



## 'Silver Bells'

Gay Men's Chorus of Houston celebrates silver anniversary of making music together.

Page 15

# Parker makes history again

## First gay council rep wins city controller race

By BINNIE FISHER

A few days after voters in Houston overwhelmingly handed the job of city controller to Annise Parker, the first lesbian to be elected to the position, she said her 62-percent majority over opponent Bruce Tatro says more than meets the eye.

For starters, it says that she pulled votes from both Democrats and Republicans in a city that is home to former Republican President George Bush.

"I drew votes from all segments of the city," Parker said. "At least a third of conservatives (who voted) voted for me."

The Houston runoff election on Dec. 6 also handed a landslide victory to businessman Bill White, who served as deputy secretary of energy in the Clinton administration, and who ran for mayor against Republican Orlando Sanchez. White garnered 63 percent of the vote to Sanchez's 37 percent.

In another key race, voters delivered a narrow victory to civil rights attorney Ron Green, who faced District G City



Houston City Councilwoman Annise Parker, left, celebrates her election to the position of city controller with (from left) daughters Daniela and Marquitta Parker and her partner, Kathy Hubbard.

Councilman Bert Keller in the race for At-large, Position 4 on the council. Green received 53 percent of the vote to Keller's 47 percent.

Green's win was considered crucial to

gay men and lesbians, even though Keller had voted favorably on gay issues in the past. It insured that political mix on the city council remained at eight progressives to seven conservatives.

In other races of interest to gay men and lesbians, Houston Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus (PAC)-endorsed Adrian Garcia defeated Diana Davila Martinez for the District H seat on the council with 52 percent of the vote, and caucus-endorsed candidate Peter Brown lost the At-large, Position 3 seat on the council to Shelley Sekula-Gibbs, who received 52 percent of the vote.

Houston is a city that has three times elected Annise Parker to the City Council. Her stunning, runoff victory serves as a message to her that Houston expects her to be herself.

"I intend to be visible and outspoken on our (lesbian and gay) issues," she said.

Since the runoff, Parker's photo has appeared in newspapers nationwide, and her victory has been lauded by gays and lesbians throughout the country.

"This is a big win for the GLBT community," said Chuck Wolfe, executive director of the Victory Fund. "Annise has won a key race in an important region. The fact that she won because of her work on the city council on behalf of all Houston citizens is significant to the future of all GLBT candidates."

Please see ELECTION on Page 8



# Marriage or bust?

## Advocates say civil unions 'separate and unequal'

By LOU CHIBBARO JR.

With Americans engaged in an unprecedented dialogue on the issue of gay marriage, the nation's gay civil rights groups are being asked whether they consider Vermont-style

civil unions as an acceptable alternative to civil marriage rights for same-sex couples.

While praising Vermont for adopting its civil unions law, leaders of virtually all of the national gay civil rights groups have come down solidly behind demanding full civil marriage for gays, saying civil unions fail to provide the full legal rights and benefits of marriage.

"In our country, we have just one, single legal protection for families, and it's called marriage," said Evan Wolfson, executive director of Freedom to Marry, a national group helping coordinate lobbying efforts for same-sex marriage.

Representatives from a number of gay civil rights groups said that bene-

Please see MARRIAGE on Page 9

**POLICE MUM:** Despite pressure, police have nothing to report on the Allyn murder. Page 3

**PIPE ATTACK:** Police haven't determined if beating of dancer a hate crime. Page 3



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## local news

## NY dancer attacked in Montrose

Police not yet classifying attack a hate crime

By JOSEF MOLNAR

Allan Koren Tibbetts saw an opportunity to offer a helping hand when a young man got out of his car near the corner of Avondale and Whitney in Montrose, looked quizzically at street signs, then asked for directions.

Tibbetts was visiting Houston from New York over the Thanksgiving weekend to perform at a DiverseWorks World AIDS Day event the following week, and he knew what it was like to be unfamiliar with the area. He pointed the way to the street the man asked about before turning and walking away.

What happened next, Tibbetts said, he will never forget. Thirty seconds later, the first blow from a pipe split the skin along the right side of his head.

"I had absolutely no idea what it was," Tibbetts said. "I wasn't expecting to be attacked by someone I had just had a pleasant conversation with."

He called for help and tried to run, but the man kept hitting him before wrestling him to the ground between two cars. The assailant continued to beat Tibbetts before demanding his money.

In all, Tibbetts sustained at least seven blows to his head and back. With the money in hand, the man jumped into the passenger seat of the car and it sped away.

At the hospital, Tibbetts received 37 stitches on his head, and it was there that he said a technician told him his was the sixth assault the hospital had seen that weekend.

Silvia Treviño, a public information officer with the Houston Police Department, said HPD has only received an assault report from Tibbetts and is waiting to finish its investigation before determining whether Tibbetts was the victim of a hate crime.

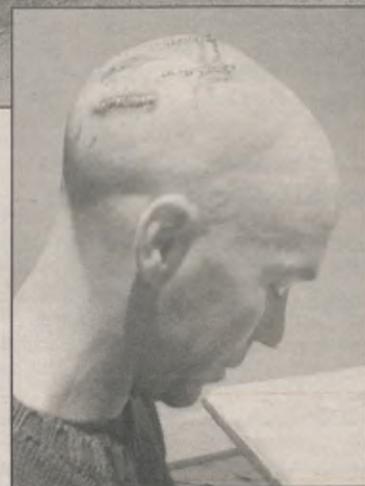
"They're definitely going to look into whether it's a hate crime or not," she said, "but at this time there is no reason to label it as a hate crime. We don't want to start second-guessing this situation."

Treviño said the pattern of the attack will help determine how it will be labeled. Tibbetts has said his attacker did not use homophobic remarks at any time during or after the attack, meaning HPD will likely classify it as an assault and robbery.

Tibbetts, for one, isn't convinced that his attack is simply a case of robbery and assault. He points out that the attacker concealed his weapon. Also Tibbetts was wearing a baseball with a Human Rights Campaign logo.

"If you want to mug someone, you do it with your weapon shown, and maybe you hit them once to show you mean business," Tibbetts said. "It really felt like the mugging was an afterthought. If you want to take someone's money, you don't keep hitting them."

HPD follows the lead of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, which broadly defines a hate crime



Street lights are few on the streets of Montrose where assaults on gay men have been reported. Thirty seven stitches were required to close wounds Allan Tibbetts sustained when he was assaulted with a metal pipe on a darkened Montrose street over the Thanksgiving weekend. (Montrose photo by Dalton Dehart)

Because many gay men are not open about their sexual orientation, they may be unwilling to report being a victim of a hate crime. For that reason, Councilwoman Edwards has said her office will receive reports from anyone reluctant to file an official police complaint.

While Tibbetts was willing to file a police report and speak with the media, he acknowledges that many victims would prefer to avoid the publicity.

Treviño agreed, and said that unlike sexual assault files, which are largely confidential, the law requires files associated with these kinds of crimes to be classified as public information.

"Complainant information is public information," she said. "Maybe that's why they don't report crimes like this."

Treviño encouraged anyone who has noticed anything or who may have been a victim of a similar crime in the to call HPD. She added that associates can also report the crime; but not knowing the first-hand details keeps the department from doing little more for that victim than filing a report. Still, she said an incomplete report is better than no report.

### **i** MORE INFO

Houston Police Department  
713-222-3131

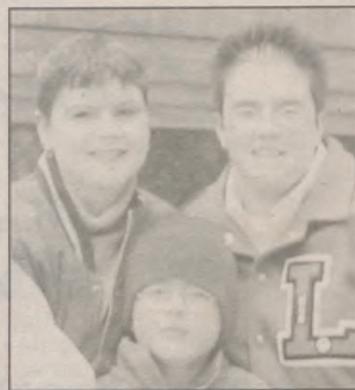
HPD Online General Safety Presentation  
[www.ci.houston.tx.us/department/police/cp\\_5/sld001.htm](http://www.ci.houston.tx.us/department/police/cp_5/sld001.htm)

City Councilwoman Ada Edwards  
713-247-1247

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**NO REGRETS:** Officials at a Louisiana school that disciplined a 7-year-old student for saying that his mom is a lesbian claim the boy is owed no apology. **Page 5**



**HOLIDAY STYLE:** Photos chronicle a week's worth of holiday events in Houston. **Page 7**



**CONJOINED WITH ASHCROFT:** What would Cher do to U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft if she were his conjoined twin? **Page 18**

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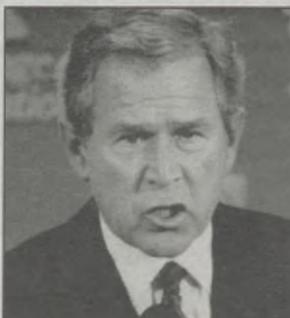
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For tickets: [www.GHGLCC.org](http://www.GHGLCC.org) or call 713-523-7576

## national news

### Three top-ranking former military leaders come out as gay

WASHINGTON — Three high-ranking retired military officers who criticized the U.S. military's ban on gays serving openly announced this week they are gay, according to a



report in the New York Times. The three, Brig. Gen. Keith H. Kerr and Brig. Gen. Virgil A. Richard, both of the Army, and Rear Adm. Alan M. Steinman of the Coast Guard, said they were forced to lie to their family, friends and colleagues so that they could serve their country. They said the 1993 "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy is ineffective and undermines the military's core values: truth, honor, dignity, respect and integrity, according to the Times. "I was denied the opportunity to share my life with a loved one, to have a family, to do all the things that heterosexual Americans take for granted," Admiral Steinman said. "That's the sacrifice I made to serve my country." The officers said that the Defense Department and White House had not adequately addressed the problem of harassment. "The president seems reluctant to emphasize the anti-harassment part of the 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy," General Kerr said in an interview from his home in Santa Rosa, Calif. "He just doesn't feel this is a serious issue."

Three former high-ranking military leaders said President Bush and the Department of Defense are doing little to stop gay harassment. The three told the New York Times this week that they are gay and had to live a closeted life to serve their country.

### S.F. voters defeat Green candidate who left Dems over gay marriage

SAN FRANCISCO — In the end to a closely watched race, Democrat Gavin Newsom defeated the Green Party's Matt Gonzalez Tuesday in the bid to become San Francisco's 42nd mayor. The race garnered international media attention to see how voters would respond to the differences between the centrist Newsom and the liberal Gonzalez. While only 3 percent of the city's population are registered Greens, polls before the elections showed the candidates virtually deadlocked. Gonzalez left the Democratic Party in 2000 because he thought the party was moving away from its progressive past, including its overall opposition to gay marriage. "I decided I am not going to vote for candidates who support the death penalty or oppose gay marriage," Gonzalez wrote at the time. Newsom said during the campaign that he supports gay marriage. Ultimately, Newsom captured 52.6 percent of the vote to Gonzalez's 47.4 percent, with about 11,000 votes separating the two candidates.

### Kan. judge questions harsher punishment in gay sodomy case

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Calling some of the state's justifications "utterly ridiculous," an appellate judge has questioned whether the state can punish illegal sex more harshly when it involves homosexual acts. Kansas Court of Appeals Judge G. Joseph Pierron presided last week over a three-judge appeals panel as it heard arguments in the case of Matthew R. Limon, whose conviction stems from sex acts in 2000 with a 14-year-old male. Limon was 18 at the time. Convicted of criminal sodomy, Limon was sentenced to 17 years and two months in prison. Had Limon engaged in sex with an underage female, he could have been sentenced to one year and three months in prison. "I'm just trying to come up with a reason, other than you don't like homosexuals," Pierron told Deputy Attorney General Jared Maag, who was representing the state.

### N.J. domestic partner bill could become law in 2004

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) — A Democrat-sponsored bill that would allow same-sex couples to form domestic partnerships and thereby gain some of the tax and insurance benefits enjoyed by married couples could become law by early next year, according to a spokesperson for Gov. James E. McGreevey (D). The measure introduced by Senate Co-President Richard Codey (D-Essex County), would limit domestic partnerships to heterosexual couples 63 and older who could jeopardize pension benefits by remarrying, and to adult same-sex couples. An earlier measure in the Assembly would have enabled any two unmarried adults living together to gain the benefits of domestic partnerships. The Assembly version drew criticism from McGreevey as too broad and expensive. Advocates for gay rights embraced the prospects of the legislation but vowed to continue court fights to form same-sex marriages.

### Calif., Neb. lesbian couples fight for parental rights, custody

SAN FRANCISCO — Two women, formerly a couple, are battling over custody of 7-year-old fraternal twins, the San Francisco Chronicle reported. At the same time, an estranged lesbian couple in Nebraska awaits a judge's decision on custody of their adoptive son, the Associated Press reported. In San Francisco, one of the women provided the eggs for conception of the children, and the other carried the girls to term, the newspaper reported. The pair raised the twins together until they broke up nearly two years ago, and courts so far have awarded the birth mother sole parental rights and custody. In January, the California Court of Appeals will hear the case, the Chronicle reported. In Omaha, Neb., a two-day trial to determine whether Serenna Russell or Joan Bridgens would have custody of their 7-year-old son took place last month. Bridgens adopted the baby in 1996 while in a relationship with Russell.

From staff and wire reports

## national news

## La. school punishes boy for saying 'gay'

ACLU vows lawsuit if demands aren't met 'to correct harm'

By CHRISTOPHER SEELY

LAFAYETTE, La. — A 7-year-old boy arrived home from school last month with a disciplinary note because he told another student that his mom is gay while waiting in line for recess.

"I sed bad wurd," wrote Marcus McLaurin, a second-grader at Ernest Gallet Elementary School in the Lafayette Parish School District in Louisiana, on a "Student Behavior Contract" dated Nov. 11.

McLaurin wrote on the contract that he should have "kept his mouf shut."

McLaurin's teacher clarified the "bad word" in her writings on the contract, which was obtained by Southern Voice.

"He explained to another child that you are gay and what being gay means," said the teacher.

The day of the incident, McLaurin's mother received a phone call from the school's assistant principal warning her that her son said something inappropriate, said Sharon Huff, McLaurin's mother.

"That [phone call] was nothing compared to the shock I felt when my little boy

came home and told me that his teacher had told him his family is a dirty word," Huff said.

Two days after the note and phone call, McLaurin was forced to attend a school behavioral clinic and restricted from explaining his gay family to other students, according to the American Civil Liberties Union, which is representing McLaurin's family and sent a letter Dec. 1 to Ernest Gallet Elementary School.

At press deadline, the Lafayette Parish School Board was scheduled to meet Dec. 11 to hear the results of an investigation being led by Lafayette Superintendent James Easton into the ACLU's allegations, said Justine W. Sutley, public relations director for the Lafayette school system.

Easton has said that McLaurin did not receive punishment because he said the word "gay" but because the boy disrupted the class.

"The superintendent has said the discipline has been for talking in or disrupting class," Sutley said. "He has also said that other documents exist that we are not privy to."

But in addition to the note Huff's son brought home on the day of the incident, a separate behavior report from McLaurin's teacher also criticized him for explaining what being gay meant.

"Marcus decided to explain to another child in his group that his mom is gay," the



When Marcus McLaurin, 7, returned home from school last month with a disciplinary note, mother Sharon Huff (left) and her partner, Heather Manley, were shocked to find out he was punished for saying 'gay.' (Photo by Chris Hampton)

teacher wrote. "He told the other child that gay is when a girl likes a girl. This kind of discussion is not acceptable in my room. I feel

that parents should explain things of this nature to their children in their own way."

The school board will likely determine whether to meet demands made by the ACLU on behalf of the boy and his mother, Sutley said.

If litigation is to be avoided, the school board must make a "satisfactory response" in its Dec. 11 meeting, said Ken Choe, an attorney with the ACLU Lesbian & Gay Rights Project who is handling the case.

"We are looking for the school to ensure that Marcus can speak about his family, just like any other student can speak about his or her families," Choe said.

The elementary school also must expunge McLaurin's disciplinary records and apologize to McLaurin and his mother, Choe said.

"What Marcus and his family are asking for is minimal," he said. "They did not want us to file a lawsuit off the bat for money or disciplinary action against school employees. We've only asked that the school acknowledge that there was an error in judgment that had serious consequences."

If the ACLU decides to file litigation, it would do so by claiming that the school violated constitutional rights to free expression and equal treatment, attorneys said.

"In this case, the discrimination is clear. There is discrimination between heterosexual parents and gay parents," Choe said.

## HIV increases among gay, bisexual men

New diagnoses up 17 percent over four-year period, CDC says

By RYAN LEE

Using the most comprehensive data to date, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention recently announced HIV diagnoses rose by 5.1 percent between 1999 and 2002, including a 17 percent increase among gay and bisexual men.

Some AIDS educators fear the increase among men who have sex with men may be the result of a cultural shift, with younger people being less afraid of the disease.

"Unfortunately, the data is not surprising at all, as we continue to see an increase in the number of men who report homosexual activity as a mode of transmission," said Kim Anderson, executive director of AID Atlanta, a non-profit service provider. "We're faced with a generation of young people who did not see the walking dead."

The data — published in the Nov. 28 issue of the CDC's Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report — showed 102,590 people in 29 states were diagnosed with HIV between 1999 and 2002. Men represented 70.5 percent of new cases in the four-year period, with gay and bisexual activity representing nearly 60 percent of those transmissions, according to the CDC.

In 1999, 9,988 new HIV diagnoses were among gay and bisexual men, compared to 11,686 in 2002.

"People are a lot less anxious about HIV than they used to be," said Philippe Chilliade, medical director for the Whitman-Walker Clinic, an HIV organization in Washington D.C. "I think some of it may be the result of peer pressure, in that if you see other gay men around you taking risks sexually, it's easier to copy the behavior of those around you."

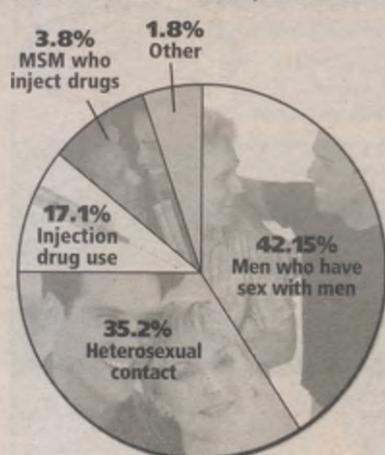
Younger men may not fully comprehend the magnitude of HIV, but Chilliade has seen an equal amount of risky sexual behavior reported by older, educated and wealthy men, he said.

"I think what we are seeing now really tells us we need to do something more than just making people aware of how STDs are transmitted," he said.

Starting in 1994, the CDC used 25 states — all of which required confidential reporting of persons with HIV — to track the progression of the disease throughout the country. In 1999, four more states met the confidential reporting requirements, and they are included in the newly released data, according to Carly Stanton, a CDC spokesperson.

But not included in the 29-state surveillance are several states with large gay populations, including California, New York, Texas and Georgia. Those states' confiden-

Exposure category for new HIV infections in 29 states, 1999-2002



Total new infections: 102,590

Source: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

tial reporting systems have not been in place long enough to produce accurate numbers, Stanton said.

Georgia — the last state to adopt an HIV reporting system — begins collecting HIV diagnosis data at the beginning of 2004.

Health advocates are eager to see the complete data, even if it reveals an even

higher increase in HIV diagnoses among gay and bisexual men.

"If we start seeing [remaining states] in CDC data, I'm pretty sure we're going to see those numbers rise," Chilliade said. "I think from a public health standpoint it's important for the CDC to be aware of who's getting infected because at least that will help us target our prevention messages."

Despite the 17 percent increase, Anderson and Chilliade said decades of HIV prevention efforts are having a positive impact.

"If we had not been doing what we've been doing, it would have been worse," Anderson said. "I think it's a call for us to be even more involved, and at different levels."

Junior high school and high school students should be targeted by HIV prevention messages, including cutting-edge ways to get their attention, Anderson said.

"We need to get access to greater dollars so we can market to younger people effectively," she said. "Just like the GAP markets, we need to market prevention education on the same level."

"The best thing we can do right now is do advertisements on a bus shelter or on a postcard," she said.

Chilliade agreed that safer sex messages should be delivered to school-aged children.

"Teaching abstinence is a great tool, but for those who will be sexually active, we need to prepare them as well," he said.

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## international news

### Brazilian mayor indicted after banning gays from town

SAO PAULO, Brazil (AP) — A mayor in southern Brazil who signed a decree banning gays from entering his town has been indicted under anti-discrimination laws, the state prosecutor handling the case said last week. "Mayor Elcio Berti stepped beyond any reasonable limit," said prosecutor Agenor Salgado. "If convicted, he could face two to four years in prison aside from losing his office." Berti, mayor of the town of Bocaiuva do Sul (population 10,000), 250 miles south of Sao Paulo, signed a decree Dec. 1 "prohibiting the presence in this jurisdiction of members of the class known as homosexuals, who can bring no benefits whatsoever to the town." A gay rights group called Dignity announced that it would mount protests outside the Bocaiuva do Sul city hall late last week. Berti was unavailable for comment. "The mayor has shut down city hall and disappeared," said Bocaiuva do Sul police officer Waldemar Mateus. "Even we don't know where he is."



Elcio Berti, mayor of Bocaiuva do Sul, Brazil, has been indicted by state prosecutors under anti-discrimination laws after he signed a decree banning gays from the city.

### Jamaican reggae star accused of inciting gay bashing in England

LONDON — Complaints that a Jamaican reggae star incited violence against gays during visits to London are under investigation by local police, Reuters reported. Bounty Killer, born Rodney Basil Price, is a dancehall reggae artist who gained fame in 1996 with the album, "My Xperience," according to the news agency. He also has gained popularity in the United States, collaborating with Janet Jackson and some of the nation's top rap artists. But a number of complaints have been lodged against the star, alleging that he has incited homophobic violence and murder, London police told Reuters. "In a democratic society people have a right to criticize homosexuality, but they do not have a right to encourage queer-bashing," gay rights group OutRage! told Reuters. Clive Driscoll, detective chief inspector of Scotland Yard's Racial & Violent Crime Task Force, said police are delving into lyrics from several of the singer's tunes. OutRage! officials said they are concerned by lyrics such as those in ghetto slang from "Another Level," which states: "Bun a fire pon a poop and Mister Faggoty ... Poop man fi drown and dat a yawd man philosophy," Reuters reported.

### Uzbek leader's declaration of amnesty may help jailed gay journalist

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan (AP) — Uzbek President Islam Karimov issued amnesty that would apply to some prisoners convicted of involvement in extremist groups, according to a government statement. Its phrasing makes it likely that it could be applied to jailed journalist Ruslan Sharipov, who is serving a four-year term for having homosexual sex, which is illegal in Uzbekistan. His pardon was sought by U.S. officials and international rights groups. Karimov's decree, timed to the 11th anniversary of Uzbekistan's post-Soviet constitution, would grant amnesty to those in such groups who "have firmly set on the path of correction," said the statement, which was published in official newspapers. It didn't name extremist groups or say how many convicts would benefit from the amnesty. The amnesty would be applicable only to those extremists whose prison terms do not exceed 10 years.

### Australian man sues McDonald's over alleged anti-gay remarks

ARDEER, Australia — A man who alleged that a McDonald's employee made anti-gay comments about him and a friend is suing the fast food chain, the Herald Sun of Melbourne, Australia, reported. Paul Corda of Werribee alleged that he and a friend were called "poofers" and "faggots" by an employee of McDonald's at Western Ring Road in Ardeer. He said he later was offered an apology by the restaurant manager and a meal voucher, the Herald Sun reported. Corda alleges that he ordered and paid for his food in the drive through and heard a staff member make comments into her headpiece, the newspaper reported. He now is suing McDonald's in the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, alleging that the company discriminated against him on the basis of his sexual orientation, the Herald Sun reported. John Whitehouse, McDonald's employee relations manager, said in a letter the worker admitted to making an inappropriate comment to a colleague, according to the newspaper. But Whitehouse said the corporation should not be held responsible for the comments of one employee.

### Solomon Islands officials arrest woman for being a lesbian

HONIARA, Solomon Islands — The United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights is monitoring the arrest of a woman who is charged with being a lesbian, according to a report in the Herald Sun newspaper. Homosexuality is illegal in the Solomon Islands. The woman, who was not named, is charged with one count of committing an indecent practice, having sex with a person of the same gender. The Herald Sun reported the woman was refused bail after appearing in court on Monday. Magistrate Jefferson Leua said the offense was a serious one and that the middle-aged, divorced mother would be remanded in custody to ensure there was no interference with witnesses. Ashley Wickham, the head of the UNHCR's Honiara office, said the case would be followed closely. "We should be trying to comply with international standards, and clearly some things have been happening here that do not," Wickham said.

From staff and wire reports

## local news

# Police mum on Ross Allyn murder investigation

Police are saying little as they investigate leads in lobbyist's homicide

By BINNIE FISHER

Three weeks after gay Houston lobbyist Ross Allyn was found dead of a gunshot wound inside his burning home, police have zipped their lips about the case.

Media inquiries are being forwarded to the office of John Cannon, Houston Police public information officer. He says homicide investigators have given him nothing to report.

Allyn was found shot to death early on Nov. 20 inside his burning home at 919 Worthshire. He had been shot in the back of the neck and was found near the front door, as though he had tried to escape his assailant.

Police have appealed to gays and lesbians to come forward with any information that may help them find Allyn's killer.

Allyn, who in 1997 was caught up in an FBI bribery sting that sent City Councilman Ben Reyes and Houston Port Commissioner Betti Maldonado to prison, never got over the feeling he was being watched.

Although a judge dropped the case against him, he remarked often to friends that he felt he was still under scrutiny.

Police spokesman Cannon said this isn't the first time investigators have been hesitant to talk about an ongoing investigation.

"I know they are working on a number of leads," Cannon said. "There are a lot of players involved."

There were many players because there were many facets to Allyn's life, providing numerous avenues for investigation.

Friends have suggested that his life as a lobbyist could have turned up enemies. There are those who have wondered whether he took the wrong person home on the evening before his murder.

His abuse of cocaine was well known, and some have speculated that could have brought about his untimely end.

Police are under intense pressure from

the City Council to solve the case. Allyn counted several council members among his friends. The evening before his death, he attended a fundraiser for Annise Parker, who was elected city controller in the Dec. 6 runoff.

Cannon said when homicide investigators have tied up the loose ends, they will release information to the public, perhaps even the name of a suspect.

"When they are ready to discuss it in the media, they'll talk," Cannon said.

## **i** MORE INFO

Houston Police Homicide Division  
713-308-3600



Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee talks with fellow award winners (from left) Sheila Scott Award Winner John Coulter, HATCH youth Brian, Student of the Year Mohammed and Lori Hildalgo, the center's employee of the year.



The Rev. Carol Mobley, assistant pastor at Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church and her partner, Adrian Bowie, enjoy the Sisters holiday party. Bowie is president of Sisters.

## Holidays in Houston

(All photos by Dalton DeHart)



U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee gets a hug from Montrose Counseling Center Executive Director Ann Robison after Lee was presented the center's Ed Eaton Award for Public Service to the GLBT and HIV Community. In turn, Lee presented the center with a check for \$100,000 in federal funds.

The Black Tie, Inc. recently presented \$46,000 to six agencies, including Bering Omega Community Services, An Uncommon Legacy, AssistHers, People with AIDS Coalition, the Montrose Counseling Center and PFLAG/HATCH.



The Houston Pride Band recently provided seasonal music during the annual holiday party thrown by the Houston Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce at the Kilworth Manor.

## local news

Houston civil rights attorney and newly elected At-large, Position 4 City Councilman Ron Green is all smiles as he savors his election night victory with U.S. Rep. Chris Bell (D-Tex.) at the George R. Brown Convention Center.



## Gay candidates no longer a 'shock to political system'

ELECTION, continued from Page 1

Parker concurs. "I don't know what it says about the gay community," she said. "Two years ago we were defeated on domestic partner benefits (for city of Houston employees). But in terms of our own individual efforts, I think we can thrive."

Voters from all walks of life have become accustomed to gay and lesbian

candidates, she said.

"Every election cycle (in Houston) we're beginning to have gay candidates in the pipeline," she said. "I don't think it's a shock to the political system anymore."

Wolfe said that as Controller, Parker will represent 2 million constituents - the second largest number of constituents represented by an openly gay or lesbian public official in the country. The public official with the most constituents is Carole Migden, who represents 21 counties as a member of the California State Board of Equalization.

Parker realizes that many of those who voted for her don't know what the city controller does.

"Controller is in many ways an obscure position," Parker said. "As controller, you don't have a vote and you don't have a role in public policy."

She said she has a definite goal in mind as she enters office. "I did not run to reform the controller's office," she said. "More importantly, I intend to reform the relationship between the controller and the (city) administration."

As the runoff drew near, Parker said she was gratified that her opponent's negative ads did not mention her sexual orientation.

"You can't play that card anymore," she said. "He just characterized me as a tax and spend liberal."

Term limits in Houston prevent city office holders from running for more than three two-year terms. There are those in Houston who are already speculating about what Parker will do six years from now.

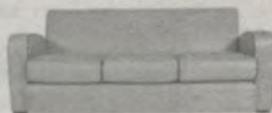
"I certainly don't intend to end my career in public service as controller for the City of Houston," she said.

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Houston City Councilwoman Annise Parker is thronged by supporters at the Home Plate Bar and Grill as she celebrates her election to the position of city controller. (Photos by Dalton DeHart)

## national news

## Gays in Congress deal with marriage backlash

MARRIAGE, continued from Page 1

fits provided through Vermont's civil unions law, or about to be enacted through California's super domestic partners law, are nice stepping stones that help some gay couples now. But, the ultimate goal is for same-sex couples to be able to get married in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Wolfson, a gay rights attorney, said he's concerned that incorrect information surfacing in the news media is misleading rank and file gays and their straight supporters into thinking a civil union is equal to civil marriage in all respects except its name. Confusion over the difference between civil marriage and civil unions, Wolfson said, could hurt efforts to achieve full marriage rights.

"Gay people should not enter into a discussion of bargaining against ourselves," he said.

A newly formed coalition of African American gays raised the issue of civil unions versus marriage rights this week in announcing plans to launch a \$100,000 media campaign promoting same-sex marriage in the black community.

"Civil unions is separate and unequal," said Keith Boykin, co-founder of the National Black Justice Coalition. Boykin, a White House special assistant in the Clinton administration, compared civil unions to the past U.S. policies of racial segregation, which labeled mandatory all-black school districts as "separate but equal."

"Our whole notion is you don't go half a loaf for civil rights," said Mandy Carter, one of the African-American gay civil rights leaders who joined Boykin in forming the black coalition.

"We don't want to settle for domestic partnership or civil unions, not that they're not important," Carter said. "But if we're going to go out and advocate, what we want is full marriage equality."

## Unions don't offer full rights

The concept of civil unions first surfaced in Vermont in 1999, when the Vermont Supreme Court ruled that the state's marriage law excluding marriage rights and benefits for same-sex couples



Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) said she applauds gays striving for full marriage rights. (Photo by Michael Wise)

violated the Vermont Constitution. The court ruling gave the legislature the option of changing the law to allow same-sex marriages or legal "unions" that offered the same rights or benefits provided by the state for heterosexual married couples. The state legislature, faced with a highly controversial issue, chose the civil unions option, backed by the state's governor at the time, Howard Dean, now the frontrunner for the Democratic presidential nomination.

The same-sex marriage versus civil unions issue surfaced once again this year when the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court issued a ruling nearly identical to Vermont's high court. However, some legal experts have said that the Massachusetts ruling requires the legislature to open up the state's marriage law to full, same-sex marriage, with no legal wiggle room to form civil unions. Others have disagreed.

If the legislature fails to act by a court-imposed deadline of May 15, 2004, a number of legal analysts, including gay rights attorneys, say the court itself may declare same-sex marriage to be legal in Massachusetts and order the state to provide marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

Before the Massachusetts ruling, civil unions became a hot topic in the Democratic presidential election campaign, as six of the nine Democrats running for president said they support civil unions over gay marriage. Three candidates lagging in the polls — former Senator Carol Moseley Braun of Illinois, Rep. Dennis Kucinich of Ohio, and the Rev. Al Sharpton of New York — have declared their support for same-sex marriage.

The six leading candidates, including Dean, have argued that civil unions provide all the legal benefits conferred by marriage. Dean, who signed Vermont's civil union law as governor, has said he also favors a federal law providing federal marital benefits and rights to those joined in civil unions.

Gay rights attorneys concede that legalizing same-sex marriage in any state, including Massachusetts, would not provide with the many rights and benefits associated with marriage to gay couples that come from the federal government, including tax deductions, immigration rights and Social Security survivor benefits.

The federal Defense of Marriage Act, which Congress passed and President Clinton signed in 1996, bars same-sex couples from receiving any federal marital benefits, though activists have questioned the statute's constitutionality.

## Marriage can lead to DOMA challenge

Why, then, do most of the nation's gay rights groups claim same-sex marriage is preferable to civil unions?

Wolfson and attorneys with Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund, a gay litigation group, say legalizing gay marriage in Massachusetts and other states will open the way for legal challenges to the Defense of Marriage Act, known as DOMA.

Experts in constitutional law have said

it remains unclear whether a section of the U.S. Constitution known as the full faith and credit clause requires states to legally honor marriages issued in other states. Most legal observers say the question will be tested in the courts, with the U.S. Supreme Court making the final decision.

But without legalizing same-sex marriage in one or more states, this issue could never be tested and the possibility of obtaining full federal marriage benefits and rights for gay couples could never be achieved without passage of legislation, activists argue.

## Extra-legal benefits?

David Buckel, an attorney with Lambda Legal, said legalizing same-sex marriage in states would have benefits that go beyond just the legal issues.

"The key issue is gay people, not the government, should make the choice between civil unions or marriage," Buckel said. "As long as the government takes the choice away from gay people, we are second-class citizens. The official message from our rulers is that we are unworthy."

Added Buckel, "Our position is that any choice available to a different-sex couple should be available to a same-sex couple. We would be making a terrible mistake to allow the government to take marriage off that list of choices."

Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), the first open lesbian to serve in Congress, called 2003 "a tremendous year in the debate and discussion on civil marriage for gays."

Baldwin said she agrees with gay rights leaders that marriage is far preferable to civil unions for gay men and lesbians, and she supports efforts by gays in Massachusetts and other states to secure marriage equality in the courts. But she said she and other gay rights advocates in Congress must now face a backlash against same-sex marriage and gay civil rights in general orchestrated by anti-gay groups.

"I think the struggle for full civil marriage rights is a very important one," Baldwin said. "That having been said, I in no way discourage efforts to protect our families in the meantime" through civil unions or domestic partner laws, Baldwin said.

Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), another openly gay member of Congress, said he also supports legalization of same-sex marriage and predicts the Massachusetts high court will decree legalized same-sex marriage next May. Like other observers, Frank said he believes the Massachusetts legislature will choose not to act, with conservative lawmakers working instead for a voter referendum to amend the state Constitution to ban same-sex marriage.

Frank said that by 2006, voters will view the issue as non-threatening and most likely will vote against a referendum to repeal marriage rights for gays.

Rep. Jim Kolbe (R-Ariz.), the third openly gay member of Congress, has no official position on same-sex marriage or civil unions, according to his press secretary,



David Buckel, a gay rights attorney for Lambda Legal Defense, said gay activists need to keep demanding that the government treats all of its citizens equally. (Photo courtesy of Lambda Legal)

Neena Moorjani. Moorjani said Kolbe opposes a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage and joined Frank and Baldwin in issuing a joint letter to all House members urging opposition to such an amendment. Kolbe did, however, vote for DOMA, angering a number of activists and leading the Arizona Republican to come out in anticipation that activists would identify him in retaliation.

## Gay groups unified in support of marriage rights

While sometimes disagreeing over strategies and issues, all of the major national gay civil rights groups are unified in their support for legalizing same-sex marriage, according to Wolfson, who said he confers with the groups frequently.

Among them are the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest gay political group; the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force; the National Latina/o Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Organization; Lambda Legal; the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation; Parents & Friends of Lesbians & Gays; Log Cabin Republicans; and the National Stonewall Democrats.

Log Cabin Republicans spokesperson Mark Mead and National Stonewall Democrats Executive Director Dave Noble said same-sex marriage enjoys widespread support from their member groups.

Martin Ornelas-Quintero, executive director of LLEGO, said his group's diverse membership appears solidly behind the concept of same-sex marriage, lining up behind LLEGO's efforts to lobby mainline Hispanic groups in support of equal marriage rights for gays. Ornelas-Quintero said the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda, a coalition of 33 Hispanic advocacy groups in the United States, came out against a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage following a LLEGO lobbying campaign.

Craig Howell, member and former president of the D.C. Gay & Lesbian Activists Alliance, said GLAA also supports same-sex marriage. Howell said GLAA is pleased that the national groups view marriage as far preferable to civil unions or domestic partnership laws.

**EDITORIAL & PRODUCTION**

Executive Editor CHRIS CRAIN  
 Editor BINNIE FISHER - bfisher@houstonvoice.com  
 Production KIKI CARR  
 Correspondents: LOU CHIBBARO, JR., JOE CREA,  
 LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN, LAUREL FAUST, MIKE  
 FLEMING, MATTHEW HENNIE, RYAN LEE, BRIAN  
 MOYLAN, KEVIN NAFF, KEN SAIN, CHRISTOPHER  
 SEELY, STEVE WEINSTEIN  
 Contributors: JOHNNY HOOKS, JOSEF MOLNAR,  
 JASON VICTOR SERINUS AND MUBARAK DAHIR  
 Photographers: DALTON DEHART,  
 KIMBERLY THOMPSON  
 Webmaster ARAM VARTIAN

**SALES & ADMINISTRATION**

General Manager DANIEL EMERICH  
 demerich@houstonvoice.com  
 Account Executives  
 BRETT CULLUM - bcullum@houstonvoice.com  
 SCOTT RYAN - sryan@houstonvoice.com  
 JENNIFER HOLLAND - jholland@houstonvoice.com  
 Administrative Assistant  
 JOHNNY HOOKS - jhooks@houstonvoice.com  
 National Advertising Representative  
 Rivendell Media • 212-242-6863

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Issue 1207

# Forum

HOUSTON VOICE

DECEMBER 12, 2003

PAGE 10

**editorial**

## Bathhouse Betty might be right

Bette Midler shocked her gay fans when she asked whether marriage was a good idea for same-sex couples, but are the gay guys you know ready to tie the knot?

By CHRIS CRAIN

**S**HE GOT HER START AS Bathhouse Betty, back in the days when gay men treated "the tubs" as all-around social clubs, and not just as places to — you know — become better acquainted.

So it came as an unpleasant shock to many in her legions of gay fans when Bette Midler, asked by Larry King this week her views on gay marriage, didn't offer up a politically correct answer about equal rights long overdue.

Instead, Bathhouse Betty thought about the flesh-and-blood gay guys she knows and loves, and questioned whether marriage was such a good idea.

"Many of the homosexual men that I know — you know, they like to move around," said Midler. "They like to have — you know, they're — that's part of it. That's part of the fun of being a gay man. I'm really wondering how — what that commitment is going to be about. Does that mean they're not going to cheat, they're only going to be with one?"

Many of us, like Bette, know one or two homosexual men who — you know — like to "move around." In fact, we know a whole slew of gay men for whom "moving around" is — you know — part of it, part of the fun of being gay. Of course, let the record reflect that the same could be said of many heterosexual men — and plenty of married ex-presidents — but her point is still one worth considering.

Some of the attacks on "gay marriage" have been over-the-top alarmist, like suggesting it could lead to the end of civilization. Others have been heterosexist, as if there were something innately superior about the "complementarity" of heterosexual love between people of opposite genders.

Superior? No. But different? Maybe.

WE SOMETIMES FORGET THAT THIS "experiment" of same-sex coupling is still a relatively new one. It is only in the most recent generation that large numbers of gay men and lesbians felt free enough to find a partner and build a life together.

For many gay couples, especially the men, long-term relationships aren't necessarily exclusive sexually. In fact, as Bette put it so — you know — eloquently, many of us have found that's part of the fun of being gay. We write our own rules.

Of course there are plenty of same-sex couples, especially on the lesbian side, for whom sexual monogamy is every bit as important as it is to George W. and Laura. And there are even some heterosexual couples today, especially under 30, who tie the knot and then make unconventional decisions about what that commitment means to them sexually.

But the gay rights movement hasn't always been exclusively about accessing traditional institutions like marriage and the military. For a long time, it was much more revolutionary, focused on rewriting traditional institutions to reflect a more progressive and less rigid view of life.

In the case of marriage, the legal rules can be pretty darn rigid, depending upon the state. They certainly all aspire toward sexual exclusivity, and sex outside of marriage can be grounds for divorce or, in states with "no fault" divorce, at least an argument for a more favorable division of property.

In some states, adultery remains a crime, though it's unclear whether those laws will survive the Supreme Court's ruling this summer striking down sodomy laws that criminalize private consensual sex between adults.

Certainly the major religious faiths that have recognized gay marriage in one form or another expect the couple to remain faithful sexually.

BUT THOSE OF US WHO HAVE BEEN in long-term same-sex relationships, and those who professionally counsel us, often find that it is more important to communicate honestly about what sort of ground rules each partner wants and coming to agreement and living faithfully to those terms. For some of us, that means monogamy, but not for many of us. The ground rules themselves, whether complete monogamy or some — you know — moving around, are less the point.

Do same-sex couples who choose something less than total sexual exclusivity still deserve full access to marriage rights and responsibilities? Are they less entitled than straight couples who publicly aspire toward monogamy but then look the other way at sexual infidelity (those ex-presidents come to mind again).

Is it any of the government's business what private arrangements couples might make on something so private as sexual monogamy? Does it become the government's business when the couple signs up for legal and financial benefits?

And what about unmarried couples, gay and straight? An entire framework of public and private benefits have been established for unmarried "domestic partners."

Most of these benefits were enacted because gay couples couldn't access all the public and private benefits of civil marriage, although the benefit rules are typically written in gender-neutral terms and more straight couples avail themselves of them than do gays.

If gay couples can get married, should domestic partnership benefits be jettisoned? Or ought we as a society have one level of benefits for "live-in" couples and another, more involved and broader set of benefits for couples that legally tie the knot?

Or are we moving toward a three-tiered system, with gay "civil unions" in the purgatory somewhere in between those domestically partnered and those heterosexual couples who, in the words of the Supreme Court, enjoy the "sacred precincts of the marital bedroom."

Bathhouse Betty may not have intended to open such a can of worms when she offered her two cents on gay marriage, and Larry "Softball" King certainly didn't mean to trip her up by asking the question. But maybe we ought to take a stab at thinking about these issues before we petition our government to rewrite a centuries-old tradition.

@ Chris Crain is executive editor of *Houston Voice* and can be reached at ccrain@washblade.com.



**viewpoint** ADA EDWARDS



Attacks in the Montrose community illustrate that hate is a very present danger for gays, but victims' silence will only make the problem worse.

# Community must report attacks

FIRST, I DEPLORE THE RECENT ATTACKS THAT HAVE taken place in the Montrose area. It continues to be a sad and horrible fact, that despite how far we have come as a city, there is still the ever-present reality of violence against people who are perceived as different.

In the days following the Thanksgiving Day weekend, our office began to receive reports by e-mail and phone informing us that there had been a rash of violent attacks against the Lesbian and Gay community in the Montrose area.

Our office immediately contacted the Houston Police Department and they confirmed that one attack was reported over the Thanksgiving weekend in Montrose in which the victim was beaten with a metal pipe. At that time, the Police did not have on record other reports of assaults or beatings in the area.

In contrast, several Montrose community leaders have reported to me, other incidents where individuals were assaulted during the same time period. Many of the victims stated that their assailants allegedly traveled in a white pick-up truck. But sadly, in almost all of these other cases, the victims have chosen not to file a formal report with the Police Department.

Our office will continue to work with neighborhood bar owners, community activists, civic clubs and the police to coordinate efforts to strengthen security and safety for Montrose residents and visitors. As one of the elected City

Council representatives for the Montrose area, I take these attacks and the city's response to them and the community, very seriously.

FINALLY, IT IS CRUCIALLY IMPORTANT THAT everyone report every incident of verbal or physical abuse to the police no matter how seemingly minor. I understand that for some, there is still fear about contacting the police, particularly for those who may not be open regarding their status at work or to their families.

I have worked with many community activists, as well as with HPD, to institute cultural diversity and sensitivity training programs within the Houston Police Department. For this reason, I will make our office available as a conduit for those who may be reluctant to report these crimes directly to the police. Hopefully, this will ensure that vital evidence can be collected while still respecting individual choices and decisions around privacy. Without individuals who are willing to come forward and report incidents, the Police Department cannot establish a discernible pattern of assaults in the Montrose area.

Unfortunately, the world is still not free of hate; however, we cannot sit idly by and tolerate or ignore it. If you have been the victim of an attack or witnessed an incident, please step forward and speak out. With concrete information, we will be able to thoroughly investigate and seek justice in these cases. Only by speaking out can we begin to make our communities safe from those who threaten violence simply on the basis of hate.

@ Ada Edwards holds the District D seat on the Houston City Council. She can be reached at 713-247-1247

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## action! alert

# 'Queer Eye' for mainstream ads

Kressley lands spokesperson job with Marshall Field's

By RYAN LEE

THE "QUEER EYE" EMPIRE CONTINUES to expand, as personalities from the hit makeover show sign endorsement deals with high-profile retailers.

Fashion guru Carson Kressley — one-fifth of the "Fab Five" from Bravo's "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" — takes his quick and catty tongue to Chicago, starring in Marshall Field's commercials touting the department store's niche "13-hour" sales.

"We were interested in Carson because we love his fashion style and know-how, and we thought he would be a great fit for our brand," said Heidi Weaver, senior manager of public relations at Marshall Field's. "We pride ourselves on being very cutting edge."

In the commercial, Kressley prances through the company's hallmark store, located in downtown Chicago, dispensing fashion advice to shoppers, according to Weaver.

"The spots are very lighthearted," she said. "We've gotten a ton of responses from our guests, and people are responding to the upbeat nature and the witty tongue he brings."

Marshall Field's — through its parent company, the Target Corporation — has a non-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation, offers domestic partner benefits to same-sex couples and has a gay employee group, Weaver said.

ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE FAB Five, interior design expert Thom Filicia, may have penned a deal to replace actress and comedian Kirstie Alley as advertising spokesperson for retailer Pier 1 Imports, according to a report in Advertising Age, an ad industry magazine.

But officials at Pier 1 declined to confirm whether Filicia is the new public face for the company.

"The article announcing we had changed spokespeople was actually incomplete and speculative," said Mary Ann Roth, a Pier 1 spokesperson. "Kirstie Alley is our spokesperson through the end of the year. However, we will have an announcement coming out about our 2004 marketing plan very soon."

USING OPENLY GAY CELEBRITIES to hawk mainstream products is not unprecedented. But the recent partnering of gay celebrities and highly recognizable companies is encouraging, said Mike Wilke, executive director of Commercial Closet, a gay advertising watchdog.



Fashion guru Carson Kressley from Bravo's 'Queer Eye for the Straight Guy' can now be seen on television hawking sales at department store Marshall Field's. (Photo courtesy Bravo)

"They're definitely going for a mainstream audience with these ads," Wilke said. "It's really a perfect fit for them to be pitching home furnishing and fashion."

Some pundits predict an anti-gay backlash following recent positive coverage of gays in the media, but Wilke says gays in entertainment may be immune.

"Some people are marveling in the amount of attention ['Queer Eye'] has gotten in the entertainment media," Wilke said. "But I think it will go completely unnoticed because it is a perfectly natural place for them to appear as endorsers."

In September, the conservative Montana Family Coalition announced it would introduce a media campaign against "Queer Eye," calling the program "outrageous" and a "joke," according to the Independent Record, in Helena, Mont.

"To me, that's not a reality show about gay people," Executive Director Julie Millam told the paper. "A really good reality show for gay people would be five gay men dying of AIDS."

Contacted this week, Millam said she was unaware of Kressley and Filicia's new spokesperson gigs, but she let out a hearty laugh when she heard the news.

After learning she was talking with a gay newspaper, Millam ended the interview without providing comment.

### ACTION! INFO

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 612-375-2200  
 www.marshallfields.com

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 Fort Worth, Texas, 76102  
 817-878-8000  
 www.pier1.com

## on the record



Los Angeles Episcopal Bishop J. Jon Bruno explaining Scriptural passages against homosexuality in an address to the 108th annual convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles (Los Angeles Times, Dec. 7)

"The court decision was undeniably bold; but it was also firmly based in conservative thought. Which makes the radical right's hysterical opposition to the ruling mistaken and inconsistent."

Patrick Guerriero, executive director of the Log Cabin Republicans, praising the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruling that denying gays marriage rights is unconstitutional, in a Wall Street Journal column (Dec. 4)

"We are not from another country, we're not from another planet, we are your families, your brothers, your sisters, your aunts and uncles. If we can get our families to understand that what we're talking about here is equal rights, then we've won. That is the conversation that needs to be had."

"Hairspray" star Harvey Fierstein, in an interview following his stint portraying Mrs. Claus during the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade (Associated Press, Dec. 4)

"Anyone with two brain cells to rub together can tell that homosexual activity is perverted."

Ben Biddulph, a member of the Trowbridge Town Council in England, in a letter to the editor of the Wiltshire Times newspaper, in which he complained about the "politically correct" nature of the council toward gay rights issues (Gay.com UK, Dec. 9)

"AIDS is the wrath of God, a punishment on homosexuals. ... God felt it's time to mete out punishment, or there would not be any difference between men and animals."

Taiwan Vice President Annette Lu in a speech promoting safe sex (365Gay.com, Dec. 8)

"I may well officiate at a same-sex marriage next year, after the [state] legislature has a chance to pass an enabling statute."

Former Massachusetts Gov. William Weld in an interview following the state court ruling on gay marriage (Boston Globe, Nov. 26)



"No, not at all. It was part of the video we were acting, there was no lesbian vibe going on."

Pop star Britney Spears, responding to a question about "lesbian tension" between her and Madonna while on a press tour in South Korea (Associated Press, Dec. 8)

"Our written Scriptures have limitations. They cannot be equivalent to the incarnate word of God in Jesus. They convey God's word in a particular cultural and historical context. And these Scriptures are the word of God in the words of human beings."



"There are a lot of questions — couples are asking about blood tests, application forms. As a community, we haven't had to pursue something like this before; it's incredibly exciting."

Corri Planck of the Family Pride Coalition, an advocacy group for gay families, when asked about the prospect of gays getting married in Massachusetts and returning to their home states (Associated Press, Nov. 29)

"Most Americans don't pay attention to this issue until it's thrust upon them. Now you're going to see millions of them raising their voices. ... They don't believe gays and lesbians have the right to define marriage for everyone else."

Matt Daniels, whose Alliance for Marriage has promoted a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage (Associated Press, Nov. 29)

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Open Wide: Pretend you're a trained seal and catch a flying shrimp at Royal Japan Steakhouse. Page 17

Trouble at the Pole: As it turns out, Santa, Mrs Claus and the eight tiny reindeer make for a fairly dysfunctional family. Page 16



# Out on the Bayou

HOUSTON VOICE  
DECEMBER 12, 2003  
PAGE 15

## *A milestone for Gay Men's Chorus of Houston*

Gay Men's Chorus of Houston celebrates 25 years of music with 'Silver Bells' and a new CD

By JOHNNY HOOKS



HERE IS NO QUESTION that 25 years signifies a milestone in any life situation. A couple celebrates their silver anniversary together at 25 years. A monarch's silver jubilee comes after a quarter century on the throne.

The Gay Men's Chorus of Houston celebrates its 25th anniversary this holiday season with productions in Houston and Galveston appropriately titled, "Silver Bells: Holidays in the City." The word play is intentional. All of the concerts in the 2003-2004 season are "silver," said Artistic Director James Knapp.

Founded in 1979 as the Montrose Singers Inc., the chorus has from the very beginning been known as the most visible face of diversity in the city. Knapp said that is a tradition on which the group has expanded.

"Diversity means all people," he said. "The face of our chorus is one of the most beautiful mosaics of diversity in our community. We have 12 countries represented in our organization."

From a first season that began with 10 singers, the Chorus has grown to include about

150 voices. The support staff for the chorus is made up of more than 40 volunteers. It takes that many hands to produce the group's concerts.

KNAPP JOINED THE CHORUS AS ITS ARTISTIC director three seasons ago, when only 30 voices were heard. He came with a background that included directing choral groups at the college and university level and also as music director for Sugar Land United Methodist Church.

He had left making music to become an artistic consultant for a group called Intropa that manages international artistic tours for performing artists.

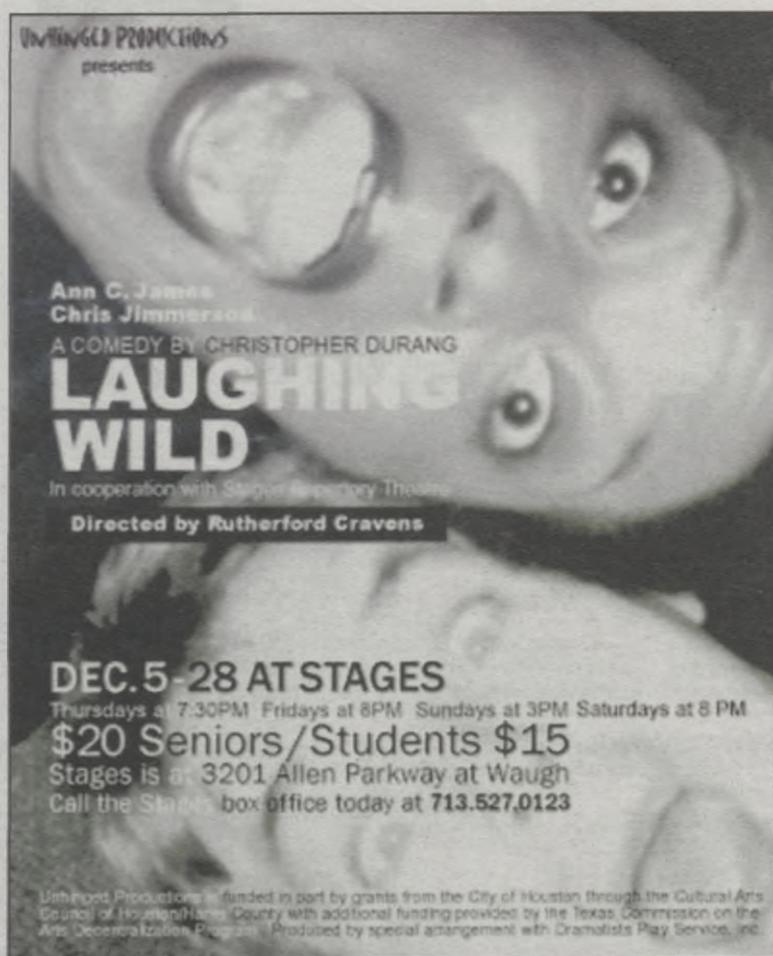
When he learned that the chorus was looking for a director, he threw his hat in the ring. He isn't shy about saying, "They made a really good choice."

His three-year record would back up that statement. In three years, the chorus has not only

Please see **SILVER BELLS** on Page 19



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Unwinged Productions is funded in part by grants from the City of Houston through the Cultural Arts Council of Houston/Harris County with additional funding provided by the Texas Commission on the Arts Decentralization Program. Produced by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc.



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## theater J.B. BLACK

Santa's herd of eight tiny reindeer  
is a twisted and dysfunctional lot  
in Theatre New West's holiday offering

### 'Reindeer' adds just enough spice

IT SEEMS WE ONLY THOUGHT we knew Dasher, Dancer, Prancer and Vixen.

Things at the North Pole are a bit more twisted than anyone ever suspected. Santa has a criminal fondness for harnessed reindeer in spiked leather Mrs. Claus is a drunken elf abuser. And apparently no one's quite sure it was that left Rudolph a catatonic mess.

They're all part of the highly dysfunctional family that makes up "The Eight: Reindeer Monologues," a spicy new comedy gliding in for a holiday landing at Theatre New West.

It wouldn't be the holidays without a bit of dysfunction, and "The Eight" piles it on in huge, sumptuous heaps.

Consider Hollywood (a.k.a., Prancer, played by Tom Kirk), who resents the fact that his career has been eclipsed by Rudolph. Hollywood is bitter that his 1989 self-titled holiday movie is overlooked at Christmas in favor of the stop-motion tale of Rudolph and his shiny red nose.

He's also angry at the movie industry's apathy toward his peers. "No deer has ever been nominated for an Academy Award," Hollywood says. "You can't tell me Bambi didn't deserve an Oscar."

FEMINIST REINDEER BLITZEN (LISA Marie Daugherty) has other issues, mainly with "the jolly fat pervert." After all, she points out, isn't it a little creepy that Santa knows when you're sleeping, knows when you're awake and knows the perfect way to sneak into your house at night?

Dasher (Steve Bullitt) only wants to bring a little order and dignity to the team. As the group's captain, he's always been "number one since day one" and doesn't want gossip and allegations to stand in the way of his elite crew.

Cupid (Jeff Bingham) hints that he's not the only gay reindeer on Santa's team, just the only one who's open about it. He has his own sordid tales to share about the "holly jolly walking talking sex crime." When it comes to pulling the sleigh, Cupid moans, "Santa loves that whip and, to tell the truth, so do I."

A melancholy Donner (Joe Watts) provides a sharp perspective on Santa's top-flight team. "The British have the queen, Americans have the Beatles and reindeer have the Eight," he explains. Donner is racked with overwhelming guilt for handing son, Rudolph, over to Santa.

Comet (Glen Fillmore), however, sings Santa's praises. A young buck from the wrong side of the Pole, Comet now preaches the saving graces of the "Gospel of St.



Who knew that Santa leads around a dysfunctional herd of reindeer. Could Santa and Mrs. Claus be to blame for the reindeer neuroses?

Nicholas." It was Santa who rescued him from a life of late-night misdemeanors that included knocking over igloos.

Dancer (Katie Hughes) recounts how she was first offered a job on Santa's team. Still, she doesn't understand why she has to work on the holiday. She originally wanted to pursue a life in the ballet, but found reindeer ostracized for wearing tights and tutus.

FINALLY, VIXEN (BIANCA TOSCNO) IS the "world's most famous victim," leading the scandalous crusade against Santa. Her allegations of North Pole impropriety are met with scorn. "Am I telling the truth or am I a lying Vixen?" she asks.

Working from Jeff Goode's biting script, Watts and co-director Tye Blue have assembled an incredibly talented, attractive cast that scores with each set piece. There's not a single misstep or wasted comic opportunity.

Two performances in particular stand out. The statuesque Kirk delivers a blisteringly funny turn as Hollywood/Prancer. One of the highlights of Kirk's monologue is his uproarious reenactment of a scene from "Prancer" in which co-star Sam Elliot stalks the reindeer with a shotgun.

As Dancer, the energetic Hughes bubbles and sparkles throughout her entire set. Her voice carries a wonderful Midler-like tone, a comic vibrancy waiting to spring out at just the right brassy moments.

"The Eight: Reindeer Monologues" is perfect for those who like their holidays served with a lot more spice than sugar.

#### **i** MORE INFO

The Eight: Reindeer Monologues  
Theatre New West  
1415 California St.  
8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday  
4 p.m. Sunday through Dec. 21  
Tickets: \$15  
713-522-2204

**dine** J.A. CHAPMAN

Utensils clanging and

shrimp flying through the air

equals dinner with a hibachi chef

**Royal Japan Steak House sizzles**

LIKE A TRAINED SEAL AT MEALTIME, I dutifully sat with my mouth agape waiting to catch a shrimp tossed by our hibachi chef. Just like everyone else, I missed.

We were sitting around a granite hibachi table at Royal Japan Steak House and Sushi Bar watching our hibachi chef cook and entertain us at the same time.

Our skillful and wisecracking chef had arrived with a clang of utensils. He'd tossed an egg for the fried rice back and forth, claiming it was a "Japanese ping pong". He'd barbecued shrimp over an onion ring "volcano." He'd somersaulted bowls of rice and caught them behind his back. And now he was doing the shrimp toss.

At his urging, we'd backed our chairs all the way to the wall and gamely tried to catch the shrimp. After two rounds, signs of our failure lay about us on shirts, chins, chairs and carpet. We'd never make it as seals.

THE ROYAL JAPAN STEAK HOUSE AND Sushi Bar gives a good first impression. A long granite sushi bar snakes down the front dining room and bar area. Intimately lit booths line the bamboo shaded windows. It strikes a nice balance between casual and classy.

Unlike the sleek front dining rooms, the hibachi rooms are well lit, with unadorned neutral walls. The ambiance is much like a bland hotel conference room.

Despite the unexciting décor, we opted to try the hibachi experience. Our group of four was seated at a table for seven, with the warning that if another party arrived within ten minutes, they'd be seated with us.

Our helpful waiter did his best to answer questions about the menu, but we struggled to hear each other across the hibachi table, as the room seems to have an acoustics problem.

TWO OF US OPTED FOR THE STEAK and shrimp hibachi dinner (\$19.95). The waiter and chef asked how we wanted our steaks prepared, but it made little difference as they were both served medium. Even so, the steak was tender and juicy.

The shrimp was perfectly cooked and full of flavor, making the hibachi shrimp dinner (\$16.95) an especially good deal. Two dipping sauces accompanied the hibachi dinners and sautéed vegetables rounded out the meal.

The sashimi platter (\$13.95) wowed us with its presentation. Nine pieces of sashimi - three salmon, three tuna and three red snapper - were artfully arranged next to a mound of grated daikon radish adorned with three skewers. Unfortunately the sashimi did not live up to appearances.



A hibachi chef entertains diners with a fire show.

The salmon and snapper were passably fresh, but the tuna was a gray and flabby disappointment. If these three low-end selections are the only options on the sashimi platter, then they should be the freshest of fresh.

Royal Japan offers an eclectic selection of desserts. Cheesecake from the Cheesecake Factory sits aside sherbet, ice cream and ice cream truffles or pie. We sampled the ice cream Mississippi mud pie (\$4.95), which was little more than average mocha ice cream in pie form.

Service glitches were a problem. Water glasses were never refilled. A bowl was not provided for the sashimi's soy sauce and wasabi. And the waiter knew little about the desserts, even mistakenly telling us several weren't available. While each complaint was minor, together they left a poor impression.

Royal Japan shines at the entertaining hibachi tables and a reasonably priced lunch menu makes the hibachi experience more affordable. However, the quality and freshness of the sushi and sashimi is questionable at best and the service is needs work.

Still, it's not every day that you get to catch your dinner in mid air. For that alone, Royal Japan Steak House and Sushi Bar is worth a try.



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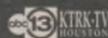
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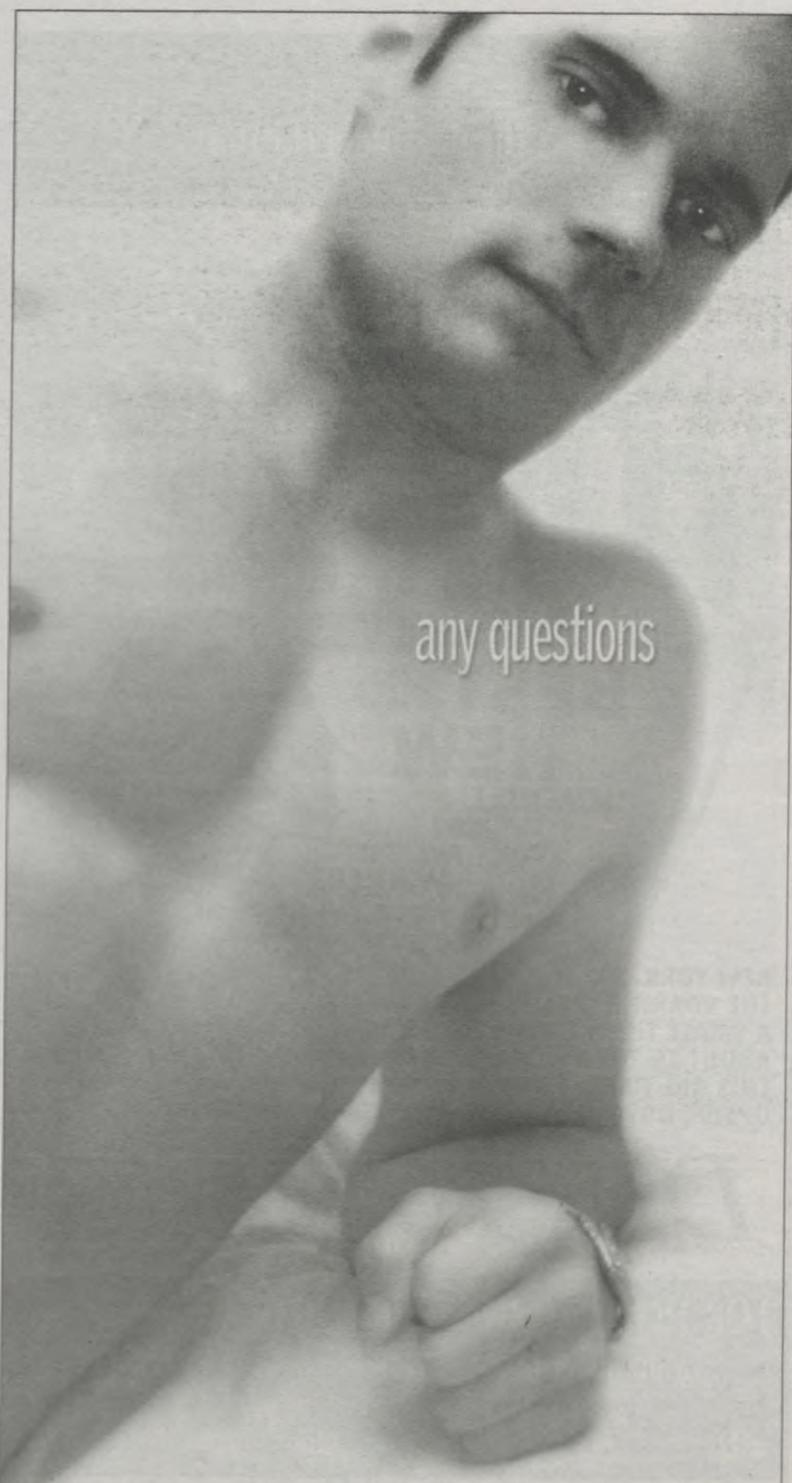
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**dish** There's a Fine Line Between Telling the Truth and Talking Trash

Gays waste a trip to Baltimore's  
Grand Central, sexy A&F catalogue  
is spiked and Cher hates the GOP.

## Leaving the Station

THERE WERE PLENTY OF PISSED OFF D.C. queens in Baltimore last Saturday night — the night that the Grand Central nightclub was scheduled to hold a JANET JACKSON vs. MADONNA dance party.

The Blade wrote about the unique event back in October and confirmed that the party was still scheduled on Tuesday, Dec. 2. Even the doorman taking the cover charge said that the Janet/ Madonna party was happening.

However, lo and behold, there wasn't a Janet or Madonna song to be heard inside the club. Nor was there a crowd, but that's another story.

Dish has it on good authority that plenty of D.C.'s gay boys were excited about the event and some even booked hotel rooms to spend the night in Baltimore after shaking their groove things at the club.

Apparently, employees at the newly renovated \$1.4 million venue decided at the last minute not to hold the event.

"I don't know what happened," said Grand Central owner Don Davis. "There was a serious communication problem going on, and I was really embarrassed by it. It doesn't make us look good for a mishap like this to happen. It's not professional."

Davis apologized profusely to anyone who came for the special event. He said that a rescheduled date is in the works and that new procedures have been put in place so that a communication breakdown doesn't happen again.

### Final quarter

THERE ARE GOING TO BE A LOT OF empty gay coffee tables this holiday season.

It was announced last week on CBS's 60 Minutes that retailer ABERCROMBIE & FITCH had pulled its latest edition of A&F Quarterly, the store's catalogue/soft-core porn magazine, from shelves amid protests that the magazine was too erotic for the young market the company courts.

On the "60 Minutes" episode, a news anchor said the A&F Quarterly apparently offended social conservatives, who complained about the risqué photos.

But the segment primarily was about a lawsuit former A&F employees of color have filed, alleging that they were fired because of racial discrimination tied to the company's efforts to portray a certain image.

That, of course, is why gay men loved it. Often featuring photos from gay photographer BRUCE WEBER, A&F always delivered plenty of pictures of hot, young,



Bruce Weber

scantly clad men, often in homoerotic positions.

Now it seems the magazine may be done for good. An unattributed quote on the gossip Web site Gawker.com says the retailer is ceasing publication of the magazine entirely.

"I work on the A&F Quarterly and as of yesterday [Dec. 8] it was announced to us that it will no longer be continued," the source said. "Several employees here in New York were fired by A&F because they will no longer be needed."

A flack from A&F didn't return calls by Dish's deadline.

Looks like the boys will have to go back to HONCHO.

### Bless her heart

DISH IS STILL GETTING OVER THE SHOCK that CHER listens to C-Span, as she told you a few weeks back. However, if the grand diva, who staged the world's longest goodbye tour, is going to be political, at least she stands on the right, err left, side of the political spectrum.

The New York Daily News reports that in an interview in the upcoming issue of Us Weekly conducted by "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" fashionista CARSON KRESSLY, the star says that she would love to be a conjoined twin with U.S. Attorney General JOHN ASHCROFT.

"So I could influence him a bit — or beat the shit out of him," Cher says.

Kressley asks her if she would ever be a Republican.

"Are you kidding me? I'd rather stick needles in my eyes," she replies.



Send comments, suggestions to  
Dish@sovo.com.

## out on the bayou

# 'Silver Bells' marks 25 years of music for Gay Men's Chorus

SILVER BELLS, continued from Page 15

added 120 members, but it has drastically increased its audience.

"Our audience has gone from about 300 per concert cycle to about 1,800," he said. "We've gone from wonderful, smaller venues to making a real commitment to recognized and valid concert venues." This season, he said, most concerts will be presented either at the Wortham Center or at the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts.

The last 25 years have seen Houston's gay community devastated by AIDS and harassed by discrimination and prejudice. Through it all, the voices of the Gay Men's Chorus of Houston have risen above the strife to heal, uplift, move and delight all those within hearing range.

To anyone who balks at the idea of purchasing a ticket to a concert by a group of predominately gay men, the GMCH beckons, "We are your sons and daughters, your coworkers and your friends. Our songs are from the heart and we present you one voice."

KNAPP SAID THE MISSION OF THE Chorus is to achieve excellence in choral music, to provide a nurturing environment for members and offer a source of pride, unity and support to the diverse communities that are Houston. He is confident that the mission is being accomplished.

A member of the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses (GALA) with over 10,000 members worldwide, the Chorus is one of the oldest in the country and among the largest.

Knapp has brought an unmistakable international pedigree to the GMCH, whose performances shine with lively fan-favored traditions that feature a wide range of musical treasures.

Principal accompanist Beth McConnell provides another bit of musical diversity

from having performed throughout the United States. McConnell has served as the accompanist for the Houston Symphony Chorus, choral ensembles at University of Houston, as well as local churches and theaters.

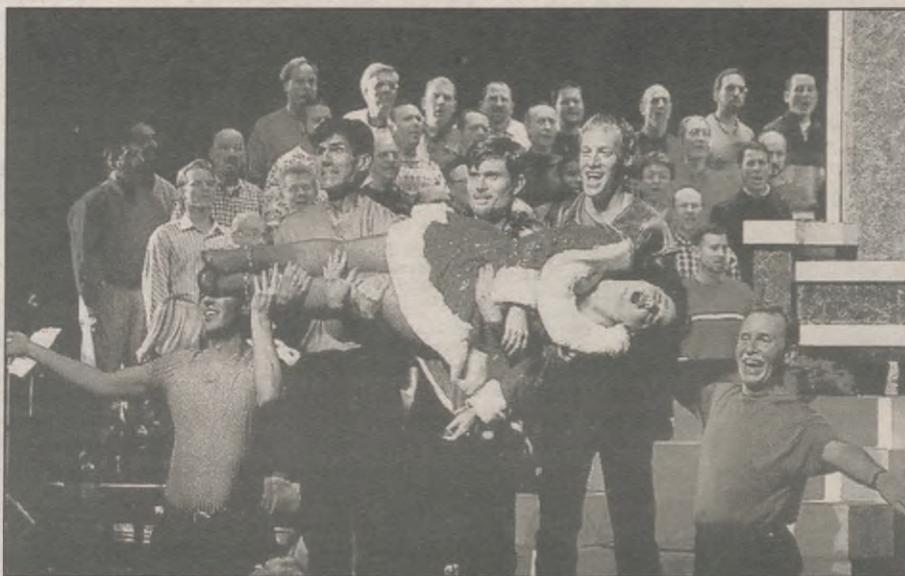
If all that wasn't enough cause for celebration, the chorus released its first CD in years, a holiday offering entitled "Gratitude."

In the CD's liner notes, Knapp says, "Gratitude is the heartbeat of the chorus. We are grateful each and every time we are together, grateful when we have the privilege of singing for an audience and deeply grateful for the magic that has changed the lives of so many through the transforming power of music."

THE CD FEATURES MORE than an hour of music from diverse holiday traditions, that were recorded during the past year at the Stude Concert Hall in the Shepherd School of Music on the Rice University campus, at the Bering Memorial United Methodist Church and the Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church.

"This is so exciting," Knapp said. "We printed 1,000 copies and sold 1,200. We've ordered a second printing."

The 15 tracks feature a wide range of Holiday themed songs, beginning with a rousing "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" and followed by "Carol of the Bells." Other tracks include "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year," "Over the Skies of Yisrael," "Music of Hanukah," a gorgeous rendition of the classic "Home," and fin-



A drunken Mrs. Claus, played by Kitty Karn, gets a ride home from designated driving members of the chorus during the group's holiday production. (All photos by Dalton Dehart)

ishes with a 13-minute version of "Christmas Flourish."

The most unusual performance on the CD is "The Twelve Days After Christmas." With lyrics that include, "The first day after Christmas my true love and I had a fight. And so I chopped down the pear tree and burned it just for spite."

This year's holiday concert features the debut of the side-splitting "Forgotten Carols of Other Lands," the gospel soul of "Behold That Star!" and the rollicking new favorite, "All I Want for Christmas is You." The concert treats audiences to a visit to Santa's workshop - as only GMCH can present it, with a special musical appearance by Mrs. Claus, who has dipped a little too deeply into the eggnog bowl.

Knapp said the 2003-2004 season has proven that as the audience grows in size,

it also grows in a diversity of its own.

"From that diversity, we are really trying to build those bridges to the greater community," he said. "We want to break those labels of just being a chorus of gay men."

### **i** MORE INFO

'Silver Bells: Holidays in the City'  
8 p.m. Dec. 12  
3 p.m. Dec. 14  
Wortham Center  
500 Texas Ave.  
713-521-7464  
www.gmch.org

'Gratitude'  
www.gmch.org



Decked out in tuxedos and evening attire, the chorus follows the lead of artistic director James Knapp as chorus 'girls' take it away.



Artistic director James Knapp and principal accompanist Beth McConnell bask in audience applause along with members of the Gay Men's Chorus of Houston.

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**SATURDAY DEC. 13**

All-Spanish Worship Service/Noche Espiritual 7 p.m.  
Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, 2026 W. 11th.  
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.

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

Montrose Soccer Club. 10 a.m. practice. Woodrow Wilson School, Fairview and Yupon. New players welcome, but beginners not currently being admitted. 713-862-9491. http://geocities.com/montrosesoccer. E-mail: montrosesoccer@yahoo.com.

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. • CATS (Community Awareness for Transgender Support) board meeting, 2 p.m. 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818.  
www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

**SUNDAY DEC. 14**

Front Runners Houston. Runners meet at Memorial Park at 8 a.m. for a three-mile run. http://home.swbell.net/larathon/houfr.htm. E-mail: larathon@swbell.net.  
713-522-0899.

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.community-gospel.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 Bowling Leagues. 7 p.m. Palace Lanes, 4191 Bellaire Blvd. 713-861-1187.

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

Grace Assembly Church. Gay/gay-affirming congregation. 11 a.m. service. 567 Cedar Grove, Livingston, Texas, 77351. 936-646-7214. E-mail: leol@easttexas.net.

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

H.A.T.C.H. Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals meets 6-9 p.m. For meeting information, call 713-529-3590.  
www.hatchyouth.org.

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

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

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

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

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

St. Patrick's Reformed Catholic Mission. Sunday Mass at noon. Holy Unions available. Group meets at the Hair Express, 3310 Delaware, Beaumont, Texas 77703. 409-781-8152. E-mail: bwatson1@qtrr.com.

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

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

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

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

Unitarian Fellowship of Galveston County. 502 Church St. Service. 11 a.m. 713-686-5876.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in, 2-6 p.m. • New Covenant Christian Church, 10 a.m.-noon • Lesbians Over Age Fifty (LOAF) 2-3 p.m. • S.I.S.T.E.R.S. 3:30-6:30 p.m. • GLOB-AL meeting, 6 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818.  
www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

**MONDAY DEC. 15**

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 1-7 p.m. at the clinic, 215 Westheimer and 3311 Richmond, Suite 100; 4-8 p.m. at Bricks, 617 Fairview; and 9 p.m. - 1 a.m. at O, 710 Pacific. 713-830-3070.

Free HIV Testing. 4-8 p.m. at All Star News, 3415 Katy Freeway. Health clinic with free testing for HIV and syphilis. 713-869-7878.

Gay Bowling Leagues. Women's league. 6:45 p.m. Dynamic Lanes, 6121 Tarnel Drive. 713-861-1187.

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

Grace Assembly Church. Gay/gay-affirming congregation. 7 p.m. aerobics class. 567 Cedar Grove, Livingston, Texas, 77351. 936-646-7214. E-mail: leol@easttexas.net.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**TUESDAY DEC. 16**

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

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 1-7 p.m. at the clinic, 215 Westheimer and 3311 Richmond, Suite 100; 4-8 p.m. at The 611, 611 Hyde Park; and 8 p.m. - midnight at Club Houston, 2205 Fannin. 713-830-3070.

GLBT Pentecostals. Bible study, prayer, 7 p.m. in the Heights. For info: 936-931-3761; e-mail: www.Wqb1947@cs.com.

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

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. • Lesbian Coming Out Group, 7 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

**WEDNESDAY DEC. 17**

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.

OutSkate. This roller Rink skate club hosts Gay Skate Night at Zenith Roller Rink, 8075 Cook Road every Wednesday from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. \$5 entry plus skate rental. 281-933-5818, Dobie367@aol.com.

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

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

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

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 4-8 p.m. at Mary's, 1100 Westheimer; 9 p.m.-midnight at Ripcord, 715 Fairview; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at E.J.'s, 2517 Ralph; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at Midtown Spa, 3100 Fannin. 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.

Gay Bowling Leagues. 6:30 p.m. Palace Lanes, 4191 Bellaire Blvd. 713-861-1187.

Grace Assembly Church. Gay/gay-affirming congregation. 7 p.m. aerobics class. 567 Cedar Grove, Livingston, Texas, 77351. 936-646-7214. E-mail: leol@easttexas.net.

Houston Pride Band. Open rehearsal, 7:30-9:30 p.m. 1307 Yale. 713-862-1488.

Houston Tennis Club. 7-9 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, 7-9 p.m. • Houston Pride Band rehearsal, 7:30 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818.  
www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

**THURSDAY DEC. 18**

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. 8 p.m.- midnight at Brazos River Bottom (BRB), 2400 Brazos, atd at Cousins, 817 Fairview, and 4 -8 p.m. at All-Star News, 3415 Katy Freeway. 713-830-3000.

Free HIV Testing. 4-8 p.m. at All Star News, 3415 Katy Freeway. Health clinic with free testing for HIV and syphilis. 713-869-7878.

FrontRunners Houston. Runners meet at Memorial Park at 6:30 p.m. for a three-mile run. http://home.swbell.net/larathon/houfr.htm or e-mail larathon@swbell.net. 713-522-0899.

Gay Bowling Leagues. Luci Duos. 9 p.m. Dynamic Lanes, 6121 Tarnel Drive. 713-861-1187.

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

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

Lake Livingston GLBT Support Group. 7 p.m. dinner and discussion. Grace Assembly Church, 567 Cedar Grove, Livingston, Texas, 77351. 936-646-7214. E-mail: leol@easttexas.net.

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

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

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

Recovery From Food Addiction (RFA). Meeting for 12-step program open to all. Noon-1 p.m. St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 1805 W. Alabama St. RFA: 713-673-2848. www.geocities.com/rfa77235/. E-mail: rfaeworldservice@aol.com.

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

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

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop in 2-9 p.m. • "Mending and Stitching," 2 p.m. • Montrose Writers Project 7-9 p.m. • PFLAG Houston Board Meeting 7-9 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

**FRIDAY DEC. 19**

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

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 1-5 p.m. at the clinic, 215 Westheimer and 3311 Richmond, Suite 100; 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. at Rich's, 2401 San Jacinto; 10 p.m. - 2 a.m. at The Meatrack, 2915 San Jacinto; 10 p.m. - 1 a.m. at Midtown Spa, 3100 Fannin; 10 a.m. - 1 a.m. at E.J.'s, 2517 Ralph. 713-830-3070.

Grace Assembly Church. Gay/gay-affirming congregation. 7 p.m. aerobics class. 567 Cedar Grove, Livingston, Texas, 77351. 936-646-7214. E-mail: leol@easttexas.net.

H.A.T.C.H. Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals meets 7-10 p.m. For meeting information, call 713-529-3590.  
www.hatchyouth.org.

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

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

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

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • Women's Game Night 7:30-9:30 p.m. • In Our Own Write (Poetry Night) 8-10 p.m.; 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

@ 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.

## appts.

### FRIDAY, DEC. 12

Poissant O'Neal Gallery, 5102 Center St., will host an opening reception for works by Dan Havel and Seth Mittag from 6-8 p.m. 713-868-9337

### SATURDAY, DEC. 13

House construction, ginger bread-style, will be the project of the day when **Houston Gay & Lesbian Parents** meets from 2-5 p.m. at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 1805 W. Alabama at Woodhead. Families are asked to bring graham crackers, at least two bags of candy such as gum drops, Life Savers, Tootsie Rolls, etc., to be used in decorating houses. Members of the group and anyone interested in becoming a parent are invited to participate.

### MONDAY, DEC. 15

The cast of the Alley Theatre's production of 'A Christmas Carol' has organized a bowling tournament called **The Ebenezer Scrooge Holiday Bowl for Hunger** at 4 p.m. at Dynamic Lanes, 6121 Tarnoff St. Proceeds will benefit Target Hunger. 713-226-4954



### WEDNESDAY, DEC. 17

Bring a new, unwrapped toy to the **River Oaks Theater**, 2009 West Gray, at 7:30 p.m., and get in free to a benefit screening of "An Affair to Remember". Better bring a handful of tissue as well, since this classic starring **Cary Grant** and **Deborah Kerr** doesn't leave many dry eyes in the theater. The toys will be donated to the U.S. Marine Corps Toys for Tots program. 713-524-2175



Open Mic at Chances.

### THURSDAY, DEC. 18

Open Mic Night has proved so successful at **Chances**, 1100 Westheimer that the club plans to make it a regular Thursday night event. Anyone who with rhythm is invited to join fluff the kat on stage. Bring, a guitar, drum, set of spoons, whatever from 9p.m-1 a.m. www.fluffthekat.com

## reasons? WHY?

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—Mary Ann McBee  
Fitness Exchange



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**SPRING BRANCH** 3 BR, 1.5 BA, LR, kit, family rm, hdwd flrs, double garage, fenced yard, AC/heat, DW, stove. \$950/mo. (713) 682-9634.

## SHARE / HOUSTON

**HEIGHTS** Roomate wanted. Furnished private room. Move in 1/04. \$450/mo incl utils. Street or driveway prkg. H: (713) 862-1306. C: (713) 299-9148.

**NEAR 610 / NORTH** Seeking GLBT individual to shr 2 BR, 2 BA home in quiet neighborhood. \$450/mo + 1/2 utils. WD included. No pets. Dep & refs req'd. (713) 302-3649.

### SAVE \$\$\$

Montrose area GM to share furn 2 BR apt. \$275/mo. (713) 521-1712, leave msg.

**SAVE \$\$\$ NW HOUSTON** Share house w/ GWF in Northwest Houston. Private BR & BA. No smoking or drugs. \$400/mo + 1/2 utils. (281) 970-7912.

## COMMITMENT CEREMONIES

**ANNOUNCE YOUR UNION** The Houston Voice is proud to announce the addition of a "Commitment Ceremonies" category to our Classified listings. When making arrangements for your Union, don't forget to include the most important aspect of all...announcing the date. Publishing your union is easy & simple. Call (877) 863-1885 ext 223 to put the finishing touches on your ceremony.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**EMERGENCY AIDS** Housing Coalition Houston crisis need tax deductible donations. 501(c)3 non-profit. (713) 864-1795. <http://web.wt.net/ahch>.

Visit [houstonvoice.com](http://houstonvoice.com) to place your ad. Up to 25 words only \$12.50 per week. 50¢ each additional word. Fax toll-free 1.888.409.6768, or call toll-free 1.877.863.1885

**VOLUNTEER GROUP NEEDED** 8-10 sexy people w/trailer or truck to move 400lb spa. Benefit AIDS shelter for Xmas. (713) 864-1795 or [ahch@wt.net](mailto:ahch@wt.net).

## EMPLOYMENT

**FT / PT OUTREACH WORKER NEEDED** Must be able to work nights. Will be recruiting participants for an HIV study on the streets of Montrose, (713) 520-8928.

## TRAVEL / INTERNATIONAL

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## TRAVEL / U.S.A.

**DC GuestHouse Elegant Victorian mansion built in 1867. Logan/Convention Center location. Blks away from world class dining & diverse entertainment. Gay owned & operated. (202) 332-2502 [www.dcguesthouse.com](http://www.dcguesthouse.com).**

**HAWAII - DIVERS WANTED** Join Lambda Divers, a GLBT dive club, for a live aboard trip on the Kona Aggressor. January 24-31. Visit Lambda Diver's website for information. [www.zzapp.org/lambda Divers](http://www.zzapp.org/lambda Divers)

**HILTON HEAD, SC** Planning to relocate? Need a vacation? Make your plans now to come to beautiful beaches of Hilton Head, South Carolina. Long term rentals or limited short term rentals. See some of our property listings at <http://homelistingstipod.com/>. Feel free to send inquiries to [Melroelongterm@aol.com](mailto:Melroelongterm@aol.com).

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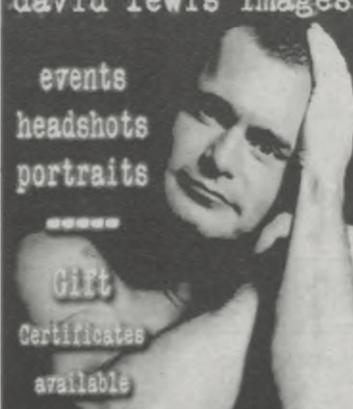
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## astrology JILL DEARMAN



Mars could bring out the artist in you, so do what comes naturally and be creative with a Capricorn.

# Practice creativity, Sagitarius!

**♈ Aries (March 21 to April 20):** Mercury and Venus in your career sector are bringing you luck at work. But you have to work hard to make that luck work even harder for you. Attitude is everything - on the job and in bed with a Libra.

**♉ Taurus (April 21 to May 20):** This is the best time of year for you to plan a trip, sweetie. While everyone is gearing up for family gatherings, perhaps you should throw on your scuba gear and escape all obligations. A Virgo wants to go deep-sea diving with you. The water is more than fine.

**♊ Gemini (May 21 to June 21):** Do all your own accounting while Saturn is retrograde in your money house. You need to take money matters seriously. Do the boring receipt-tabulating work you've been avoiding. A Taurus will play with you while you play with your calculator.

**♋ Cancer (June 22 to July 22):** There's no need to panic over a work-related mishap. Everyone is on your side. You are allowed to make mistakes. In fact, it makes you seem more human. A Pisces wants to help you move up to the next level.

**♌ Leo (July 23 to August 22):** The Sun meets Pluto in your house of love affairs, so don't be surprised if all sorts of troublesome and complex characters want to get with you this week. A Scorpio can't leave well enough alone. Can you?

**♍ Virgo (August 23 to September 22):** Uranus in your health sector has your body shaken up but good. Don't worry though, a more peaceful time is ahead. Your love life is related to your good health, so make love, not war, you whore. A Sagittarius wants to make it with you.

**♎ Libra (September 23 to October 22):** Turn off all that reality TV and get in touch with your sense of romantic reality, dear. That means if you want true love, you have to

work to get it and keep it. If you give up a tired old illusion, you will get a fresh and fierce Aquarius in the bargain.

**♏ Scorpio (October 23 to November 21):** If you are starting to wax sentimental about a love gone wrong, stop, cease, and desist now! You can have something so much better, informed by the "real" you, not by an old illusion you had of yourself. A Capricorn gets you on a multitude of levels.

**♐ Sagittarius (November 22 to December 21):** Mars in your creativity sector could bring out the artist in you. Paint, play, or do whatever comes naturally. Then do it again, and again. Creativity is a practice. Amazing sex with a Capricorn requires the same mix of discipline and abandon.

**♑ Capricorn (December 22 to January 19)** Venus finishes up a stint in your sign on Dec. 20, so make this a week of love. You deserve it. Don't wait for a Sagittarius to come on to you. Make your move while you are looking so hot! You need to tap into your earthy side.

**♒ Aquarius (January 20 to February 18):** Mars in your communication sector makes you quite the spokesperson, sweetie. Stand up for the cause you believe in most, and a Scorpio will stand right beside you. Don't be afraid to put your beliefs on the line.

**♓ Pisces (February 19 to March 20):** Magic needs to be mixed with good humor, darling. You will experience a dream come true with a Libra, but you may have to deal with a strange booty prize, too. Laugh about the little things, and grab for the big things with great gusto.

**@** 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](mailto:QScopes@aol.com).

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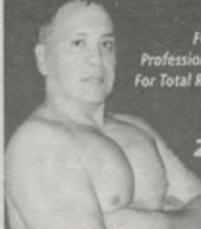
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