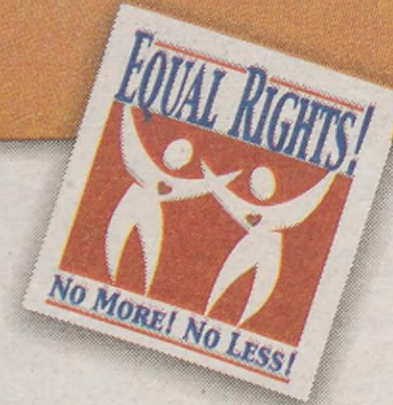
local life
Hairdresser to the stars of drag, **Leon Schwartz**, has coiffed the divas of a glitzy gay artform.
PAGE 8

dish
'Desperate Housewives' Cross and Huffman gab about their recent GLADD awards kiss.
PAGE 17





Houston Pride Celebration



Gay, Lesbian, Bi, and Transgender Pride
Saturday, June 25, 2005

Pride Festival:

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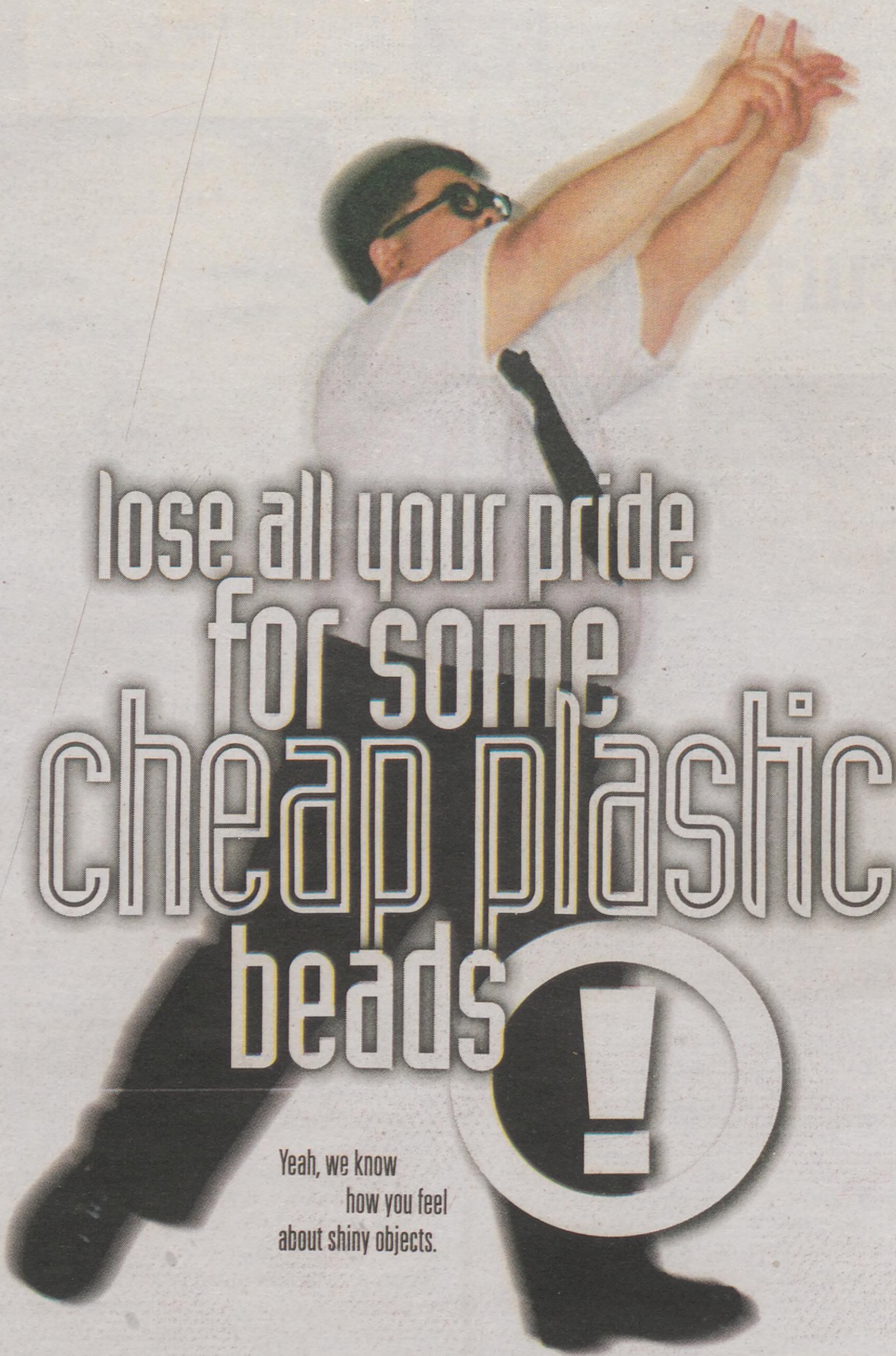
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local news briefs



Dentist Dr. Randy Mitchmore will whiten teeth for charity on May 21.

'Whitening Weekend' helps survivors of domestic violence

Houston dentist Dr. Randy R. Mitchmore has planned a "Whitening Weekend", a teeth whitening event where all proceeds will be contributed to a good cause. The event is scheduled from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. May 21 at 1722 W. Alabama. Proceeds from every teeth whitening treatment will go to the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry's (AACD) Give Back A Smile Program. Mitchmore regularly volunteers his services to the program designed to heal the effects of domestic violence by providing free consultation and dental treatment to restore the smiles of survivors who have sustained dental damage as a result of abuse. Ultradent and Discus Dental are supporters of the program. 713-592-9300.



Former congressman Chris Bell will be among the speakers at a festival sponsored by Democracy for America.

Democracy for America to stage a family festival

"Save America Without DeLay" is the theme of a festival sponsored by Democracy for America at 4:30 p.m. Saturday at Tom Bass Regional Park Number 3, Pavilion Number 4. The park is located at 15108 Cullen Road. The word "DeLay" refers to embattled Republican U.S. Rep Tom DeLay of Sugar Land. The event is described as an afternoon of food, games and speakers, including Richard Morrison, who ran against Tom DeLay last fall and former congressman Chris Bell. www.democracyforamerica.com/DFHPicnic.

GCAM to close temporarily in a money-saving measure

Long strapped for cash, the board of the Gulf Coast Archive & Museum of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender History (GCAM) recently announced that the museum is closing its doors temporarily. With storage rent, the rent on the apartment that housed the museum and other bills, GCAM founder Judy Reeves said, the overhead ran

about \$700 monthly. Since traffic at the museum was light, she said, it made sense to eliminate that expense and concentrate on preserving the many items the museum has from Houston's gay past. The museum will reinstate a program of monthly discussion sessions at 4 p.m. Sunday at the Houston GLBT Community Center, 3400 Montrose, suite 227. During Pride, GCAM will be the beneficiary of a June 22 fundraiser starring Jade Esteban Estrada. Small exhibits of items from the GCAM collection will still be on display at the Community Center.

Kindred Spirits benefits charities and remembers a favorite haunt

The Fourth Annual Kindred Spirits Reunion is planned Saturday at the Edwin Hornberger Conference Center, 2151 W. Holcombe Boulevard at Shamrock Drive. The event each year gathers the kindred spirits who once frequented a popular women's club operated by Marion Coleman. Proceeds benefit Houston Buyers Club, Lesbian Health Initiative, Montrose Clinic and Montrose Counseling Center. For information, call House of Coleman at 713-523-2521.

Uncommon Legacy Houston is accepting Extra Mile applications

Uncommon Legacy Houston is accepting nominations for the 2005 Extra Mile Awards. Last year's winners were Carol Wyatt, Kathy Hubbard and Linda Morales. Award recipients will be announced at the Uncommon Legacy Extra Mile Awards Brunch July 30 at the Intercontinental Houston. Deadline for award nominees is July 18. For information, e-mail legacy-houston@yahoo.com.

From staff and wire reports

local news

Gay activist Ray Hill says it's time to hang up his sword

By BINNIE FISHER

Over four decades of fighting for the rights of gays and lesbians, Ray Hill has seen and done it all.

He's been to jail and to prison, though the prison stint had nothing to do with gay activism.

"I was a thief, a commercial burglar," Hill says. "I specialized in art, antiques and jewelry."

He's also seen his civil rights case against the Houston Police Department go all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, where he won.

Today, his business cards proudly include a term that came from the court's opinion in referring to Ray Hill as "Citizen Provocateur." He wears the title proudly.

Hill was arrested for questioning the police about arresting a young black man on his lawn. When an officer warned that he should be quiet or face arrest himself, Hill replied, "I think that's a great idea, mother fucker."

The court's opinion stated that Hill was free to refer to the mothers of the officers in whatever way he chose.

As gays and lesbians in Houston prepare to stage the second ever conference on the future, Hill is about to stun them with an announcement.

"I'm retiring," he says.

He was there the night gays and lesbians united in a legion that was reported to be 12,000-strong and protested the inclusion of Florida orange juice spokeswoman Anita Bryant in an early 1970s convention of the State Bar of Texas.

The first conference on the future

He was there for the first conference on the future, Town Meeting I, that netted in the formation of the Montrose Clinic, Montrose Counseling Center, the Q-Patrol and other entities.

He'll remain on the activist rolls until after the upcoming June Conference on the future and then, he'll take his queue from a Kathryn Hepburn quote.

"Kathryn Hepburn said, 'I always enjoyed the party, but I never knew when to leave.' I'm not going to make Kathryn's mistake."

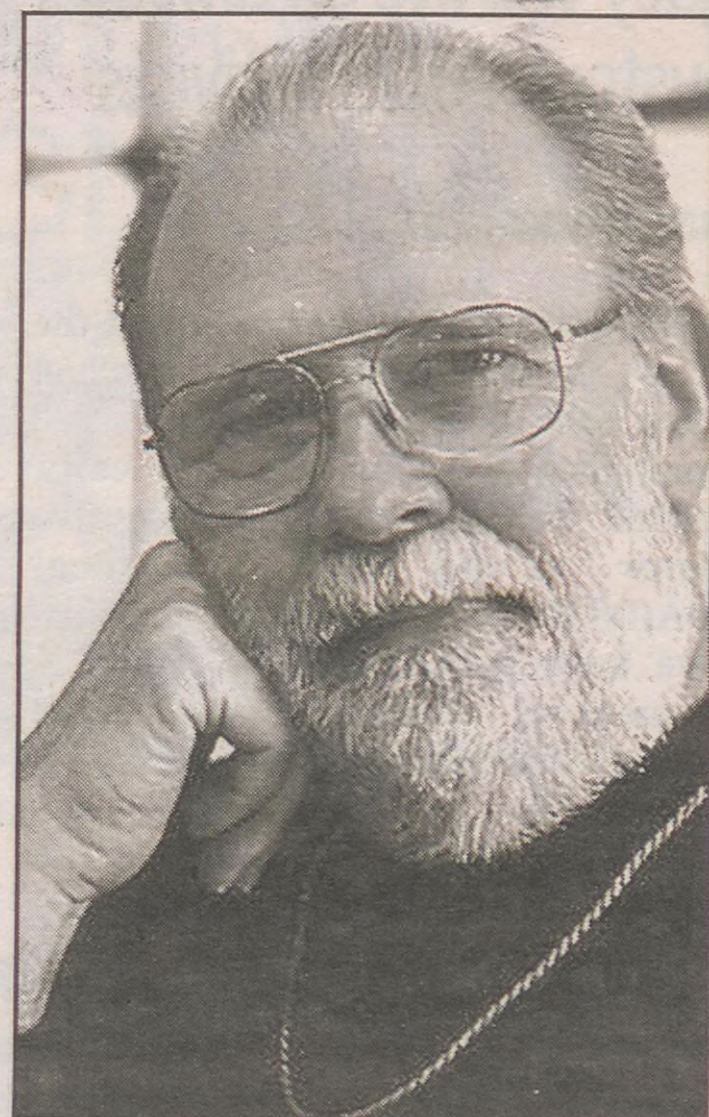
He remembers that in the early 1960s, the major issue on the horizon involved an often unseen segment of gay life, women.

"In Houston, it all started around 1966," he says.

The problem was police raids on bars, lesbian bars. The problem? "Lesbians with flies on their pants," Hill says.

He recalls that a lesbian with the nickname of "Papa Bear" got a group together.

"Most other places, women didn't have any problems," he says. "In Houston, women had just about as many



Gay activist Ray Hill is adamant, he's retiring from the cause.

problems as the men. It was good for organizing." Having grown up with union organizers for parents, Hill says, he knew how to do that.

In the '60s, he says, nobody took gay activism as serious opposition.

Through the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s, Hill said, he marveled at the perseverance of gays and lesbians. He describes it as a class of people who were faced with the terror of AIDS and instead of running away, confronted it head-on.

"Our community's leadership in the face of that pandemic is truly remarkable," he says.

When the conference on the future concludes, Hill says, he will officially retire to work on other matters, including his Prison Show on KPFT-FM, 90.1 and his one-man prison show that he spent last week touring in Pennsylvania.

He says he is confident that today's crop of activists will carry on the work he began 40 years ago.

His colleagues say they are stunned by Hill's announced retirement.

"I hope he doesn't go into quiet retirement," says attorney Jerry W. Simoneaux. "All of us here in Houston stand on his shoulders. He made it legal to call the police mother fuckers."

Transgender activist Phyllis Randolph Frye says, "He's forced a lot of other leaders to step up and become more visible."

Randall Ellis, executive director of the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas concurs.

"Ray has been an icon," he says. "It's certainly a huge loss at a time when more people with experience in training new leaders."

Hill says he's trained good leadership. He says his work is done.

local obituary

AIDS funding advocate remembered

Colleagues say Springer's legacy will live on among Houston's AIDS activists

By RICH ARENSCHIEDT

AIDS activists this week mourned the loss of former Houstonian Michael Springer, who died May 6 in Dallas.

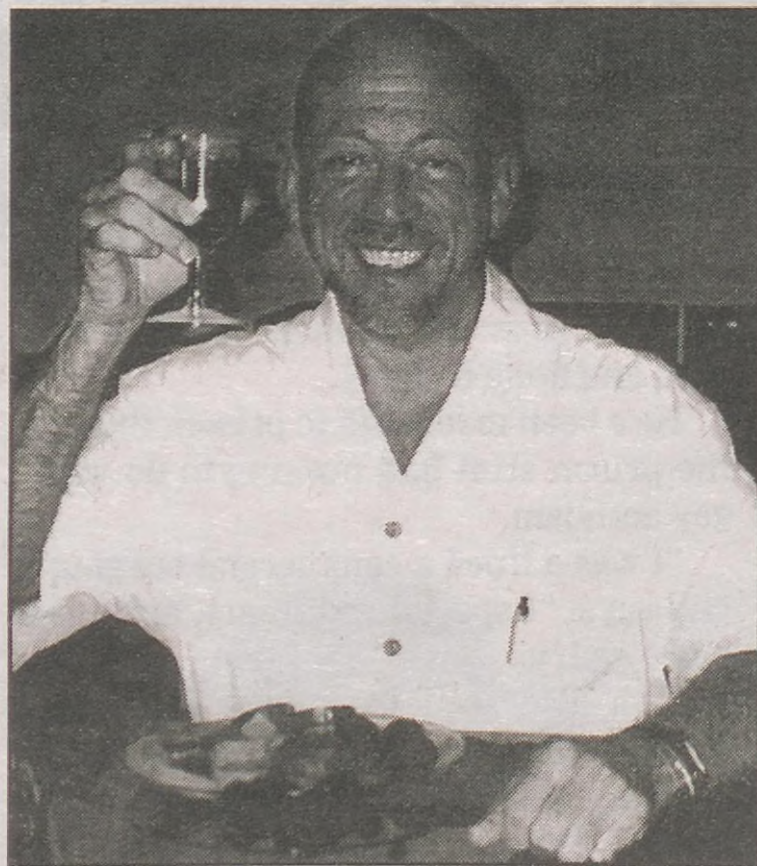
Springer, 55, was known locally, statewide, and nationally as Executive Director of the Houston Regional HIV/AIDS Resource Group, an administrative agency that oversees the disbursement of millions of dollars in state and federal funds to assist HIV-positive Texans.

A native Texan, Springer was born in Big Spring on May 23, 1949. He attended Baylor University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Texas Women's University.

His professional career was varied but had a consistent central thread – assisting those in need. Throughout the 1980s, he served as a minister and worked as a hospital oncology chaplain before entering the field of HIV program management and resource administration.

At the time of his death, he was pursuing a Ph.D. in public health.

He was famous for his encyclopedic



Former Houstonian Michael Springer, who headed up the Houston Regional HIV/AIDS Resource Group, died May 6 in Dallas.

knowledge of the complex milieu of state and federal HIV funding sources. Springer was one of a very select group of administrative agents who understood all of the legislative and regulatory elements surrounding HIV funding.

According to E. Ross Craft, longtime chair of The Resource Group, "Michael was nationally recognized as one of the few who could negotiate the maze of HIV/AIDS funding. Additionally, he was completely passionate with regard to the work of The Resource Group. His devotion

to the community was unparalleled."

Others working at Houston's AIDS service organizations expressed heartfelt respect for Springer. Longtime colleague and friend Dr. Jack Nemecek remembers Springer's unique interpersonal abilities.

"I was so impressed with his professionalism, his intelligence and dedication to the work he was charged to do," Nemecek said. "He was expert at dealing with people, he knew everybody in the field and his opinions were sought out and well-respected. Michael shared his expertise freely with all who needed it – he was a true collaborator."

Yvette Proctor, current executive director of The Resource Group, mirrored the view of many when she noted, "Michael's passing was a profound shock to all of us. To those with whom he worked he was a mentor, role model, confidante and friend. His humor and passion inspire us to continue the legacy he started – one that assures that HIV-positive consumers have a voice in the care and services they receive."

Those who knew him have said that Springer's kindness and willingness to impart knowledge to others, combined with his decade of leadership in HIV funding and service delivery, will continue to beneficially impact the lives of thousands of HIV-positive men, women, and children – a legacy of which he would be justifiably proud.

national

Ed Gallagher, activist, dies

Outsports.com reported that activist Ed Gallagher died on May 4 at his home in New Rochelle, N.Y. of a heart condition. Gallagher, who was the author of three books, was a starting tackle at the University of Pittsburgh. He was so ashamed of being gay that, at age 27, he tried to kill himself by rolling off the edge of the Kensico Dam in Westchester County. His attempt was unsuccessful, but he did sustain a spinal cord injury and was confined to a wheelchair. He went on to create a nonprofit organization and Web site called "Alive to Thrive," which was dedicated to "promoting suicide prevention, emotional and sexual health, creativity and potential, and the free expression and rights of all individuals." In 1994, Gallagher wrote "Johnny in the Spot," a novel that looks at the experiences of a gay man named Johnny Spokain who also suffers a spinal injury. His other works are "Will I Live Another Day Before I Die: Thoughts on Suicide and Life" and "Roller Coaster Release: A Collection of Organized Chaos." "Mr. Ed's Corral" was the name of a cable television talk show hosted by Gallagher, which began in 1986; it covered a number of disability related topics. "The show was an extension of Ed and committed to the issues he took to heart," wrote Cyd Zeigler on Outsports.com. "While he was the shortest guy in the room, sitting in his wheelchair, from the moment I met him, he was always the biggest person in the room."

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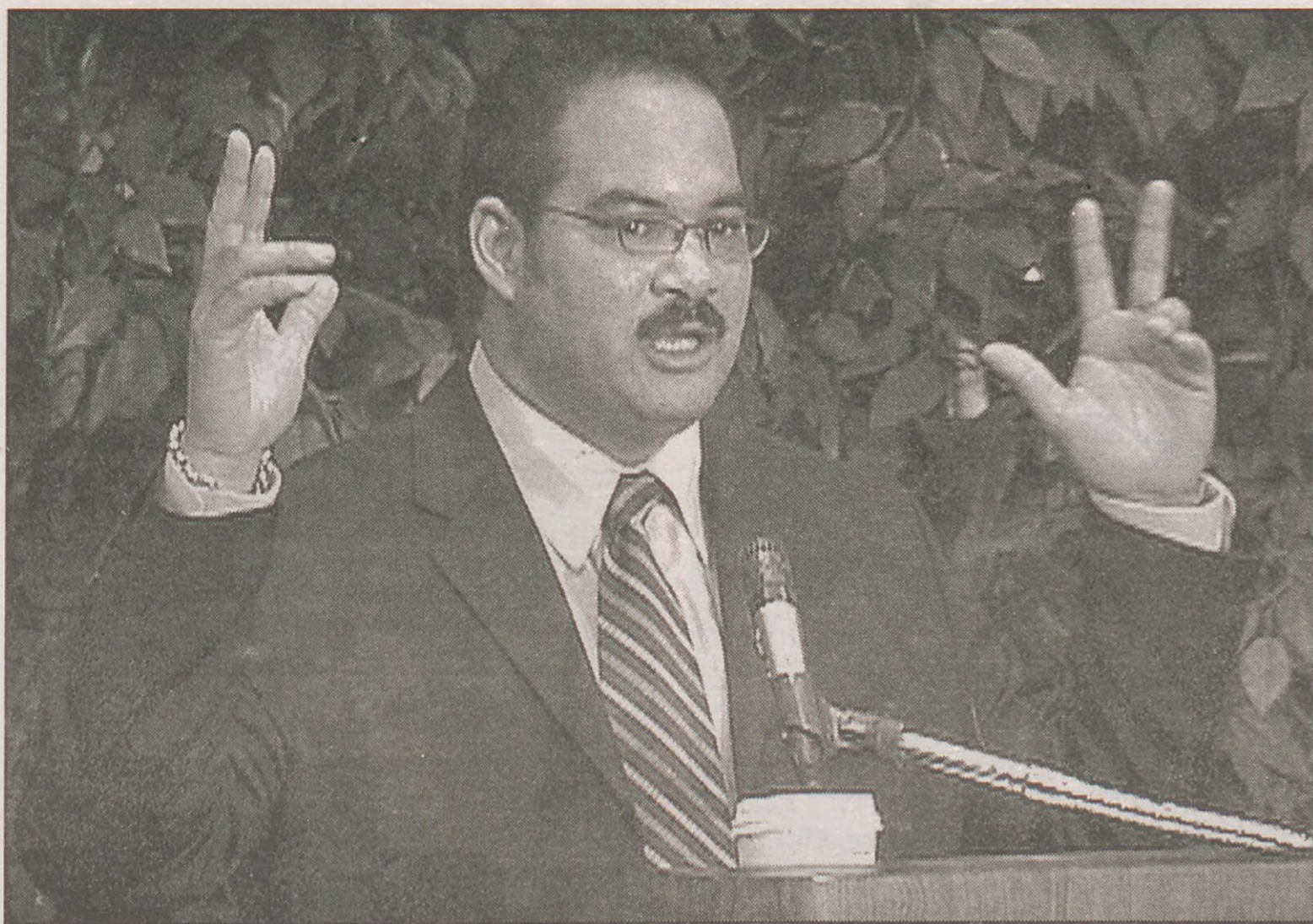
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local news



State Rep. Garnett Coleman (D-Houston) was a close ally of House member Joe Moreno, who was killed last week in a car crash.

Moreno kept House colleagues going when battles were lost

MORENO, continued from Page 1

unions. The measure needed 100 votes to prevail in the House, and it received 101.

In the truck with Moreno May 6 as he drove back to Austin from a Houston Rockets game were State Rep. Rafael Anchia (D-Dallas) and Monica Piñon, a legislative aide to Rep. Joe Pickett (D-El Paso). Anchia sustained minor injuries, but Piñon was hospitalized with broken bones.

Department of Public Safety investigators said Moreno appeared to have veered onto the shoulder and overcompensated, causing his four-wheel-drive truck to slide into a ditch and overturn.

Those who worked closely with Moreno were still in shock on Thursday, a day after his funeral in Houston.

State Rep. Garnett Coleman (D-Houston) said legislators from both sides of the political spectrum will miss Moreno because he was a unifying force.

"He knew how to bring people together through their commonality," he said.

With a Republican-dominated House and Senate, Coleman said, Democrats rely on one another for support.

"We work in teams," he said. "It's lonely when you are in the opposition, but it's not lonely when you are in groups. When you have someone like Joe, who can say, 'Come on, let's get this done,' it makes a difference."

Moreno was first elected to House District 143 in 1998 and was serving his fourth term at the time of his death.

He was introduced to state politics when he was hired as chief of staff for State Rep. Jessica Farrar (D-Houston).

Speaking at his funeral Wednesday, Farrar could hardly hold back the tears as she talked about Moreno as a colleague and as a friend.

"He made everything fun, and he made

everything seem possible," she said. "He always knew what he wanted and had a plan to get it."

Farrar said Moreno made it no secret when he worked for her that his goal was to become a state representative.

She added that he worked tirelessly for children, the poor and senior citizens.

The 90-minute Catholic service drew more than 1,500 mourners and featured a mariachi band.

Among those in attendance were Gov. Rich Perry, Houston Mayor Bill White, fellow legislators and longtime friends from his East-End Houston neighborhood.

Many of Moreno's colleagues expressed shock after hearing news of the fatal accident.

State Rep. Martha Wong (R-Houston) said even though she and Moreno were often on opposite sides of an issue, he easily won her respect.

"I saw him as a very caring person and a very inclusive person," she said. "He always made us laugh. It is so tragic, but I know he is in a better place than we are."

Randall Ellis, executive director of the Lesbian/Gay Lobby of Texas (LGRL) said Moreno's death has left a pale of sadness over the state capitol.

"Joe was a great friend to our community," he said. "He was someone you could always depend on to do the right thing."

Beyond that, he said, "There's another side of this. It really hurts our folks in terms of putting everything in perspective. It knocked the wind out of our folks."

Coleman added, "He was an integral part of this fight for what's right. I don't think people understand how hard it is to lose all the time and keep going."

When he and his colleagues found it difficult to pick themselves up and go on, Coleman said, it was Moreno who urged them on.

"He knew that a demoralized group of people will lose it," Coleman said.

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national news

Oregon, California move on marriage

By EARTHA MELZER

Oregon Rep. Dennis Richardson (R-Central Point) has introduced a reciprocal benefits bill (HB 3476) in an attempt to counter SB 1000, a bill that would create civil unions and ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and which has strong support in the Senate.

Scott Jorgenson, legislative assistant for Rep. Richardson, said that he expects to know within the next week or so whether the reciprocal benefits bill will receive a committee hearing. Jorgenson said that the bill is modeled on one enacted in Hawaii in 1997.

"Last November Oregonians voted to define marriage as between a man and a woman with measure 36, which received 57 percent of the vote," Jorgenson said. "SB1000 runs counter to what the people said they wanted. We wanted to address all the basic fairness issues that came up ... transfer of property, hospital visitation."

Basic Rights Oregon, a statewide gay and lesbian advocacy organization, calls the reciprocal benefits bill "unfair, inadequate and insulting." In a letter to members, BRO said, "This bill is an attempt by religious extremists to appear 'moderate', to undermine any real chance at fairness for same-sex couples and to dominate the terms of this debate by making civil unions look too extreme for Oregon."

BRO said that reciprocal benefits would provide only a handful of benefits, most of which can already be achieved through contracts; that the reciprocal benefits plan

degrades committed same-sex relationships by treating them the same as other groups that cannot marry; and that this plan would not provide equal protections for gay men and lesbians under the state constitution.

Kara Suffredini, legislative lawyer for the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force said that though reciprocal benefits are being offered as an alternative to civil unions in Oregon, the two are not comparable systems.

"The limited benefits they offer are nowhere near a substitute for marriage-related rights and obligations. For example, a partner to a reciprocal beneficiary relationship need not inform the other partner before terminating the relationship—he/she must simply file notice with the state."

Suffredini said that benefits offered under reciprocal benefits plans are geared toward couples and do not provide family-oriented benefits, such as survivorship rights and applicability of parenting and divorce laws.

In 1993, the Hawaii Supreme Court ruled that it is unconstitutional to deny gay couples the right to marry. The Court said the government had no compelling interest in denying marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Then the Hawaii Legislature passed a Defense of Marriage Act banning same-sex marriage and a reciprocal benefits law.

Under the Hawaiian plan, reciprocal beneficiaries must be legally prevented from marrying one another, 18 years old, not married and not in another reciprocal beneficiary relationship. The law does not require that the

people live in the same place. The law went into effect in 1997 and granted 60 rights to registered beneficiaries. Some of these benefits expired in 1999 when the Hawaii Legislature did not renew some of the bill. The current law provides reciprocal beneficiaries very limited rights, including inheritance without a will, worker's compensation, protection under domestic violence laws and standing to sue for the wrongful death of a partner.

Vermont also has a system of reciprocal benefits that was created by the same law that established civil unions for same-sex partners in that state. In Vermont reciprocal beneficiaries must be related to one another to an extent that they cannot marry. The rights granted these couples are mainly within a medical context such as hospital visitation and medical decision-making.

Both the California Senate and House judiciary committees moved May 10 to block the progress of a state constitutional amendment that would ban same-sex marriage.

California law has prohibited same sex marriage since 1977. Since then California has developed the country's most comprehensive domestic partnership system. In California domestic partnership conveys the same rights granted by marriage in Massachusetts or by civil unions in Vermont, and, as of this October in Connecticut.

Last month the Senate Judiciary passed the Religious Freedom & Civil Marriage Protection Act, which would allow same-sex couples to marry. Opponents of same-sex mar-



Rep. Dennis Richardson has introduced a reciprocal benefits bill that would grant same-sex couples fewer rights than would be granted by Oregon's civil unions bill which is under consideration by the Senate.

riage have vowed to seek a referendum to amend the constitution to ban same-sex marriage. Earlier this year a San Francisco Superior Court ruled that the state law against same-sex marriage is unconstitutional. This decision is in the process of appeal.

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national news

Brain responses differ among gays, straights

Swedish researchers boost biological link to homosexuality

By LOU CHIBBARO JR.

Researchers in Sweden have discovered that a section of the brain that may be linked to sexual arousal responds differently in gay and straight men who were asked to smell chemical scents extracted from male and female sex hormones.

Swedish neuroscientists report findings showing that the hypothalamus region of the brain responded in a similar way in a group of gay men and heterosexual women after both groups sampled odors obtained from male perspiration.

Brain functions of the study subjects were examined through separate positron emission tomography, or "PET" scans, and magnetic resonance imaging, or "MRI," tests.

The same imaging tests given to a sample of heterosexual men showed that their hypothalamuses did not respond with neurological activity in the same way to the odor from male perspiration but did respond to a separate odor obtained from an estrogen-like substance found in women's urine.

The sample of gay men and heterosexual women, in turn, showed no significant neurological response in their hypothalamuses when asked to sample the odor from the female substance, known as EST.

The study was conducted by a team of researchers from the Department of Clinical Neuroscience & Medicine at Karolinska University Hospital in



Ivanka Savic was one of the authors of a Swedish study that found gay men and women have the same sexual response to certain male smells. Straight men do not have similar responses.

Stockholm, Sweden. It was published in the May 10 edition of the Proceedings of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences.

The test subjects were also asked to smell several "control" substances, such as lavender oil, cedar oil, and butanol, the study said. These substances did not trigger any hypothalamic responses during the brain imaging tests, the study said.

Supports genetic theory

Some scientists familiar with the study said it appears to support the theory, advanced by previous studies, that link sexual orientation to the genetic makeup of individuals through mechanisms believed to be acquired at birth rather than through psychological factors.

The odor obtained from male perspiration used in the Swedish study comes from a

testosterone derivative called AND, the Swedish researchers said in their study.

Ivanka Savic, Hans Berglund, and Per Linstrom — the lead researchers in the Swedish study — conclude that their findings provide new evidence that pheromones might play a role in human sexuality.

The three researchers also state that their study "further indicates hypothalamic involvement in physiological processes related to sexual orientation in humans."

But they express caution that the different responses in the hypothalamus between gay men and heterosexual men could be related to "an acquired sensitization to AND stimuli in the hypothalamus [among gay men] ... due to repeated sexual exposure to men." They also note that they exposed their research subjects to far higher concentrations of the hormone-produced odors than would be expected in normal human interaction, and that the higher concentrations could have played a role in the hypothalamic responses.

Sandra Witelson, a specialist in brain anatomy with the DeGroot School of Medicine at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada, told the Associated Press that the Swedish study "clearly shows a biological involvement in sexual orientation."

The Swedish study follows findings in the early 1990s by U.S. researcher Simon LeVay, which showed that the hypothalamus region of the brain is significantly larger in heterosexual men than it is in gay men and heterosexual women. LeVay conducted his research by measuring the size of the hypothalamuses of human cadavers.

The study by the Swedish researchers also follows a study published earlier this month in the journal *Human Genetics* by National Institutes of Health researcher Dean Hamer identifying similarities in the

chromosomes of a sample of gay brothers. Hamer's latest study is a follow-up to his previous research showing the existence of clusters of gays within families, a development that suggests, Hamer and other researchers said, a link between homosexuality and the genetic makeup of individuals.

Hamer called his findings important because they reinforce the theory that "sexual orientation is at least partially genetic and that there are many different genes, not just one or two," that may be linked to sexual orientation.

According to the report this week in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the Swedish researchers used a total of 36 people as subjects for their study. The 36 were divided into three groups of 12: gay men, heterosexual men, and heterosexual women. All 23 were "healthy, un-medicated, right-handed, and HIV-negative," the study report says. The report says all 36 were also within a similar age range and had a similar level of education.

The report said all of the heterosexual men and women scored a "0" on the Kinsey scale of heterosexuality/homosexuality, while all of the gay men scored a 6 on the Kinsey scale. The scale, developed by famed sex researcher Alfred Kinsey, uses a 0 to describe people who say they engage solely in opposite sex sexual activity throughout their lives. A score of 6 is used to describe people who engage solely in same-sex sexual activity during their lifetime.

Brian Mustanski, a university of Illinois researcher who worked with Hamer on the study linking chromosomes to gay siblings, called the study by the Swedish researchers "very well done" and a significant advance in findings suggesting a genetic link to sexual orientation.

'Ex-gays' insist on being part of Md. sex ed class

SEX ED, continued from Page 1

maintained by supporters has posted the curriculum. The Montgomery County Board of Education unanimously approved the new curriculum last year.

Falwell group claims victory

Mat Staver, president of the Liberty Counsel, said on the organization's Web site that the judge's decision granting a 10-day injunction was a major victory, calling it, "the most significant curriculum decision ever."

"Yesterday's decision snatched our youth out of the jaws of a radical homosexual agenda," Staver said.

Liberty Counsel is a non-profit law firm

that provides free representation for Christians. It is involved in the effort to introduce the teaching of creationism in public schools.

The Liberty Counsel is affiliated with Jerry Falwell's Liberty University, which was involved in stopping the manual recount in Florida during the 2000 election and was in the news recently for its involvement in the Terri Schiavo case and its arguments before the Supreme Court in favor of the public display of the Ten Commandments.

The plaintiffs in this case have said that because Montgomery County is a large and affluent school district, what happens in its curriculum will have wide-ranging effects.

There has been widespread media coverage of the controversy.

David Fishback was chair of the citizens' advisory committee, a group of parents, teachers and community members that worked for two years to create the updates for the 8th grade and 10th grade health education curriculum after receiving reports from teachers that the old curriculum was inadequate.

"The judge is put in a difficult position," Fishback said, "and the points that he makes have some merit."

Fishback said that the plaintiffs filed 78 pages of legal and factual assertions and the Montgomery County School Board had less than 48 hours to respond.

Fishback said that it appears that the judge may not have understood that the discussion of religious views that the plaintiffs presented as part of the curriculum were actually part of a teacher resource section that is not distributed to students.

"There are 22 teacher resources," Fishback said, "the objectionable material is in three of the 22 teacher resources we selected to accompany curriculum."

'Venom' in the curriculum

The only statement about religion in the curriculum is one statement in the 8th grade curriculum that different religions have different views on homosexuality and that the views of individuals within a religion vary.

"In hindsight we should have selected dif-

ferent resources because they do express a viewpoint," Fishback said. "But as a result of this controversy, people do understand that there are a variety of viewpoints."

Fishback said the judge said nothing negative about anything that is in the curriculum and that the teacher resources that formed the basis for his ruling could be removed.

"This is a science course," Fishback said, and the school is not required to provide a venue for theological debate.

Wayne Besen, author of "Anything But Straight: Unmasking the Scandals & Lies Behind the Ex-Gay Myth," said in a statement that PFOX is not a credible organization and that the lawsuit against Montgomery County is frivolous and should be dropped.

"PFOX is the most despicable anti-gay group in the nation because its main thrust is to infiltrate schools and inject venom into the curriculum," Besen said. "This is an attempt to put a right-wing program into place that will tear down gay students and make them vulnerable to the appeals of charlatans such as PFOX."

i MORE INFO

Montgomery County Public Schools
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www.mcps.k12.md.us

Local Life

HOUSTON VOICE

MAY 6, 2005

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He's the hairdresser to the stars of drag

Leon Schwartz spent 28 years ratting and rolling the hair of some of drag's most famous queens.

By JOHNNY MADDOX

In the glitzy and glamorous world of female impersonation, someone has to be the expert when it comes to creating those beautiful, elegant coiffures that adorn the heads of all those aspiring beauty queens, not to mention painting the fabulous faces that ultimately transform mere men into gorgeous women.

For the last 28 years, that someone has been Leon "Lee" Schwartz, a native Houstonian with varied interests and by all accounts a force to be reckoned with.

Schwartz attended beauty school in the late 1970s and quickly found his way into the world of wigs, lashes and mascara. Immediately, his talent was recognized and he was hired to do hair at the legendary Copa, which featured the Fabulous Four every Sunday night.

Schwartz was the first one to put Tandi Andrews in drag and even gave her that now famous name.

When he was hired at the Copa, he replaced the talented Robert Clanton at his own request and soon acquired a list of superstar entertainers that impressed even the most jaded of pageant aficionados.

The list included porn star Jeff Stryker, singer Anita Ward, impressionist Kenny "Claude" Sasha, as well as disco icon Grace Jones.

The list of female impersonators is equally impressive with names like Tiffany Jones, Donna Day, Hot Chocolate, Naomi Sims, Tasha Kohl, Charlie, Nikki Hansen, Paivi, Dyan Micheals, Tina Alexander, Taylor Kennedy, Candy Holliday, Black Velvett, Coco, Jerry Harper, Tiffany Arieaugus, (the mouth of the south) Ernestine, Brandi West, Tommy Ross, Netasha Edwards, Laura Lee Love (founder of the Royal Sovereign Imperial Court of the Single Star), Miss High Energy Cheree, and Kelly Lauren.

The list and travels are truly endless. His first actual pageant contestant was Sabrina DeLorean for Miss Gay Houston 1980, and of course Jill Jordan, who won Miss Lone Star Country 1981. Thus began a twenty-five year association that netted three state and three national titles collectively.

"It's been a very enlightening and growing period of my life," Schwartz said. "I love all the people I have met and



Leon Schwartz rats and chats with Jill Jordan in preparation for a recent drag event. (Photo by Dalton De Hart)

worked with over the years. Each and every one has been an inspiration to me, and I think the association has helped me evolve into who I am today."

His best friend and protégé for most of his career was Paivi Lee Love, whom he quickly molded and trained to be a self-sufficient entertainer. Their crowning achievement was Love being crowned Miss Galaxy in 1998.

Love's death a year later was devastating, Schwartz acknowledged.

"It was life altering for me because he had been a member of my family for over twenty years," Schwartz said. "It made me review and assess my own existence and motivated me to appreciate and made me strive to raise the quality of my life."

He has gone on in his typical style to persevere and stay focused on his goals.

i Leon 'Lee' Schwartz

Age: 45
Birthplace: Houston
Home: Houston
Education: Houston Community College
Relationship Status: Single
Pets: Diva Kitty and Max the Boxer

After returning to college a few years ago, Schwartz made the Dean's List with a 3.77 grade point average. He has started a new career in Public Relations and Marketing.

"I went back to college to prove to myself that I was who I always thought I was at a time I was questioning myself," Schwartz admitted.

Today he still works with a select few of drag's elite, but is always willing to work his magic on a deserving newcomer for a moderate fee.

He is currently managed by Texas Entertainment Agency and is available for consultations and services.

In addition to hair and make-up, Schwartz is Public Relations and Quality Assurance Director for Houston Medical Transfer, a local emergency medical service.

In March, he coordinated a marketing blitz to benefit Texas Children's Hospital Auxiliary, which was a rousing success. He confided, "Marketing has always been an interest of mine and thanks to my sister, Trixy, who gave me the confidence and support to go for it, it has been a very successful decision."

Schwartz, who turned 45 on May 10, enjoys gardening at the new home he shares with his extended family, sister Trixy, Laura, two teens, Diva kitty, as well as a loving and spoiled Boxer named Max.

"They are my family like any other family, my support system, my guardian angels and a top reason I am so happy today," he said.

Recently he was diagnosed with diabetes and other health issues and has had to take charge of his health by losing some excess weight. He has cut his once long hair, giving him a healthier and younger appearance.

"It's truly sad that it takes the shock of having health problems to make you want to live," Schwartz said. "For probably the first time in my life, my world is turning and I am on it and participating."

Having survived two near deadly hate crimes in the past, he has never allowed those events to make him bitter or afraid of attempting his day-to-day life or goals. He approaches life with the determination to tackle any task, whether it's marketing, hair and make-up or gardening, and to succeed at all cost.

out in houston

(Photos by Dalton DeHart)



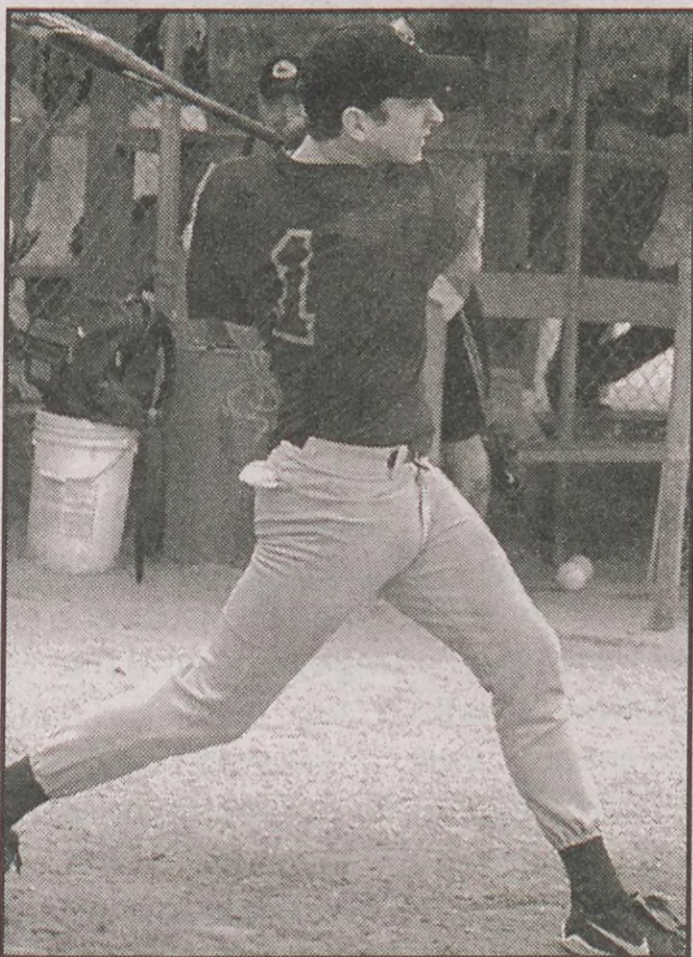
During the PFLAG-H.A.T.C.H. scholarship dinner last week, **Jacob Ornelas** received one of the awards as his mother, **Leo Ornelas**, and sister, **Paula Ornelas**, helped him celebrate.



Violinist **Geoff Nuttall** (left) talked with cellist **Sonia Wieder-Atherton** and Da Camera Executive Director **Sarah Duck Loudermilk** after the organization's season finale last week.



At a reception following Da Camera's season finale, 'Gypsies and Bohemians,' ticket manager **David Braddon** joined Artistic Director and pianist **Sarah Rothenberg** and violinist **Geoff Nuttall** to celebrate a successful 2004-2005 season.



Doug Smith swings hard during Montrose Softball League play last Sunday.



Nixon Wheat threw a Derby Day, mint julep fundraiser for city Council Candidate **Sue Lovell**, and gathered on the stairs are (from left) Houston City Controller **Annise Parker**, **Lovell**, **Wheat**, and political strategist **Grant Martin**.



Janice Merritt (left) and her partner, **Anita Jones**, were among those in attendance at a spiritual Splash Day service conducted by **Jeffrey Campbell**, pastor of Fresh Start Church.

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MAY 21, 2005

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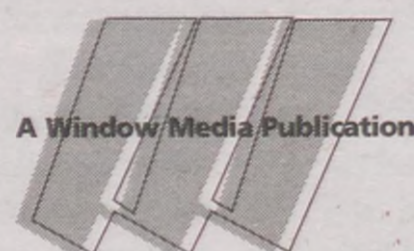
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Forum

HOUSTON VOICE

MAY 13, 2005

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editorial

A Baptist at the door

A Baptist picked the wrong day of
the wrong week of the wrong month
of the wrong year to come calling.

By BINNIE FISHER

I'M JUST NOT ONE TO BE impolite, so what happened Monday has me a little unnerved.

I had just arrived home from work. My partner and I live in Brazoria County,

the county just south of Harris County. We're in a rural area where the breeze blows cool even on the hottest days of summer and sweeps across our four and a half acres.

There is no place better on a hot afternoon than one of the Adirondack chairs that are parked under the oak tree in the front yard.

Our community of 3,000 people seemed tranquil, and in addition to making friends with other gays who live there, we've found straight friends who are supportive of our relationship.

So, what happened Monday evening caught me off-guard.

Someone wheeled onto the property, sending all five dogs barking at once.

I opened the door and was greeted by a baby-faced man who uttered my name and wanted to know if I was that person. Up went the iron barrier.

He happily informed me that he wanted to invite me to the First Baptist Church, to which I reservedly answered, "No thank you."

He persisted, "Well, do you go to church?"

Managing to keep a lid on the anger that I felt bubbling somewhere just below the surface, I answered, "That's a private matter."

Able to hold back no longer, I blurted out, "Besides, you wouldn't want us. We're lesbians."

A look of absolute horror grazed his face, and he countered, "Well, we don't approve of the lifestyle."

"It's not a lifestyle," I answered. "Now, goodbye."

He ran pretty quickly to his car and backed out of the driveway as rapidly as possible.

All I can say is he must have caught me on the wrong day of the wrong week of the wrong month of the wrong year in the century.

Houston had just days earlier lost one

of only 29 Texas House members who voted against a proposed constitutional amendment that would not only ban same-sex marriage but would also prohibit civil unions.

Rep. Joe Moreno (D-Houston) had been killed in a car crash that also injured another Democratic legislator and a legislative staffer.

That marriage bill sailed effortlessly through the Texas House. Earlier, the House had approved an amendment to a foster care bill that would prohibit gays and lesbians from serving as foster parents.

I guess I attach some blame to the conservative Christians for all the setbacks gays and lesbians have suffered recently.

The baby-faced man at my door couldn't have known that. Nor could he have known that the Southern Baptists and I go way back.

My mother, who had grown up Baptist but didn't care to attend church herself, sent my siblings and me to Baptist Sunday school and to vacation Bible school every summer. That is, until I was old enough to refuse to go. Even at a young age, I detected something sinister beneath all the candy-coated greetings. And, I knew I didn't belong.

In high school I went home one day with a classmate whose mother met me at the door and demanded to know, "Are you saved?"

I gave the classmate the benefit of the doubt and went with her to a revival meeting at the Southern Baptist Church she attended. The visiting preacher railed on about women wearing their hair short. I had just had all mine chopped off earlier that week to about an inch long. Enough, already.

When I finally found my way to the Episcopal Church in the small town where we lived, my mother's Baptist relatives assured me that now I really was going to hell because that's where all Episcopalians were bound. I can only imagine what they would have said if they had known that in a few short years, I would come out of the closet.

Just after college, my mother was dying of cancer, and I found myself smoldering in a corner because her relative's Southern Baptist preacher thought it was his duty to join the deathwatch in her hospital room.

Of course, they asked him to preach her funeral. He made note during the service that it was her wish to see her three children baptized. Since she hadn't spoken a coherent sentence in weeks, I wondered when she made that pronouncement.

As if that wasn't enough, he dropped by our house a couple of weeks after her burial to finish the job, to bring her three sinning offspring to Jesus. As we three siblings sat there in that uncomfortable moment, I noticed my 11-year-old brother turn red. I knew to brace for a storm.

He stood and unleashed a torrent of four-letter words, the likes of which I'm sure the preacher had not heard before. I could barely believe what I was witnessing as he ordered the preacher out of the house and told him never to show his sorry ass at our door again. I felt ashamed that the job of ejecting the preacher been up to an 11-year-old boy. As the oldest, that should have been my move. But then, I wasn't one to be impolite.

The pastor never darkened our door again. Surprisingly, the relatives never mentioned it. Not one word, though I'm sure they knew all the tawdry details.

After my less than gracious encounter with a Baptist on Monday, my partner is probably justifiably concerned. "Are they going to come and burn a cross on our lawn?"

As outlandish as that sounds, it's a very real concern in rural Texas. Conservative Christians for the most part put their white robes and hoods away when it became too politically incorrect to harass racial minorities. But sexual minorities are still fair game.

I worry about the progeny of these religious zealots. Not long ago, as my partner and I were getting out of the car at a nearby farm store, a teenager roared into the parking lot with a large American flag and an equally large confederate flag flying from his pickup. He looked angry and capable of doing some damage.

Within the last two weeks, a black woman living in a town just down the highway found swastikas painted on her garage doors, a hangman's noose dangling from a tree and a cross burning in her yard. A gang of 16-year-olds was responsible.

As my partner pointed out, Baptists are in control of our community. Word will get out. Neither of us is comfortable hiding in the closet, but I wonder if perhaps I might have chosen my words more carefully when confronting the Baptist.

I guess I could have said, "You wouldn't want us. We voted for Kerry." But then again, it wouldn't have carried quite the same magnitude as, "We're lesbians."

@ Binnie Fisher is editor of the Houston Voice. She can be reached at bfisher@houstonvoice.com



viewpoint RICH MERRITT

Through faith and hope, I have overcome my 'affliction,' but it wasn't my homosexuality.

Bye-bye Dr. Bob

EDITORS' NOTE: Dr. Bob Jones III retired as president of Bob Jones University on May 7. This is an open letter addressing his tenure in office.

DEAR DR. BOB:

In 1980, you told the Associated Press, "It would not be a bad idea to bring the swift justice today that was brought in Israel's day against murder and rape and homosexuality. I guarantee it would solve the problem post-haste if homosexuals were stoned, if murderers were immediately killed, as the Bible commands."

At the time of these remarks, you and other fundamentalist ministers had gone to the White House to deliver petitions to President Carter. Your efforts were rewarded: The Civil Rights Act has never been extended to cover sexual orientation.

Now, you are retiring after 35 years as president of Bob Jones University, the school in Greenville, S.C., founded in 1927 by your grandfather. I was a student at your various schools for 14 years of your 35-year administration.

As a seventh grader, I was required to attend daily chapel services with the

5,000-member student body and faculty. In this overwhelming forum, I regularly heard similar condemnations, such as the stoning to death of homosexuals.

In the early 1980s, your late father, the chancellor of BJU, preached about a new and deadly disease afflicting only homosexuals. This ominous disease was proof, he said, that God does not tolerate wickedness. In the best of circumstances, adolescence is an extremely tough part of life. For teenagers struggling with their sexual identity and other quandaries of "difference-ness," the difficulties of these years are monumental. At your self-proclaimed "Fortress of Fundamentalism," a young gay person is in hell on earth.

WHEN PRESENTED WITH THE IDEA that we are gay by birth and not by choice, fundamentalists typically respond that through faith and prayer; any gay man or lesbian can grow in Christ while seeking His help in overcoming his or her "affliction."

Indeed, through faith, hope and experience, I have made tremendous growth, both spiritually and personally, as I've overcome my "affliction."

My affliction however, is not my homosexuality; rather, my affliction has been the tormented shackles of fundamentalist bigotry.

In the 20 years since you handed me my Bob Jones Academy high school diploma, I've slowly and painfully learned how to combat the self-hatred I

learned in your schools.

THE MAIN DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US is that your belief system requires you to reject all other belief systems.

My "liberal" belief system requires that I maintain respect for opinions, traditions and practices of all other faiths, even those held by people who wish that I be stoned to death.

No one on my side is saying that we should stone all fundamentalists. In fact, although I don't agree with what you believe anymore, as a Marine, I was will-

ing to give my life to protect your right to hold extremist beliefs.

After the November 2004 elections, you delivered a letter to President Bush in which you wrote, "Put your agenda on the front burner and let it boil. You owe liberals nothing. In your re-election, God has graciously granted America a reprieve from the agenda of paganism."

Quite the contrary, Dr. Jones. The only hope for America is if people like you and I begin to live and work in harmony. I realized long ago that you and the fundamentalist crowd aren't going away.

letter

Channel 2 focused on the wrong transgender angle

To the Editor:

What made me mad about a recent news segment on transgender prostitution that aired on KPRC-TV, Channel 2?

The fact is that many transgender people cannot get other work and also are not welcome, as the transgenders they are, at homeless shelters. They are stuck - on the street.

Using me as an example of one - I have four college degrees with two professional licenses, and I am a former Eagle Scout and a Veteran.

And yet, I was unemployable by engineering firms for almost ten years, and even when I began to practice law, no law firm would mentor or otherwise give me an assist of any kind for another eighteen years.

If I faced that kind of discrimination with those credentials (check them at www.nsflaw.us), what do other TG folks face? THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE STORY!

The only reason that I was not on the street hustling is that my spouse chose to

stand by me. "For richer or poorer, in sickness and in health" was the marriage vow that she took and stood by.

Instead of sensationalizing TG folks for KPRC's ratings, how about doing some shows on why we cannot get a fair shake?

Our bigoted society - inflamed by shows such as KPRC's - wastes the talents and education and otherwise kind souls of the transgender community that I know and love.

Our lifestyle involves a huge, life-altering struggle - day by day, year in, year out - because our brains are telling us that we have been brought up in the wrong gender.

Our lifestyle involves being fired and denied employment opportunities that were previously open to us. Surely you don't think that those of us forced into prostitution get a thrill out of sucking or stroking some man's dirty old thing for \$20. Give me a break!

We transgenders are an easy target to get a TV station the sensation it needs for its tawdry tale to attract viewers and sell ads. Who is the prostitute there?

PHYLLIS RANDOLPH FRYE
Houston

@ Rich Merritt, an attorney in Atlanta, has written about his experiences at Bob Jones University and elsewhere in his book, "Secrets of a Gay Marine Porn Star," to be published in June by Kensington Press. He can be reached at AtlantaWriter@mindspring.com.

THE
Q
Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays recently hired a new executive director. In your opinion, does an organization like PFLAG need a paid national leader?



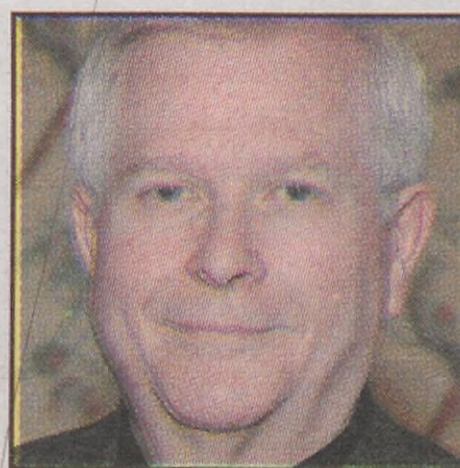
PFLAG needs an executive to coordinate the activities of about 500 PFLAG chapters, to interface with the politicians in Washington, to work for PFLAG causes and to act as a source of information to alert PFLAG chapters as to what is going on in Washington that affects PFLAG's mission.

JAMES R. DUPREE, 66
Houston
Retired



We have a national president who is a volunteer. We need someone giving full attention to the business of PFLAG.

NORMA GRAVES, 30-plus
Houston
Volunteer



PFLAG needs an executive director to carry forward the work of PFLAG.

THOMAS G. CHAPPELL, 61
Houston
President/CEO



We need one. It's very important that everything be coordinated and disseminated through a national office. This is an international organization. It's really a full-time job. Volunteers can do only so much.

BLAKE WEISSER, 86
Houston
Retired



We definitely need one. We need someone to speak out for PFLAG.

JANE B. SMITH, 69
Missouri City

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Interviews and photos by Dalton DeHart

eclipse



Megan's new gig
Move over Ellen, Megan Mullally's getting her own talk show, and it should sustain her after 'W&G.'
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MAY 13, 2005

after 23 years we still want our MTV

EQUALITY FORUM HONORED GAY-FRIENDLY MUSIC CHANNEL

By YUSEF NAJAFI

VIEWERS MIGHT BE SAD BIDDING farewell to Karamo and Willie, the two gay characters on the latest season of MTV's "The Real World." But turn on the music channel today and you're bound to see other gay men and a few lesbians on the channel's reality shows, dating shows and music videos.

During the past 23 years, MTV has not shied from airing gay content. The music channel has presented the good, the bad and the downright silly.

Among gay audiences, the story of Pedro Zamora, an HIV-positive AIDS activist who died shortly after appearing on the third season of "The Real World" in the early '90s, stands out for many MTV fans. Add to that the controversy surrounding MTV's coverage of rapper Eminem, whose lyrics have offended and insulted gays. And who can forget that infamous pseudo-lesbian kiss between Madonna and

Ian Rowe, vice-president of MTV, says the music channel has spent a lot of time looking for ways to incorporate gay content into its programming without making it seem like a bold strategy.

"There have been [gay] breakthrough moments," he says, "but I think the key in why we are so successful in this area is because we don't always make a big deal out of it.

"We integrate gay characters as regular people in our shows," Rowe says, "whether that be in 'The Real World,' 'Made,' or 'True Life.'"

THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME A GAY ORGANIZATION has honored MTV for its work. Three years ago, Equality Forum awarded its International Role Model Award to MTV. And in 1999, the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation bestowed its Fairness Award on the music channel.

GLAAD's executive director, Joan M. Garry, is a former business development director at MTV. She co-creat-

taken-for-granted and expected part of the real world," he says.

Gross also is the author of "Up From Invisibility: Lesbians, Gay Men, and the Media in America."

"The other side of the coin is that MTV succeeds by attracting and holding an audience that is largely engaged with popular youth culture," he says, noting that this can be good or bad, depending on the music channel's content. "And often with performers or themes that are misogynistic, anti-gay and problematic, that's sort of the nature of the beast.

"One could imagine that if MTV were to try to maintain a politically correct line in all of their programming they probably would lose much of their audience and their commercial validity," Gross adds. "It would be nice to think of them as consistently progressive; it's probably not realistic."

Five years ago, gay rights advocates and their supporters, including GLAAD staff members, expressed outrage at MTV's decision to continue airing videos by Eminem. Lyrics to one of his songs stated: "My words



Among the notable individuals often mentioned when the topic is gay content and MTV are (left to right): Pedro Zamora appeared on 'The Real World: San Francisco'; MTV's reality show 'I'm Gay and I'm Getting Married' featured this gay couple; Britney Spears and Madonna's infamous smooch. (Photos courtesy of MTV)

Britney Spears during a live musical performance at the 20th annual Video Music Awards in 2003.

Equality Forum, a national weeklong gay rights extravaganza in Philadelphia, recently honored MTV and 37 gay and lesbian rights advocates for their work. Equality Forum, which took place April 25 to May 1, is part of an annual effort to share information about the impact of homophobia. The event includes 70 programs, parties and related special events in various venues throughout the city.

"There has not been a media company that has had a longer-standing commitment to portraying our community openly, honestly and inclusively than MTV," says Malcolm Lazin, executive director of Equality Forum.

ed the music channel's Video Music Awards.

Damon Romine, entertainment media director at GLAAD, says MTV effectively incorporates gay content on the channel on two levels. "They show straight kids in this country that [we are] everywhere," he says, "and gay kids can watch the network and find someone to identify with."

Larry Gross, director of communications at the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Southern California, in Los Angeles, says when it comes to gay content on television, MTV's reality shows have played an important role.

"[MTV's] invention of a new reality TV genre [began] with 'The Real World,' [and] was ahead of its time in making the inclusion of gay and lesbian characters a

are like a dagger with a jagged edge/That'll stab you in the head/Whether you're a fag or a lez/Or the homosex, hermaph or a trans-a-vest/Pants or dress/Hate Fags? The answer's yes."

Though MTV did not play this song, activists did not want Eminem promoted on the music channel at all.

Gross noted in "Up From Invisibility" that MTV also aired music by heavy metal band Guns 'N' Roses, even though that group's anti-gay sentiments had been expressed in a song. Lyrics to one of the songs included: "Faggots they make no sense to me/ They ... spread some fucking disease."

Please see MTV on Page 18

'GIRLIE' LESBIAN: Actress and beauty queen Holland Vavra admits she liked playing a 'girlie' lesbian. Page 14

'EATING OUT': Two gay films mix straights and gays and offer well-rounded characters and quality fare. Page 15



here!

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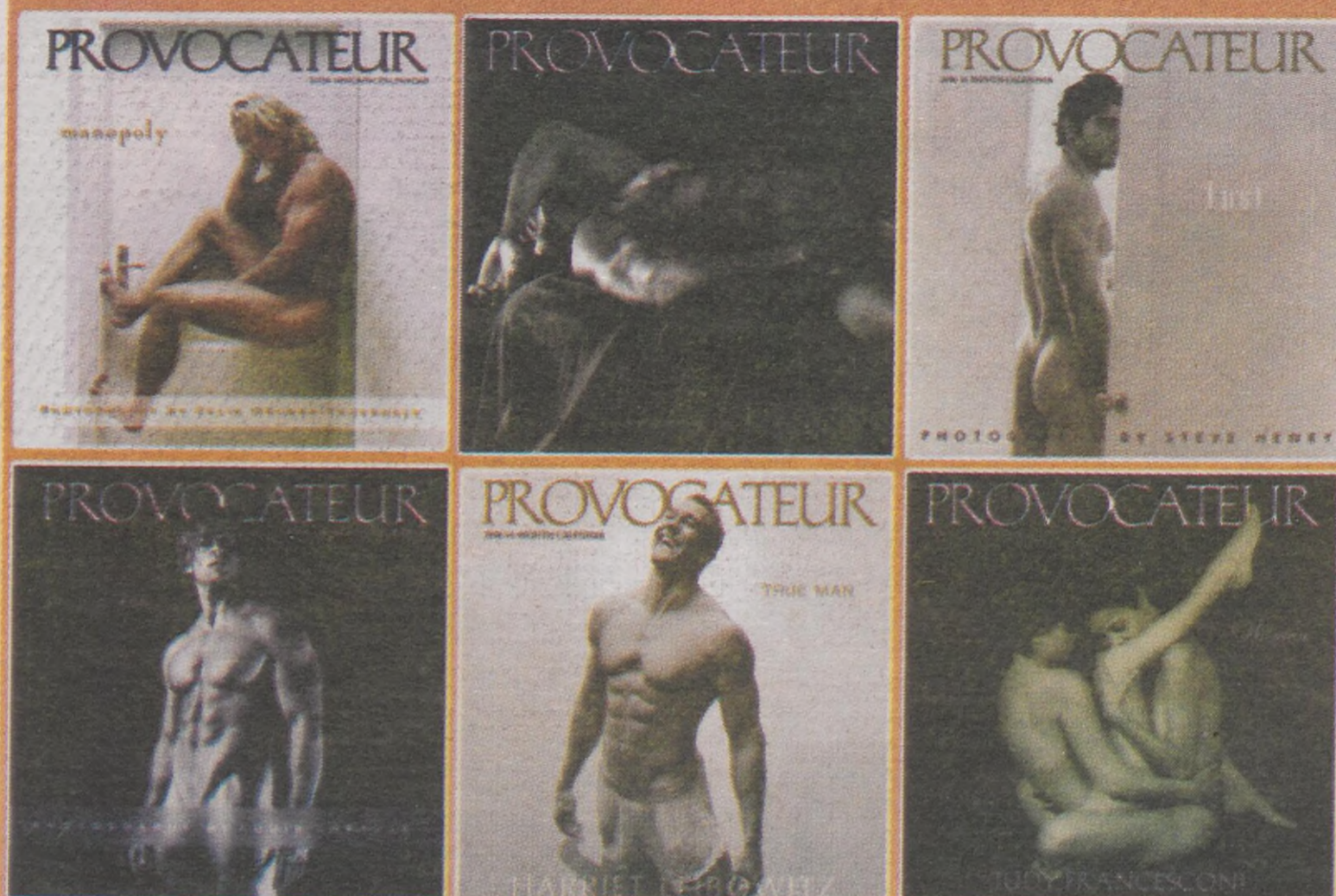
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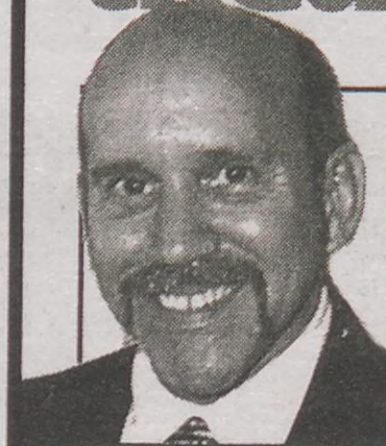
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theater DON MAINES



Beauty queen Holland Vavra gears up for her upcoming role at Theater LaB and admits that she enjoyed playing a "girly-girly" lesbian.

A 'girly' lesbian

AT JUST 22, HOLLAND VAVRA, MISS Fort Bend County 2005, is making a name for herself, not just in pageant circles but also in Houston's theater scene.

"I just can't say enough about her abilities," says Steve Jones, music director for two shows in which Vavra starred. "She can do it all - act, sing and dance. She's the beauty queen of our cast."

Vavra opens Tuesday in "A Class Act" at Theater LaB. It's her third musical this year in Houston, following her professional acting debut as star of "The Spitfire Grill" at Stages Repertory Theater and as a "girly-girly" lesbian in "Falsettos" at the University of Houston-Downtown. The pageant crowd might be stunned to learn that Vavra liked playing a lesbian.

"I didn't have to do anything (sexual)," she giggles naively. "(Co-star) Melody Smith and I had the most fun playing lesbians. I got to play the girly-girly of the two and wear a very cute dress and Farrah Fawcett hair."

About her hair, Jones says, "Oh, she has some serious hair," and then mutters aside, "We're all jealous."

As Miss River Oaks in the 2003 Miss Texas Scholarship Pageant preliminary to Miss America, Vavra sang "Gimme Gimme" from "Thoroughly Modern Millie," winning cash scholarships as the most talented first-year contestant and most talented nonfinalist.

"I couldn't believe it. I thought I blew it," she says. "But they said I won, and my next semester was paid for. It really helped."

Last year she was crowned Miss Sam Houston State University-Huntsville, where fans flocked to see her as Adelaide in "Guys and Dolls," April in "Company" and, in a dramatic change of pace, Harper, the Valium-addicted, agoraphobic wife of a gay man in "Angels in America."

"We did a lot of research," she explains. "A nurse from a critical care unit came in and talked about AIDS in the '80s, and we studied Valium addiction and agoraphobia. It is vital for an actor to do research. You can add so much more depth to a character when you know what that person is going through."

After performing for two years in musical variety shows at Six Flags Astroworld, Vavra decided to get a leg up



At Theater LaB, Holland Vavra smiles in front of a poster in which an actress holds aloft her Broadway Tony Award.

on breaking into professional theater by auditioning for shows in Houston.

Almost immediately, she was cast in shows with some of the city's top talents.

"We had all heard about her voice," remembers Brandon Peters (her love interest in "Spitfire"), but we didn't know anything about her professionalism or work ethic. Then I did my first scene with her, and I was just floored. It was amazing to see her completely pull that character out of herself."

THE CHARACTER WAS PERCY, A young woman just out of prison trying to start a new life. "Our only reservation was that she was too pretty," says Jones. "We cut her hair and dyed it and didn't let her wear makeup to try to keep her natural beauty from showing through."

In contrast, Vavra gets to play a beautiful "free spirit" in "A Class Act." "The roles couldn't be more different," says Jones.

The part of Lucy also handed Vavra a new song to perform in the talent competition at the 2005 Miss Texas pageant in July, "Broadway Boogie Woogie."

"I heard it. And I thought it was the cutest song in the world," she says.

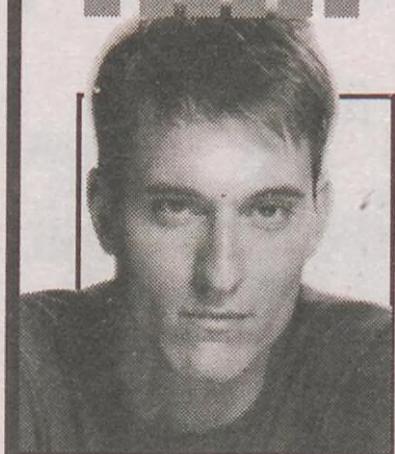
Lydia Griffin, executive director of the Miss Fort Bend County Scholarship Pageant, concurred with Vavra's choice. "I adored 'Gimme Gimme,' but this song shows off Holland's bubbly personality even more," she explains.

The song by the late Edward Kleban, who won a Tony Award and the Pulitzer Prize for his lyrics to "A Chorus Line," is a comic look at the real frustrations of actors who audition for roles for which they might be too thin, too fat, too short or too tall.

i MORE INFO

"A Class Act"
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film ANDY ZEFFER



'Eating Out' deserves some credit for taking risks. But overall, the film comes off as **overdone and sophomoric** rather than edgy or cool.

Sex games

"EATING OUT" IS A MOVIE YOU'LL either love or hate. There isn't much room in between.

The way the subject matter is dealt with is bound to stir up strong opinions for the audience. Writer and director Q. Allan Brocka strives to satirize gay life with a sexy and slick screenplay. The problem is, he goes way overboard, especially with ridiculous one-liners peppered throughout the film.

The film opens with undeniably hot Caleb (Scott Lunsford) in sexual role-play with girlfriend Tiffani.

Brocka pulls a cheap trick from the get-go, by at first making it appear that Tiffani is being raped.

Then there's the twist: Tiffani dumps Caleb because he isn't kinky enough for her liking.

In the meantime, Caleb's gay roommate, Kyle, played by gay "American Idol" castoff Jim Verraros, is lusting over sexy Marc, played by Ryan Carnes, currently making a splash as the gay pool boy in television's hottest series, "Desperate Housewives."

Caleb and Kyle go to a party at Marc's where Caleb sets eyes on Marc's fag hag roommate, Gwen (Emily Stiles). Caleb poses as a gay guy in an attempt to get into Gwen's pants.

And here's another twist: Before he can do that, he has to date Marc.

WITHIN THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF the film cheesy phrases like "don't Heche me," "grabs my corndog," and "geekaziod" are thrown about left and right.

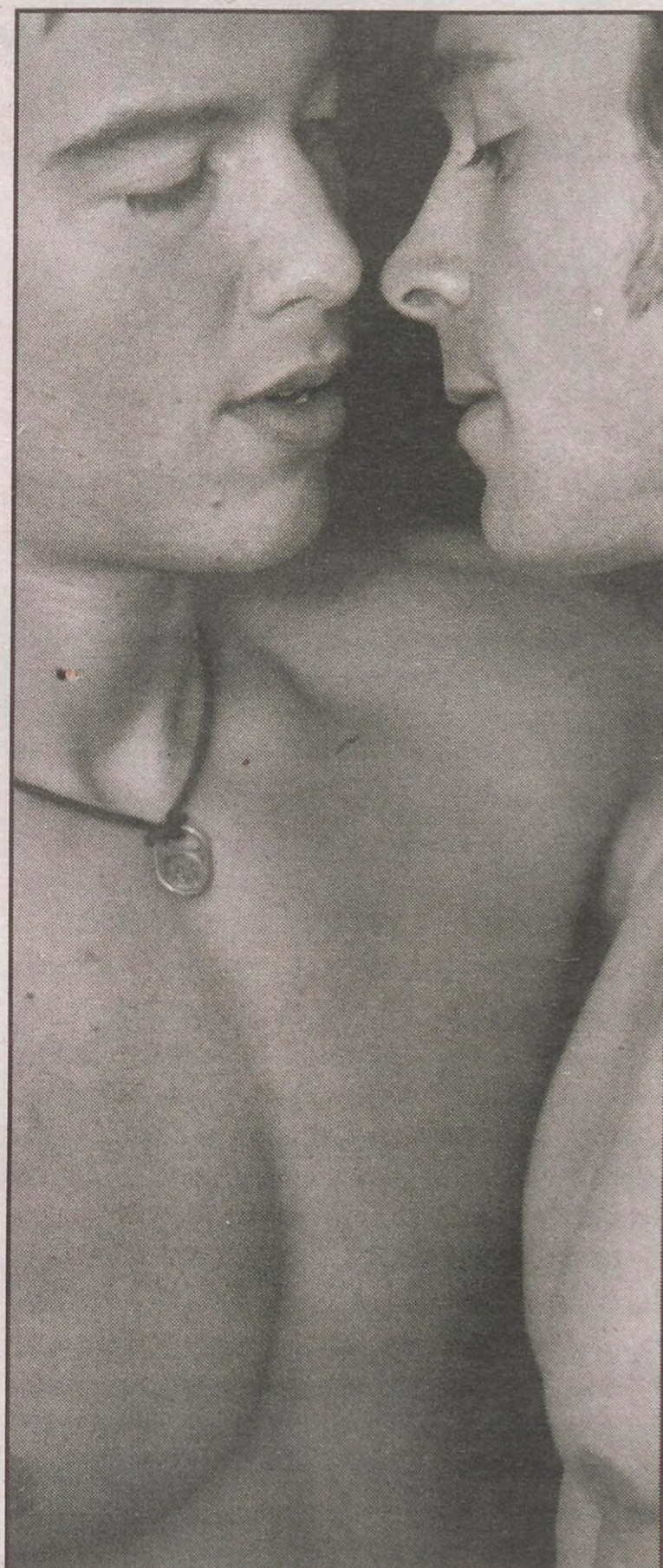
Brocka goes overboard on the California lingo. Even a college student who never left Orange County wouldn't say half this stuff.

Brocka also takes a risk by throwing the word fag around loosely, even having Caleb's junior high sister saying the term derogatorily on a few occasions.

This might be Brocka's attempt to take power from the word, but many people will find it just plain vulgar, not to mention offensive.

Still, the film does get credit for taking risks.

There is a clever and well thought out sex scene where Gwen is having phone sex with Caleb while Marc performs oral sex on him. Gwen is thinking Caleb is a



"Desperate Housewives" hunk **Ryan Carnes**, pictured on the left, gives the one standout performance in "Eating Out." Here, he tries to steal a kiss from co-star **Scott Lunsford**.

nervous fist-timer and trying to help her roommate out by getting him in the mood. During this scene, both Lunsford and Carnes go full frontal. Many viewers will be delighted that both actors display their manhood for longer than a split second.

As for the acting, Carnes is the most natural performer in the cast. He displays a calm realism that the film desperately needs.

Verraros comes off as bitchy and whiney. His character is meant to draw empathy, but instead, you have the urge to shake him by the collar and tell him to be a man.

But the most grating character is the abrasive and obnoxious Stiles. Her histrionics are not helped by the ridiculous Bjork-like hairstyles she is given throughout the film. Apparently, the hair and make-up department got confused and thought they were on the set of "Star Wars."

In the future, Brocka's films will be far more effective if he can just tone things down a little.

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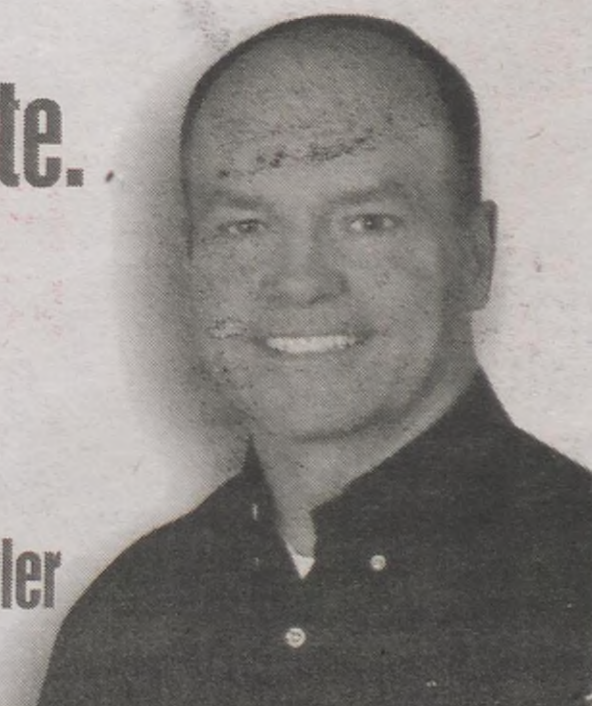
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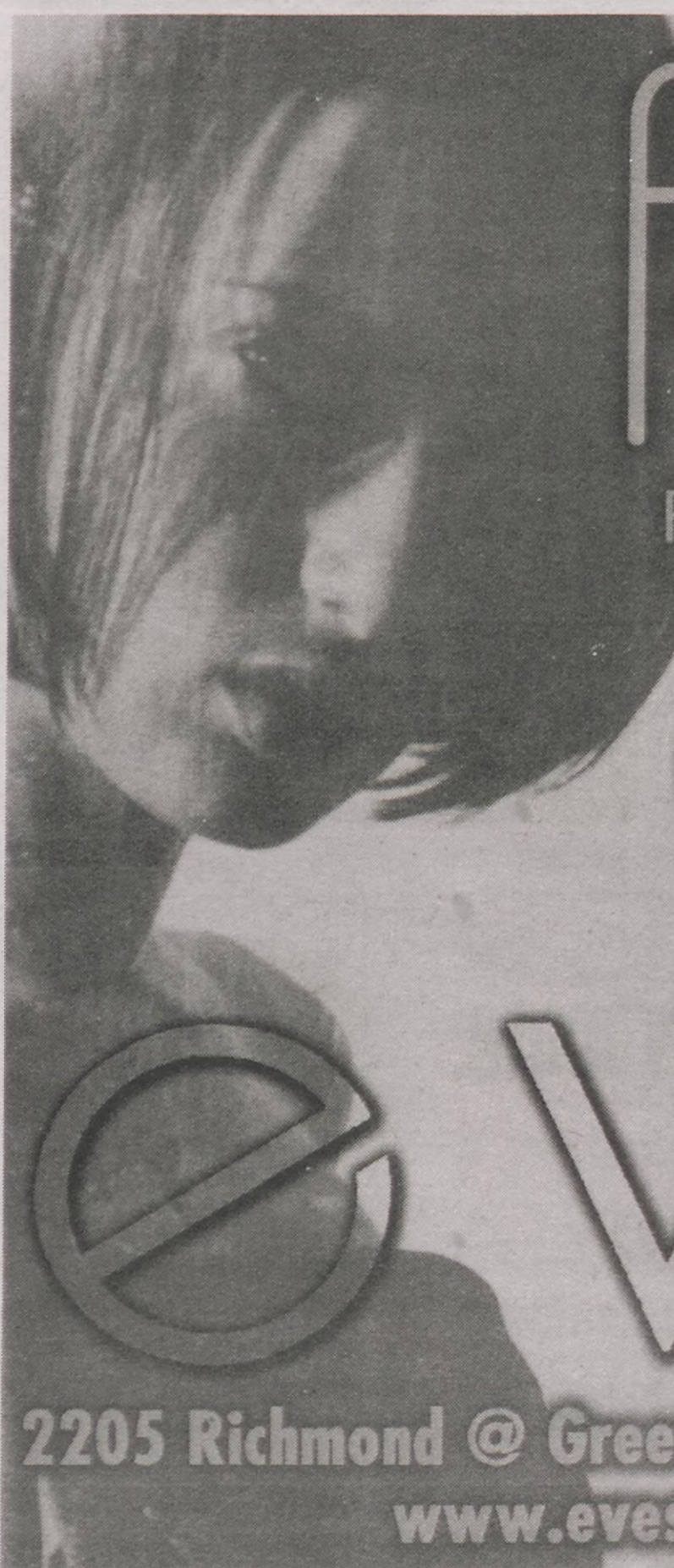
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nitelife JOHNNY HOOKS



Grand re-openings of favorites, a new location for a Galveston bar and a return visit by Kristine W — summer has finally arrived

Summer in Montrose

TWO THINGS ALWAYS HERALD THE arrival of Houston's summer in the Montrose. First, the rainbow banners are hung with care along Westheimer, knowing that for the parade you will be there. And the cobble stoned streets, Michigan and Maryland, have been freshly mowed. HotGG saw both this week and so we'll be looking at new things springing up.

FIRST THOUGH, HOTGG WOULD BE remiss in our duties if we didn't tell you soap lovers to set those Tivo's to record everyday at 1 p.m. on ABC.

Why? Because dear readers, the devastatingly handsome actor, **Matt Cavanaugh**, recently here for Theatre Under The Stars' production of "Anything Goes" is involved in a tres scandalous romance on HotGG fave "One Life to Live." Cavanaugh plays **Mark**, an idealistic 20-something who, it was revealed this week is having an affair with newly married Llanview District Attorney, **Daniel Coulson**! Cavanaugh's character has always been out gay, but Coulson's sexuality has never been anything but str8. Of course, Coulson killed two people to cover up the affair (ala "Basic Instinct"), but hey, two steps forward and one step back is better than none.

OPEN, OPEN, OPEN HAS BEEN THE mantra for months now regarding several Houston area bars and clubs. Well, get ready to karaoke till you drop because **Guava Lamp** is back! The new location at 570 Waugh Drive and **D'Amico** is simply swank with 1,000 square feet more room! Texture is the key here, as all the comfy semi-circular banquettes are swathed in faux-suede, as are the electric orange library chairs. Mosaic-tiled lamps hang throughout the bar, giving everyone that perfect glow. The pool table is chalked and ready, and your favorite games made the move too. Congratulations to **Woody Gould**. Stop by and say HotGG sent you.

IF YOU ARE DOWN ON GALVESTON Isle this weekend, step into **Undercurrent** at their new location, 2409 Market, Saturday to experience the official grand opening! Kids, we're talking multi-levels, 15,000 square feet of space and six, count them six different venues including **Thrust**, the **Arena**, the **Blue Room** and the **Garden Room**. The hardest working girl on the Isle, **Misty Valdez**, hosts a fundraiser there on May 14 as well. If

you miss that show, fear not. She'll also be hosting one at **3RD Coast Beach Bar** next Saturday, May 21. For more information check out www.undercurrentgalveston.com and www.3rdcoastbar.com or call 409-750-8571 for Undercurrent and 409-765-6911 for 3rd Coast.

FINALLY, THE KING, OR MAKE THAT Queen of Houston queer nightclubs, **Rich's**, returns on Saturday, May 21 with mega-diva **Kristine W** singing her nine number-one hits! HotGG began our nightclubbing in 1983 on the night **Rich's** first opened its doors. We went through the first closing when the club was re-christened **Mecca**, its closing, and the several incarnations of **Rich's** since then. So we will be there again on May 21 to see the incredible improvements owner **Nassim Joseph** has made to our friend of 20 plus years. You are not going to believe it when you see it dear ones, trust me! The sound and lighting systems alone boggle the mind and shake your soul. Tickets are now available online at www.richs-houston.com (\$15 advance, \$20 door) and at M2M Fashion. This will be a sell-out event, so purchase tickets in advance to guarantee entrance or you'll be standing outside. 21 and up only (yay!) and you can call 713-759-9606 for more info. **The Houston Voice** and sister publication **Genre** magazine will be giving away "Dynasty: The Complete Season One" DVDs too!

JOE WATTS OF THEATRE NEW West is having an opening of sorts. It's a garage sale to help raise money for the theater troupe Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 436 Hawthorne at Garrett. Some of the great stuff includes dishes, clothing, lots of costume jewelry, women's shoes, paintings, artwork, Broadway musical recordings, theater books and other unusual items.

OUR FINAL OPENING IS THE **GAY Men's Chorus of Houston's "Razzle Dazzle,"** saluting Broadway legends Kander and Ebb. The small ensemble, **VocalEase**, sings all your faves from "Chicago" to "Cabaret" Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 3 p.m. at **Bering Memorial United Methodist Church**, 1440 Harold. Tix are only \$20.

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

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

Talk of the town

Megan Mullally gabs, Arianna Huffington blogs and Marcia Cross smooches

When Dish reported several weeks ago that "Will & Grace" has been renewed for an eighth season, she said it will probably be the show's last hurrah. Most likely, many of you, dear readers, were horribly upset. "What will we do without the show," you might have wondered. "And more importantly, what will happen to MEGAN MULLALLY's career?"

Dish has an answer to at least one of your questions. Reuters reports that the bisexual actress, who is married to a man, is going to have her own talk show.

Sources told the news organization that the diva who won an Emmy for portraying the hard-drinking Karen Walker is in final negotiations to sign up for a syndicated daytime talk show that will begin airing in 2006. NBC Universal Domestic Television Distribution will produce the show, so its schedule will coincide with Mullally's work on "W&G." And, if by some freak of nature, the sitcom returns for a ninth year, Mullally will be able to do both projects.

It's said that Mullally, well known for her vocal as well as comedic talents, will be getting in the "mid-seven figures." Wowie. Add that to the \$13 million or so she's getting for the next "W&G" season, and Ms. Mullally will never have to marry for money like poor Karen.

Fit to print

It's not a talk show, but political commentator **ARIANNA HUFFINGTON** has a new day job. This week, she launched her own blog called the Huffington Post (www.huffingtonpost.com). To combat the proliferation of conservative news outlets, Huffington enlisted a number of liberal celebrity and high-profile friends to post their thoughts about news and world events on the site.



Arianna Huffington

On its first day, "Seinfeld" alumna **JULIA LOUIS-DREYFUS** and her husband, comedian **BRAD HALL**, posted a tongue-in-cheek entry about gay marriage.

"Gay marriage destroys real marriage," Hall wrote. "Now, when I come home to my wife, I feel nothing. How could I? SHE COULD BE A MAN! Thanks a lot, gays. Thanks for render-



Megan Mullally won't be fading away once 'Will & Grace' leaves the air.

ing our vows obsolete."

Huffington should know something about gay marriage, because her ex-husband, politico **MICHAEL HUFFINGTON**, came out in 1998.

Also posting about gay topics is gay playwright Jon Robin Baitz, who talks about his upcoming play "The Paris Letter," about a gay man in the '60s who tries to make himself straight. **ELLEN DeGENERES** writes about the plight of wild horses. No kidding!

And gay politico and former Recording Industry Association of America head **HILARY ROSEN** chats about how hard it is to program her iPod.

And Dish was worried that the site might focus too much on politics.

Cross examined

"Desperate Housewives" stars **MARCIA CROSS** and **FELICITY HUFFMAN**, who play Bree and Lynette, respectively, on the show had a humorous reaction to their unplanned onstage kiss at the GLAAD Media Awards ceremony in Los Angeles on May 1.

"I've been wanting to do that all year," Huffman joked to "Access Hollywood" after the event.

"She just grabbed me and I went with it. It was a little short, I thought ... I don't think my publicist would have let that happen," Cross added.

She shouldn't be laughing too hard. It was just a few months ago that Internet rumors about her sexual orientation had Cross coming out as straight (but supportive of gays) on ABC's "The View."



Marcia Cross

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Music channel blazes trails

MTV, continued from Page 12

While MTV did not play the song on the music channel, Guns 'N' Roses did perform on the music channel, to the chagrin of gay activists and their supporters. "The thing about our audience is that they're not monolithic," says Rowe, MTV's vice president. "We do allow our artists to express themselves. We work with organizations like GLAAD and GLSEN [Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network] to represent positively images of gay Americans and the issues they face. And you would find that more than [on] any other network we honestly show what this community has to deal with."

Lazin agrees. "[MTV is] not here to advocate an individual viewpoint," he says. "It's led the way, in terms of progressive thinking. So while they reflect society, they also have been progressive in terms of trying to educate society."

Another gay milestone took place in 2001 when MTV cut off all programming on the channel and for 17 hours ran the names on a black screen of hate crime victims.

The murder of 21-year-old Wyoming college student Matthew Shepard was also a frequent topic on MTV. In 1999, as part of the "Fight For Your Rights: Take a Stand Against Violence" campaign, MTV ran a series of public service announcements featuring the victim's mother, Judy Shepard. In 2001, MTV aired a full-length film about the murder.

MTV Networks, the parent company of MTV, is preparing to offer even more gay content by launching the highly anticipated all-gay channel LOGO on June 30. It will be available on digital cable on a separate channel.

"We're going to have movies, documentaries, original series, and more than 200 movie titles — all gay-themed," says David Bittler, a spokesperson for LOGO.

Bittler says LOGO programming will feature shows like "Noah's Arc," about a struggling black, gay screenwriter and his three friends in Los Angeles. In addition, the all-gay channel will explore culturally diverse documentaries such as "What's It Like to be Gay & Muslim."

But don't expect the launch of the new channel to interfere with the queer quotient on MTV.

"They're really two separate channels," Rowe says. "LOGO is going to benefit from the programming on MTV, but it won't diminish at all our focus on this area."

MTV BEGAN OPERATING IN AUGUST 1981 as a channel that ran continuous music videos. The first video aired on MTV,

the Buggles' "Video Killed the Radio Star," predicted a medium that would eventually introduce artists such as Prince, Madonna, Duran Duran and Michael Jackson to much larger audiences.

In 1985, MTV Networks launched Video Hits 1 (VH1), which featured more mainstream music and less heavy metal and rap. Today, MTV Networks includes VH1, Nick At Nite, Nickelodeon, TV Land, Spike TV, and Country Music Television.

In the '90s, MTV added television shows to its mix, including the cartoon "Beavis and Butthead," and reality shows like "Road Rules" and "The Real World." "The Real World," the channel's trademark reality show that documents the interaction between seven strangers living in the same home, debuted 15 years ago and featured a gay man.

"The first 'Real World' had the gay character on there, named Norman, which was a huge deal at the time," says Bittler.

Rodger Streitmatter, author of "Sex Sells! The Media's Journey from Repression to Obsession," and a journalism professor at American University, in D.C., agrees.

"During its early years, the 'Real World' on MTV provided an invaluable service to the movement," Streitmatter says. "I'm sure that millions upon millions of young people — kids in their teens or early 20s — were introduced to gays and lesbians and bisexuals for the very first time on the program ... and so their comfort level with gay people increased enormously."

Like many viewers, Bittler says the most memorable gay moment on the channel was the inclusion of Pedro Zamora on the third season of "The Real World." The 22-year-old gay native of Cuba and his partner, who was African American, held a commitment ceremony on the show. Zamora died of AIDS-related complications in 1994.

"The things that were special about Pedro back then were not only that for much of our audience it was the first time that they met someone gay, but he was also HIV-positive," Rowe says. "[Pedro] was in an interracial relationship ... and it was a remarkable opportunity for our audience to interact with somebody they probably wouldn't have an opportunity to do so with in their day-to-day life."

Streitmatter agrees. "I still have students in my classes who talk about Zamora as if he was one of their friends. They got to know him so well," he says. "For kids to watch as this handsome and personable young man gradually suffered the ravages of AIDS became a more powerful public health lesson than anything they could have been exposed to in the classroom."

Today, Streitmatter says, "The Real World" isn't as effective as it was 10 years ago when it comes to increasing viewers' comfort level about gay people.

"The casting has become too formulaic — one virgin, one gay or lesbian, one African American," he says. "Contemporary kids recognize that the whole thing is scripted to encourage conflict and drama."

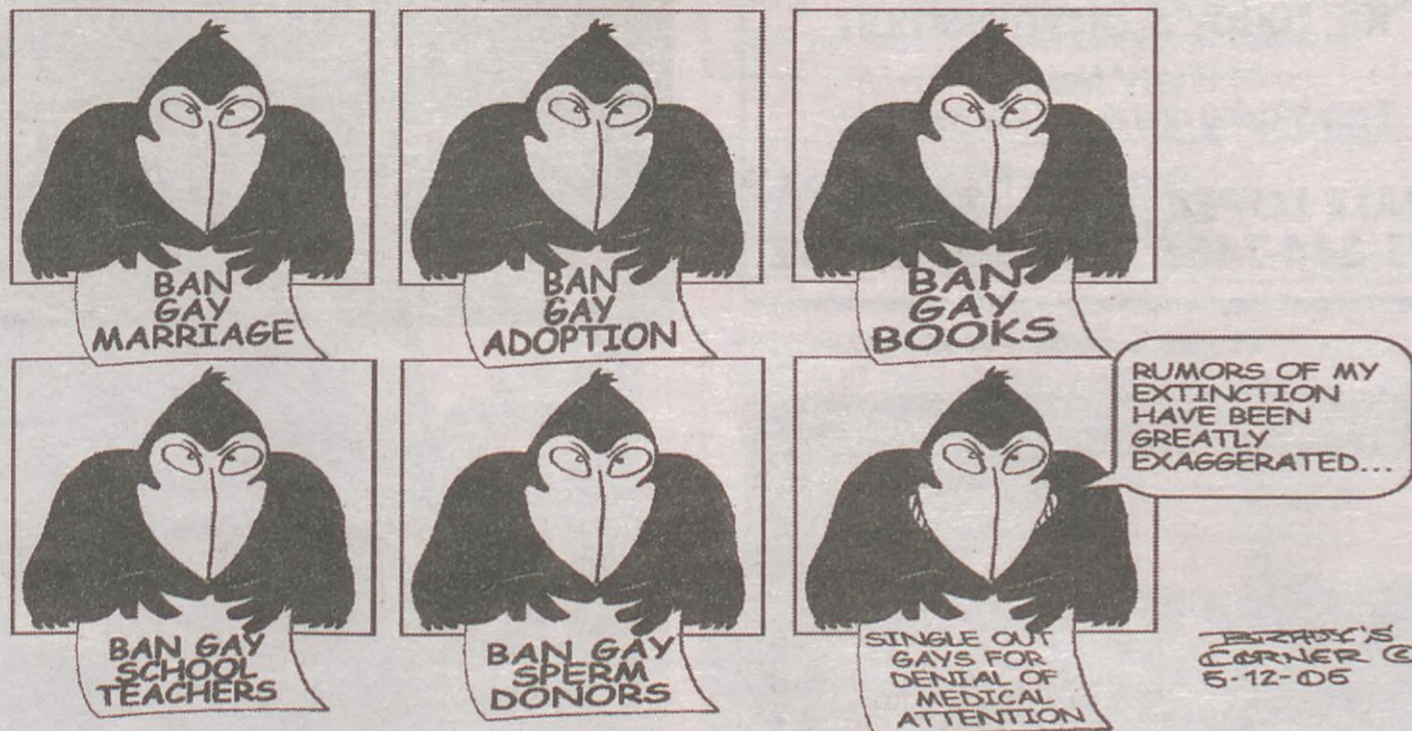
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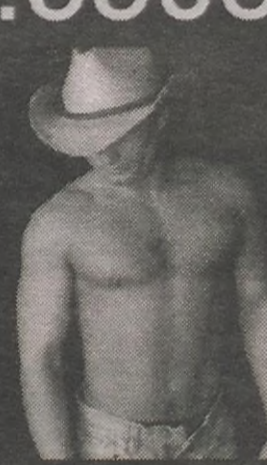
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 BY GLEN HANSON and ALAN NEUWIRTH

NATHAN AND SOIRÉE ARE WATCHING SKY ON THE LATEST "ADAM & STEVE" REALITY SHOW...

ADAM, MY SON, ONCE AGAIN IT FALLS UPON THY BRAVINY SHOULDERS (AND LEAN WIT) TO CHOOSE WHICH HOTTIE SHALL FALL FROM GRACE... AND GET HIS ASS KICKETH OUTTA YON GARDEN PARADISE WHICH I (WITH THE HELP OF A FABULOUS FAYGELAH PRODUCTION CREW) HATH CREATED.

NOT SKY!
 DON' YOU DARE PICK SKY--!

UHHH... LIKE, UM...
 UH... I PICK...

...BRANDON.
 WHAT?! AFTER I SUCKED YOUR BLEEP BEHIND THE BLEEPIN' TREE OF KNOWLEDGE?! YOU BLEEP HOLE!!!

LEMME TELL YA, Y' BIG QUEEN, THE LAST TIME I SAW SOMETHING THAT SMALL IT WAS WRAPPED IN A BLANKET ON AN HORS D'OEUVRE TRAY! WHY DON'TCHA JUST GO BLEEP YOURSELF!!

OY-- SUCH A MOUTH ON THAT ONE! AND TO THINK POOR ADAM GAVETH UP A RIB FOR THAT BITCH!

AND SO, ADAM, I SAY VERILY UNTO THEE: THERE ARE BUT 5 CONTESTANTS LEFT, ONE OF WHICH THOU SHALT CHOOSE AS THY "STEVE"... BUT BEWARE: "THE SERPENT" IS STILL IN YOUR MIDST. AND HE MIGHT JUST BITE THEE IN THE ASS!!

UGH... NOT NOW?! IT'S TAMARA, MY MOM'S LIVE-IN COMPANION-- CALLING AGAIN.

RING RING

RING RING

OH, SHIT! OKAY, I'LL BE THERE AS SOON AS I CAN!

WHAT IS IT, BABY? WHA'S WRONG?

MY MOM IS MISSING! NO ONE KNOWS WHERE SHE IS-- I'VE GOTTA GET TO LONG ISLAND TO HELP FIND HER!!

BARK! BARK!

>SIGH< EVER SINCE MOM'S ALZHEIMER'S KICKED IN, IT'S BEEN ONE EMERGENCY AFTER ANOTHER -- EITHER SHE'S SLAPPED TAMARA, OR EATEN COINS, OR LOST HER FALSE TEETH AGAIN...

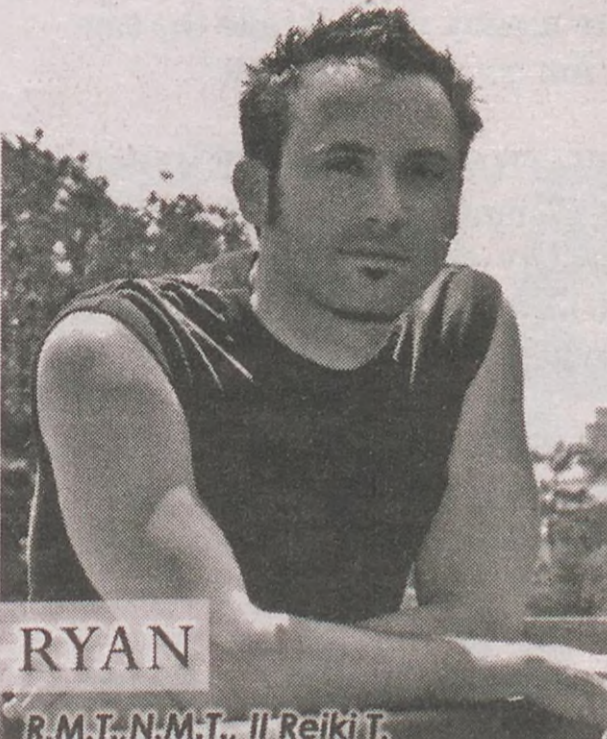
Hi, TAMARA... WHAT'S HAPPENED NOW...

RING RING



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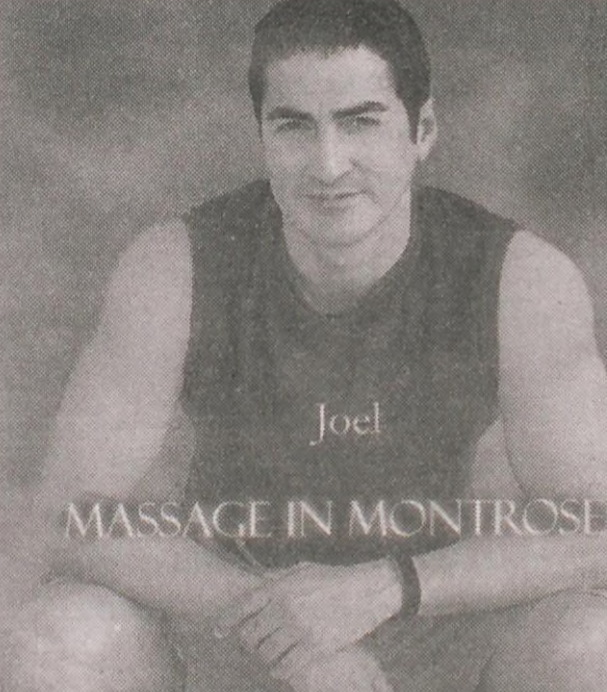
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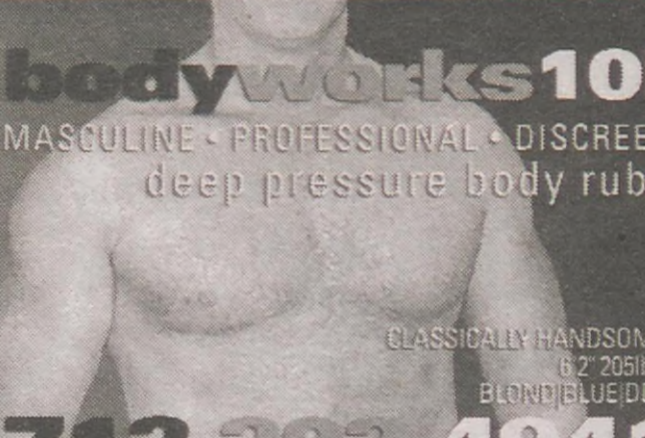
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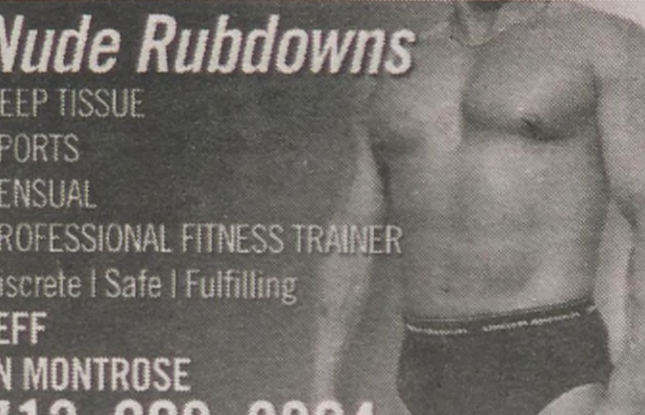
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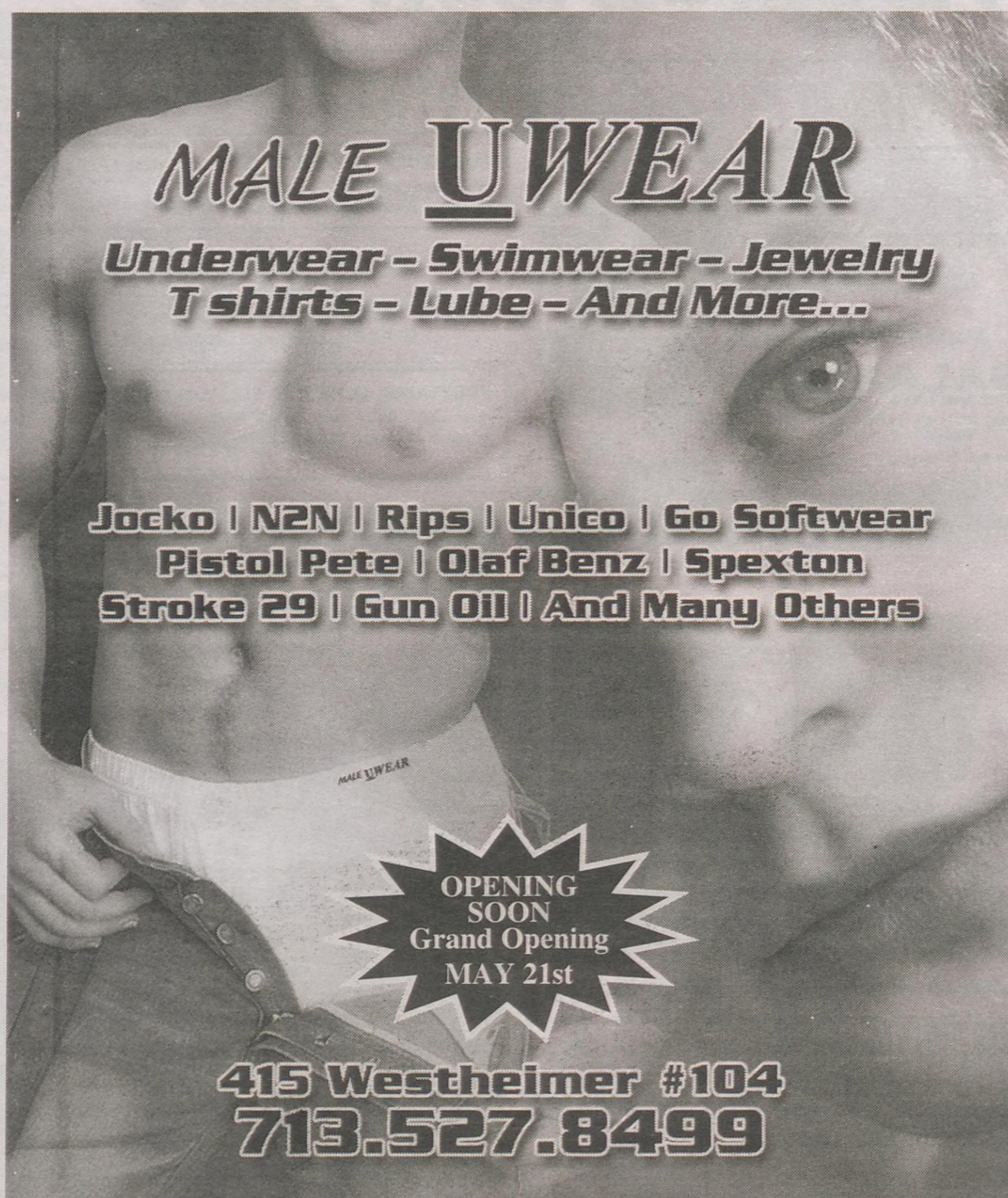
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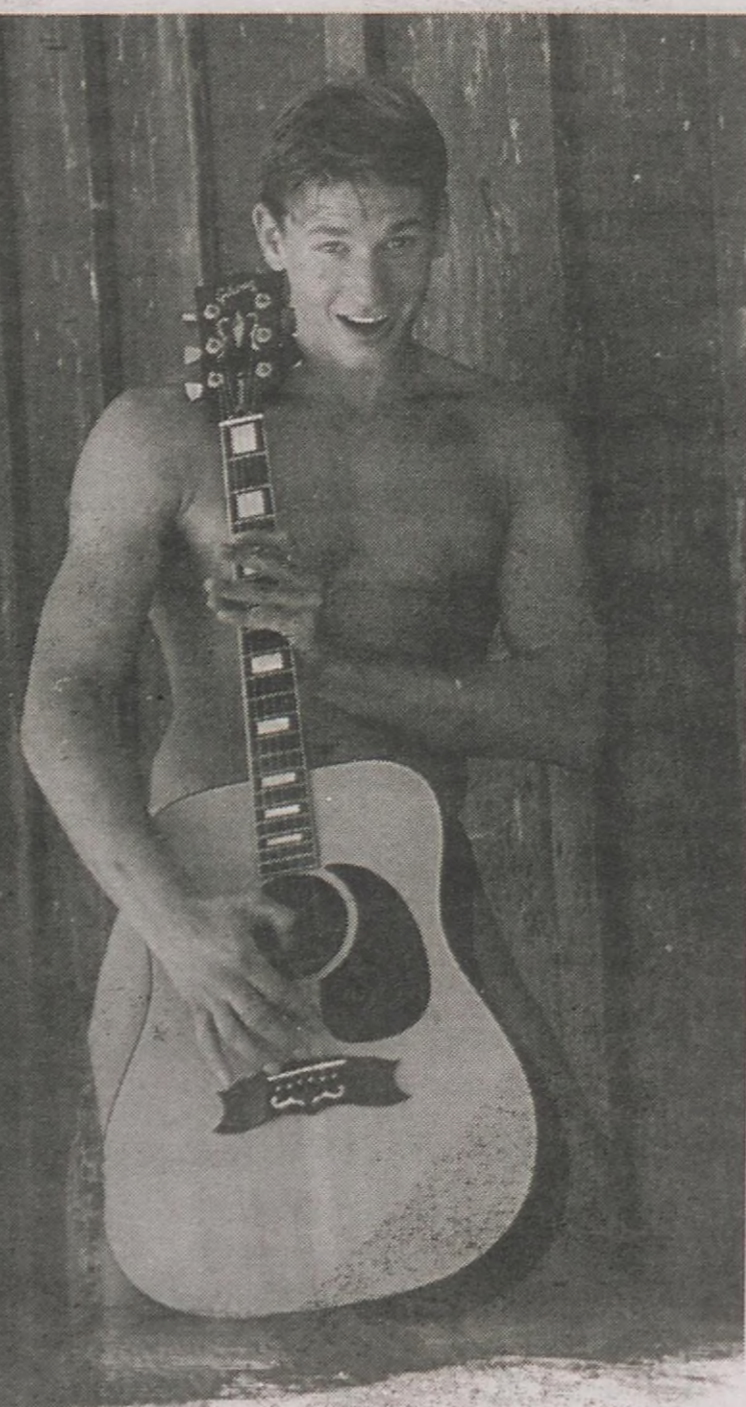
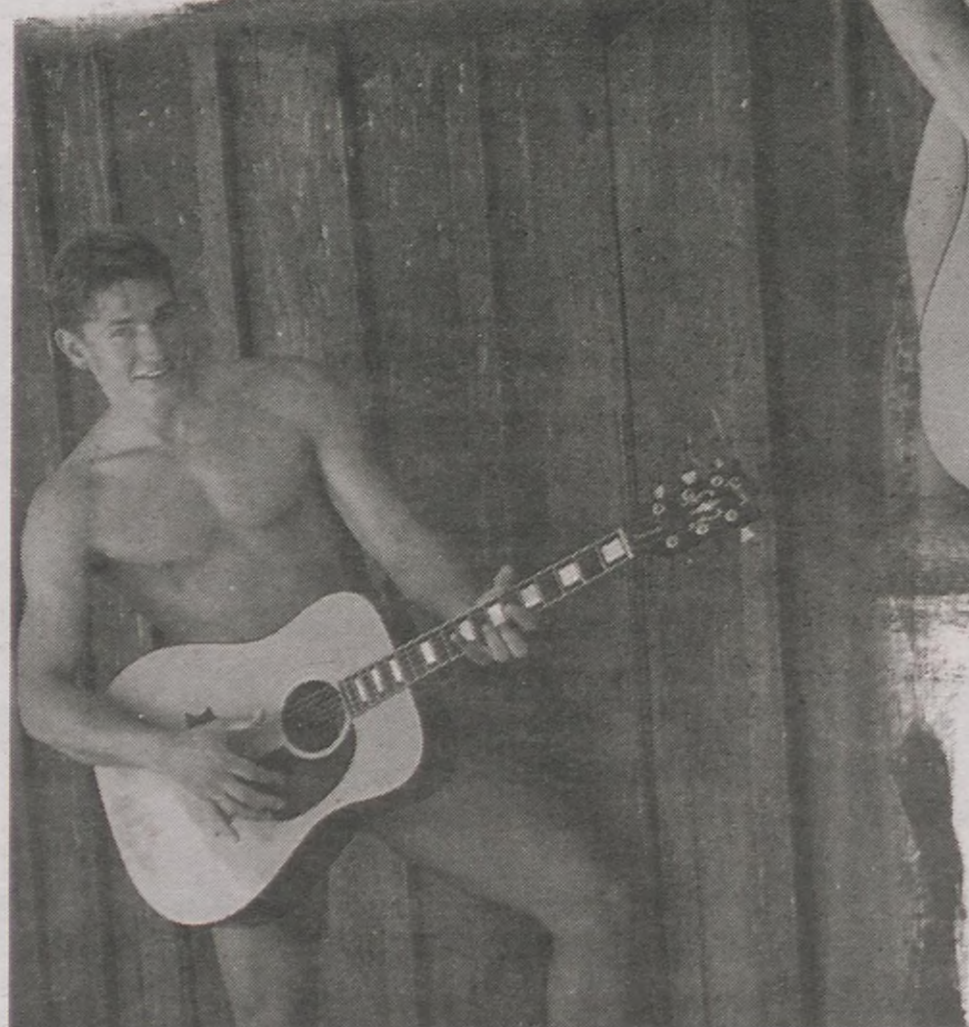
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bitch session

bitch session

Can I still advertise myself as masculine if I only act like a girl in bed?

I AM 36 YEARS OLD AND GUESS WHAT? I don't want some 18- or 21-year-old child. Introduce me to his dad, OK?

THE WORST THING ABOUT COMING out as a lesbian was all the incredibly stupid people who are out at clubs on a regular basis.

YOU SHACKED UP WITH ME FOR MY money, and then you get pissed when I treat you like a whore. We all end up having to earn our keep, one way or another.

TO THE IDIOT WHO WROTE ABOUT Goth kids: It's not about weird hair, it's about individuality. So throw your Abercrombie on, and head out with the rest of the cookie-cutter crowd.

I AM AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN MAN who was approached recently by two different white guys at a gay bar for drugs, even though there were white guys on either side of me. It really annoys me that white guys assume that black guys have drugs when they're at white bars. Please stop it!

IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH meeting people you recognize from the Internet, then stay offline!

TO THE "AMAZING RACE" FAN WHO criticized the gay couple Lynn and Alex: They are not making a spectacle of themselves, they are trying to win \$1 million. They're just being who they are.

SUSPICIOUS PEOPLE WHO ARE checking their boyfriend's computer files have no right to get their feelings hurt or feel slighted in any way! Shame on you! What's next? Eavesdropping on private phone calls, or opening someone else's mail?

WE ALL KNOW LESBIANS AREN'T just sitting around playing folk music and petting their pussies. They're also having potluck dinners and forming support groups.

NOT EVERYONE HATES MEN WITH back hair. I love them! The more back hair the better!

TO "HOT GUYS" WHO USE THEIR looks to become popular: It's not the "hot guys" that have the personality that "real people" want to get to know.

BARS FOR GAY MEN ARE NICER THAN bars for gay women because gay men spend more money, period! Like the saying goes "You gotta play to win!"

I DO THINK THAT WE GAY MEN OWE the lesbian community a debt of gratitude for the way they stood by us in the darkest days of AIDS, even though some of them come off a bit self-righteous here.

GUYS, PLEASE STOP WITH THE eyebrow plucking and waxing! Do you have any idea how effeminate you look? Just tattoo "BIG FAG" on your forehead!

THESE GUYS GRIPING ABOUT SOME cosmetic or hygienic trimming need to step into modern reality. The species isn't running barefoot in the woods anymore! Clean up those gnarly, wild crotches! Yuck.

I WORK AT A GAY-OWNED AND -operated restaurant, but the "straight" guy in the kitchen keeps talking about how being gay is wrong. Why are we employing him?

I MET YOU WHILE YOU WERE STRIPPING. I didn't ask you to stop stripping. One STD later, I am asking myself why I dated you in the first place.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO CRUISE THE SEX Web sites and hopefully get lucky, expect some rejection or lack of interest from some guys. Accept the fact that someone out there doesn't want you!

WHY DO ETHNIC MEN INSIST ON calling themselves "white"? You are not white! Don't hate me. I'm just calling it like it is!

YOUR LAST BOYFRIEND TOLD YOU THAT you use the word "love" too freely, that you're selfish, and that it's always best to tell the truth. I wish you had listened to him.

SORRY BUT YOU'RE NOT BEEFY. Porky is more like it.

I HAVE A 32-INCH WAIST, A 46-INCH hairy chest and a fuzzy face, and I like being considered a bear. So to the 34-inch-waisted guy who finds comfort in ridiculing my fellow bears: Think again, tubby.

WHY ON EARTH WOULD ANYONE, man or woman, feel bad about having a 34-inch waist? It just goes to show the sick thoughts people have based on the perceptions shoveled out in the mass media.

IF I HEAR ONE MORE TIME ABOUT how we "sissies" are promoting a negative stereotype, I'm going to hurl. I don't feel bad about being light in the loafers, so quit rainin' on my parade!

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

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