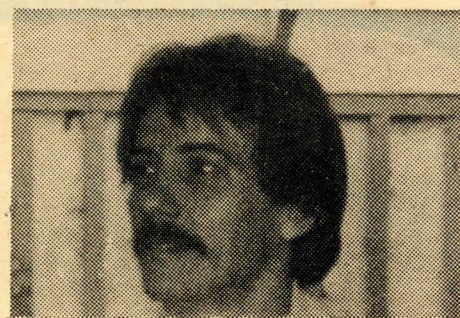


This man, back on the
Houston disco scene, page 3



STAR NEWSPAPER CHAIN

MONROSE STAR

Houston's Free Weekly Gay Newspaper/Issue #130/March 9, 1979

Dallas TV station sides with gay group, cancels homophobic preacher

DALLAS — An anti-gay sermon caused a Dallas television station to drop weekly broadcasts by James Robison, a well-known evangelist, the Associated Press reports it was told by a television station executive.

David Lane, station manager of WFAA-TV, reportedly said he decided to drop Robison's Sunday programs because he believes Robison violated the Federal Communication Commission's Fairness Doctrine. Robison's programs, produced at WFAA-TV's studio, is said to be carried on about 85 stations. It was not known if Robison would be allowed to continue to use the studio for production purposes.

The program is carried in Houston on KHTV, channel 39, Sunday evenings at 9:30. KHTV's programming department told the Star that it has not decided to cancel the program and in fact has a backlog of tapes to cover for any production problems.

The sermon that caused the controversy, broadcast last week, included comments by Robison that the gay movement is "despicable" and "a perversion of the highest order."

Representatives of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus requested equal time on WFAA-TV to rebut Robison's remarks and have been granted it.

"We believe that our religious programs should not deal with such matters. We cover these controversies in our news and public affairs shows where we can

balance both sides," Lane told the Associated Press.

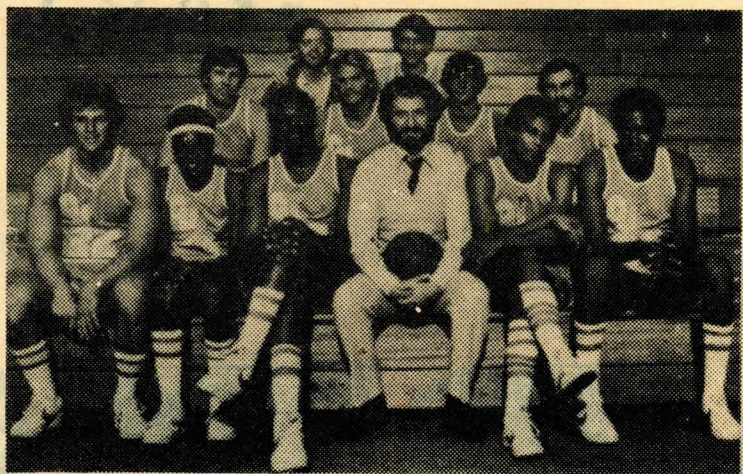
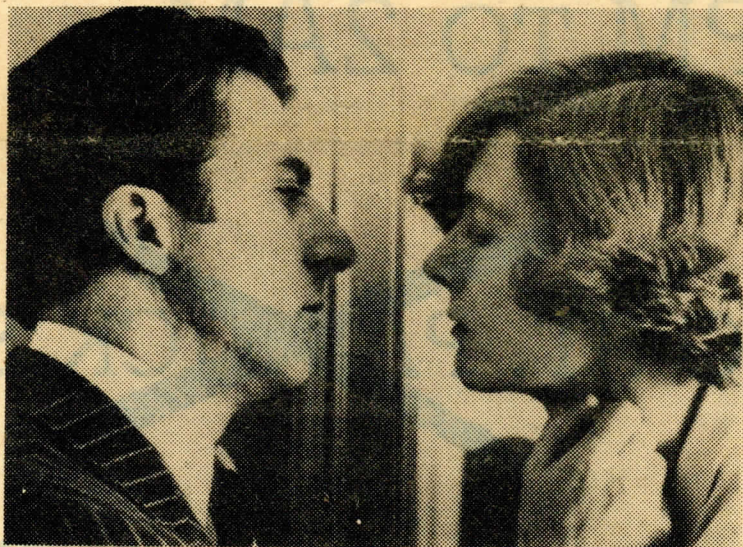
"I'm not arguing with his theology. I'm trying to do

my job," Lane continued.

Robison, 35, said homosexuality is "becoming prominent and practiced

as a normal lifestyle in America. It's being condoned by religious groups and legislative bodies. We

can't keep people from living sinfully, but we can at least acknowledge that it's a sin."



*Movies
reviewed...*

**Kind words
for 'Agatha'**

**Not-so-kind
words for
'Fast Break'**

Iran executes accused sex offenders

TEHRAN, Iran — Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's revolutionary courts March 7 executed six more people, all Tehran men accused of raping and driving into prostitution teenage boys

who had come to them for food and shelter, according to news reports.

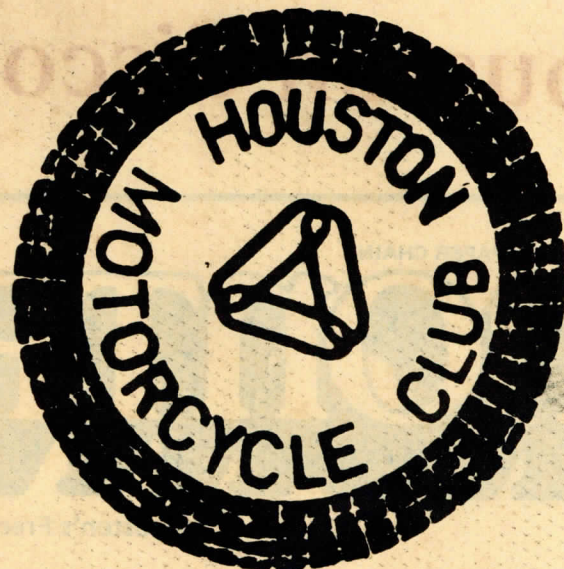
The Khomeini-appointed government of Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan, primarily Western-educated

liberals, has expressed anger over the wave of secret trials, executions and arrests carried out by Khomeini's followers.

Khomeini, meanwhile, has complained that his

appointed premier's government was acting like the shah's regime, called the nation's ministers "weak," and derided them for believing "everything should be copied from the West."

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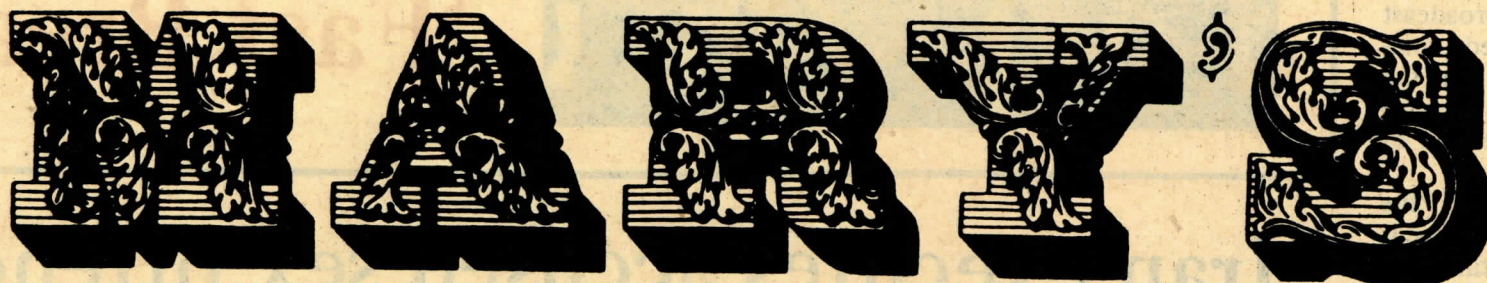


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NATURALLY

1022 WESTHEIMER



Howle's Copa to open in a few weeks

Gene Howle is a well-known disco owner . . . well-known perhaps because of the party-like manner in which he runs his clubs.

Some say he is rich. Rich is a relative quality, of course, but Gene does own (along with Lynn Ganey) a popular club in Beaumont and two in Huntsville.

Gene, a dashing, spirited man who appears to be in his thirties, says he doesn't think about his age — or anybody else's. And he says he doesn't try to think about his statewide notoriety either. "But I have learned to live with it, and, frankly, I suppose I love it. Who wouldn't?"

The man who is responsible for gay disco in Houston will shortly be back in this city. "I'll be opening a new disco, to be called 'The Copa,' around April first, and I'm thrilled to be back in business in Houston."

Gene and Lynn operated the Farmhouse Club at two different locations in Houston before it moved to Beaumont a little over a year ago. The first Farmhouse, on Westheimer near the Greenway Plaza area, was the first gay club in the city to have a live disc jockey.

Gene's clubs have always been big successes. Why? He says, "Success is seventy-five percent loving what you do and twenty-five percent hard work."

Work is easy when you're doing what you like in a place you like. Right?

"I was in Las Vegas with Lynn for a week, where we lost a lot of money, and in New York to visit with Gloria Gaynor, but there is no place like Houston and no one like its people."

Keep an eye on this man. And on this new club.

The Montrose Star, a Star Newspaper Chain publication, is published weekly by Henry McClurg. Advertising director: Paul Terry. Representatives: Howard Jacobsen, James Prasifka. Contributing writers: Ram Rocha, Seth Cagin, Ed Martinez, Hank Bonney. Mailing address: POB 70282, Houston, TX 77007. Phone: (713) 529-8188. Advertising rates on request. Application pending Houston, TX, 2nd Class Mail Permit. Subscription rate in US, Canada: \$21/year, 52 issues.

Oct. 14 march date set

PHILADELPHIA — Gay activists from across the country met here the weekend of Feb. 24-25 to resolve differences and set the date for a national gay rights march in the nation's capital.

The delegates voted to stage the march Oct. 13 and 14, 1979 and named a coordinating committee to work on details. Houston activist Ray Hill was picked temporary chairperson of the committee and longtime Washington, D.C. activist Frank Kameny was named legal counsel. Among Kameny's first duties is the drawing up of the incorporation papers and obtaining the necessary permits.

Also attending the Philadelphia meeting from Houston was Steve Shiflett, president of the Houston Gay Political Caucus, and Gary Van Ooteghem, publisher of *Upfront*.

Van Ooteghem has been promoting Oct. 28 as the date for a "human rights" march in Washington but the delegates voted that the march should strictly be a "gay" march and should be held Oct. 13 and 14, which is Columbus Day weekend, a time when many federal employees will have time off to participate in the march.

Hill says he will attempt to persuade the other committee members to have another meeting around May in a midwestern city to map further plans. Oklahoma City was mentioned as a possible site.

"We want more minority and lesbian participation in the organization of the march," Hill said. "At the Philadelphia meeting, we had black and Chicano representatives but it was not sufficient. At our meeting in May we hope to remedy this."

Plans were proposed to divide the country into 48 regions and for each region to send four delegates to the May meeting. Delegates would be required to be representative of the racial and ethnic makeup of the region and generally split fifty/fifty between male and female.

A group called the Gay Youth Caucus was well represented at the Philadelphia meeting. They recommended that "'child molestation' baiting and propaganda by homophobes and

anti-gay spokespeople be addressed directly, in other words that the issue be no longer avoided, silenced . . . by spokespeople for the National Lesbian/Gay March," according to the minutes of the meeting.

Debate on the Gay Youth Caucus motions was highly emotional.

Some organizers are hoping for 100,000 to turn out in October. They point out that the march should draw heavy crowds from the New York City area. Washington is only a five-hour ride from New York.

The march was originally proposed by San Francisco

City Supervisor Harvey Milk during an address in that city's Civic Center during Gay Freedom Day celebrations in 1978. When Milk was slain several months later, the idea of a march began to emerge as a tribute to the man who was, at that time, the nation's highest, openly-gay elected official.

The delegates to the Philadelphia meeting voted to open offices for the march in New York City; Detroit; Washington, D.C.; and San Francisco. The New York office at 156 Fifth Avenue was selected to be the head office.

Horoscope

Your future is here

PISCES (through March 20): Others may criticize you but, bull, pay little attention. They're frequently just pointing out their own inadequacies, not yours. Then again, do pay attention to compliments. The compliments are not usually accurate either, but they are pointing in the right direction.

ARIES (through April 19): You will bubble with energy this weekend. So enjoy yourself. Get out and boogie. Dancing is almost the best energy release available. Almost. Of course you know what the best energy release is. And maybe you'll do some of that this weekend too!

TAURUS (through May 20): Be patient with your long-range plans of eternal happiness. Half the fun is in trying to get there. Keep working on your plans and enjoy the trip.

GEMINI (through June 20): You may be subjected to a delicate situation within the next few days. You can handle it, we know, and keep feelings of others from being hurt. Others feelings are very important. Use your best diplomacy.

CANCER (through July 22): The next 48 hours you'll be in horny-ville. Your sex drive is reaching a peak. And of course, as you know, part of the sex drive is the drive to conquer. Spend some time prowling and satisfy your urge.

LEO (through Aug. 22): The best romance for you is a quiet romance, at least for the next few days. Take this advice and spend secluded moments with your special one by candlelight. If you've no special one at this time, spend time searching for one in a place with soft music. No discos for you this time, please.

VIRGO (through Sept. 22): There's an Aries in your future . . . your immediate future,

sugar. Don't let this Aries slip through your delicate fingers. You can be provided with warmth and close friendship.

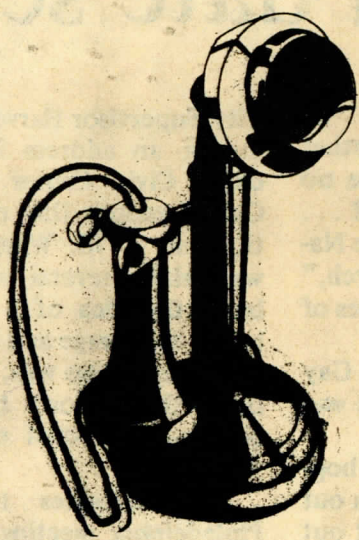
LIBRA (through Oct. 22): Finish off those old projects before starting new ones, please. And go on those dates with old friends before setting up new ones. It's important in your life to complete what is started. Others may be sloppy and inconsistent, but not you. At least, you shouldn't be.

SCORPIO (through Nov. 21): You're being watched over by someone close. Start to realize it and return the favor, please. This weekend, especially. Accept all party invitations. And especially if the party giver is a Capricorn.

SAGITTARIUS (through Dec. 21): Look for more ways to make money, rather than the usual tried-and-true ways. This next week, let your entrepreneurial attitudes prevail. Try some new angles. But hold tight on laying out the hard cash. Despite the old adage, you only need a little money to make a lot of money. If you know what you're doing.

CAPRICORN (through Jan. 19): Sex. It's not something you do. It's something you are. You are a sexual being. There's no reason to feel guilty. Say "hog-wash" to moralists who try to convince you that you are a sinner. These people have deep problems themselves, in that they want you to live your life by their standards. (What we've just said here, you know already, of course. But it's nice to see it in print.)

AQUARIUS (through Feb. 18): This weekend, be daring. Really daring. Drop your inhibitions and go all out. Enjoy yourself and enjoy your friends. Scream, jump, boogie, whatever you feel. And love all those around you.



CALL IN ADS

529-8188

Disco

Gonzalez is #1

The Star surveyed the gay discos in Houston this past week and determined that these were the top songs:

1. Haven't Stopped Dancing - Gonzalez
2. Keep On Dancing - Gary's Gang
3. Do You Think I'm Sexy - Rod Stewart
4. Knock on Wood - Ami Stewart
5. Love and Desire - Arpeggio
6. I Will Survive - Gloria Gaynor
7. At Midnight - T-Connection
8. Get Dancing - Bombers
9. If There's Love -

- Amant
10. Wings of Love - Celi Bee
11. Contact - Edwin Starr
12. Dance - Paradise Express
13. Feed the Flame - Lorraine Johnson
14. Baby I'm Burnin' - Dolly Parton
15. Fire Night Dance - Peter Jaques Band
16. Heart of Class - Blondi
17. Ultimate - Ultimate
18. Great Expectations/ Hold Your Horses - First Choice
19. Dance/Dance to Dance - Gino Succio
20. Countdown - Dan Hartman



SF still seeking gay police recruits

SAN FRANCISCO — Joe Williams hurred for the police softball team in a game against a gay team, while making a pitch to recruit homosexuals as officers.

The gay men listened, but they also batted their way to a 20-9 victory over the police.

"We want the police department to be a reflection of the community, and obviously, San Francisco has a substantial gay population, Gain told the Associated Press.

During the next three years, Gain said, his department will hire about

650 new officers from the eligibility list. His goal, he said, is fifty percent minorities, including gay people, and twenty percent women.

The force now has about 1700 officers and plans to bring the complement to full strength of 1950. Attrition is currently about ten officers a month, officials say.

Officer Joe Williams, one of the recruiters, conceded that some veterans might be leery of gay men or women on the force because "ignorance of lifestyles breeds fear." But exposure to gay people would combat that fear, he said.

Directory

Wondering where to shop and spend time? These businesses are involved in your lifestyle.

ADULT ARCADES

Adonis News - 1407 Richmond
Adultz News - 714 W Alabama
Asylum - 1201 Richmond
Bellaire News - 5807 Bellaire - 661-8840
Oscar Wild - 3400 Travis - 528-8491
Studz News - 1132 W Alabama

ALL-MALE THEATER

French Quarter - 3201 Louisiana - 527-0782

BARS

After Dark (disco) - 6250 Westpark - 978-7895
Baja Sams - 402 Lovett - 527-9866
Barn (western) - 710 Pacific - 528-9427
Brazos River Bottom (country) - 2400 Brazos - 528-9191
Briar Patch - 2294 Holcombe - 665-9678
Cove (disco) - 2912 S Shepherd - 524-0170
Dirty Sallys - 220 Avondale - 529-7525
Exile - 1011 Bell - 659-0453
Galleon - 2303 Richmond - 522-7616
HiLite Ranch - 6800 S Main - 528-8730
Inside/Outside - 1318 Westheimer - 527-9071
Just Marions & Lynns (women) - 817 Fairview - 528-9110
L'Amour les Femmes (women, disco) - 227 Westheimer - 528-7831
Lampost (women) - 2417 Times Blvd - 528-9110
Locker (western) - 1732 Westheimer - 528-8844
Marion's Too (women) - 109 Tuam - 528-9097

Mary's (western) - 1022 Westheimer - 528-8851
Midnite Sun (disco) - 534 Westheimer - 526-7519
Montrose Mining (western) - 805 Pacific - 529-7848
Moulin Rouge (disco) - 308 Milam - 223-0491
Ms Take II (women) - 2047 Marshall - 52-3533
Numbers (disco) - 300 Westheimer - 529-5599
Old Plantation (disco) - 2020 Kipling - 522-2363
Our Place (women) - 1419 Richmond - 528-8903
Pink Elephant - 1812 Leeland - 659-0040
Ram Rod - 5110 Airline - 691-9928
Venture-N - 2923 Main - 522-9019

BATHS

Club Houston (CBC) - 2205 Fannin - 659-4998
Midtowne Spa - 3100 Fannin - 522-2379
The 2306 (macho) - 2306 Genessee - 528-6235

NEWSPAPER

Montrose Star - POB 70282, zip 77007 - 529-8188

ORGANIZATIONS

Affirmation (gay Mormons) - 669-0955
Crises Hotline - 228-1505
Dignity (gay Catholics) - 528-7644
Episcopal Integrity/Houston - 526-0555, 521-0690

Gay Political Caucus - 1310 McDuffie #28A - 526-2668
Gay Resource Svcs - Univ of Houston - 749-3489
Human Rights League - POB 3624, zip 77001 - 523-6969
Integrity/Houston (social, political) - 819 Richmond - 529-7014, 694-1732
Lambda Ctr for Alcoholics - 521-9772
Lambda Social Club - c/o 1st Unitarian Church, 5210 Fannin - 433-8380, 528-1311
Lutherans Concerned - 453-1143
Metropolitan Community Church of the Resurrection - 1214 Joe Annie - 526-8233
Montrose Activity Ctr - 1423 Holman - 526-9719

RESTAURANTS

Angelo's Pizza - 224 Westheimer - 528-7851
Auntie Mames - 2278 Holcombe - 661-5970
BPs - 1322 Westheimer - opening soon
Baja Sams - 402 Lovett - 527-9866
Brasserie - 512 W Alabama - 528-8744
Chapultepec (Mexican) - 813 Richmond - 522-2365
Don's LePatios - 428 Westheimer - 523-5595
Front Runner - 1525 Westheimer - 528-8474
House of Pies - 3112 Kirby - 528-3816
Lee Garden - 224 Westheimer - 526-2683
Mabel McGowans - 708 W Alabama - 528-8885
Pips Great Expectations - 212 Westheimer - 528-2731
Spirit - 243 Westheimer - 523-4680

SERVICES

Brazos Realty - 2416 Brazos - 526-0909

Jim Holomon Realty - 521-0278
Reed's Keys - 1612 Westheimer - 523-2927
J Ross (realty) - 1911 SW Fwy - 521-1254
S/H Construction - 1919 Harold - 529-6615
Paul Stewart Assoc (graphics) - 528-5655
Studio 13, KXYZ - request line 795-0013
Top of Stairs (hair) - 3509 Montrose - 528-4659
V&J TV Repair - 819 W Alabama - 521-1139

SHOPS & STORES

All That Glitters - 4315 Montrose - 522-6976
The Bookstore - 1728 Bissonnet - 527-8522
Byman Furniture - 1401 S Post Oak Rd - 961-1813
Eagle Leather - 1022 Westheimer in Marys Etc - 300 Westheimer in Numbers - 522-7988
Facets - 1412 Westheimer - 523-1412
Guenther Flowers - 2030 W Alabama - 523-2828
Hodge Podge - 1338-A Westheimer - 522-6585
House of Plants - 1634 Westheimer - 529-1901
Manhole (clothing) - 1983 W Gray - 522-1089
Norman & Eddie's (flea mkt) - 2202 Waugh Packies Hair Poots - 906 Westheimer - 527-0188
Pet Shop & Bird Clinic - 3118 Smith - 529-7266
Q-1 Leather - 2400 Brazos at Brazos River Bottom & 1732 Westheimer at the Locker - 527-9044
Ram's Records - 521 W Alabama - 529-2559
Union Jack (clothing) - 4025 Westheimer - 622-3100
Wilde 'n' Stein (bookshop) - 819 Richmond - 529-7014

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NEWS EDITOR

The Star Newspaper Chain is now accepting applications for fulltime editor. Applicants should be familiar with national and local gay rights movement. Salary negotiable. Responsibilities will be many, including editorial decisions involving three local gay newspapers and one national paper.

Henry McClurg, owner
STAR NEWSPAPER CHAIN, P.O. Box 70282, Houston, TX 77007
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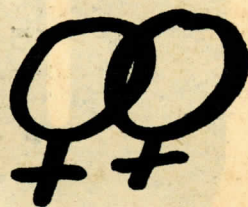
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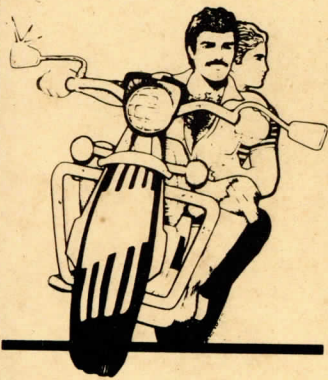
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BARTENDERS

Bar Talk

Here's who's who and what's what

Probably the biggest bar news in town is the news of this city's nest gay super disco. Gene Howle and Lynn Ganey will be opening the Copa in the shopping center at the corner of South Shepherd and Kirby. These two club entrepreneurs are best known for their Farmhouse clubs several years back in Houston. They continue to operate the Farmhouse in Beaumont.

This new club will be a major league disco and will have plenty of shopping center parking. Projected opening date is April 1 but that could change. Keep an eye on the Star and we'll keep you posted on the latest opening date.

Mary's is having another notorious Moonlight Madness party this Tuesday. Theme: St. Patrick's (er, excuse me, St. Mary's) Day. The moon will be full and the party will start 10:00 p.m.

A reminder: Mary's never, absolutely never, has a cover charge.

Most know by now that the Locker is under new ownership and under the expert management of Brian "World War II" Rogers. Changes at the "New" Locker include longer operating hours (11:00 a.m. every day till 4:00 a.m.) which takes in after-hours cruising every night.

And a reminder that ALL the gay bars in our fair city are not in the Montrose, r.e., the Ram Rod on North Airline. If you live out that way (or if just on the way to or from the airport), drop in for some different cruising. Apple



Annie recommends the place. (Drag shows Friday and Saturday nights. This week's special guest is Abby, the Soul Lady.)

This newspaper (yes, we're going to talk about ourselves now) has a couple of openings as we prepare for our expansion. Immediate openings include fulltime news editor and a graphic arts director.

The news editor should be someone familiar with national and local gay rights news. And the graphic arts director should be someone with the ability to take complete charge of the layout and pasteup each week of the Star. Salaries depend on ability. Call us to arrange an interview.

More help wanted news: The Ram Rod's hiring go-go boys. If you've got the body and if you're daring enough, this could be a lot of fun. Call them to arrange an interview.

(No, we don't need go-go boys here at the Star, but it would be fun to do some interviewing anyway.)

The Gay Rights March is set for Oct. 13 and 14 in the nation's capital. To answer a few questions we've been getting at the Star, 1) Yes, this is to be strictly a GAY march, not a

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The quarterly NYC/NJ Edition covers New York City, Long Island, and New Jersey. Features include bar and cruising notes, and a special section, "Women's Gayellow Pages." \$1.50; \$2 by mail.

Pick up a copy at your local bookstore, or you can order from Box 292, W.I.A., Village Station, New York, NY 10014

There is no charge for a basic Gayellow Pages entry. Write for an application.

human rights march. We're all for human rights, of course, but we want to keep the purpose of the march specifically gay. 2) The Star fully supports the march and will be running promotional announcements for it over the next seven months. 3) It'll be not only a march but a two-day party on Columbus Day in Washington. Washington's gay clubs will be going all out to welcome gay men and women and the Star, with the help of D.C.'s gay newspaper, The Blade, will run a map of D.C. and a listing of all the events. But that's several months off.

Meanwhile, closer to the present time, we've got a Gay Pride Week to think about. Houston gay business owners will be meeting March 19 to talk about festivities. And, of course, the Star's the one to keep you informed on it all.

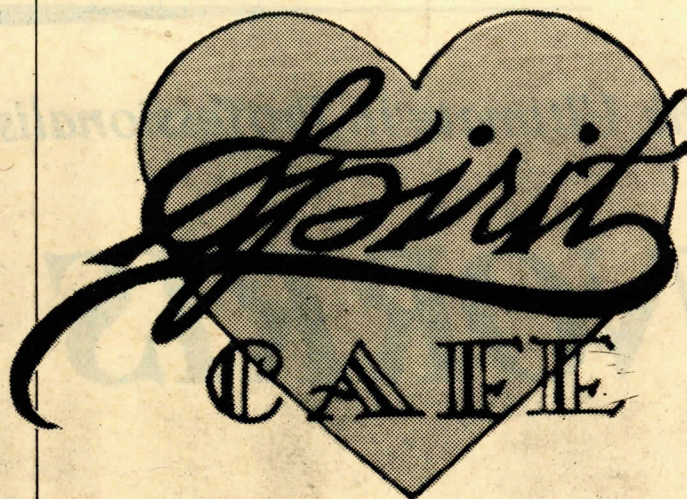
The 2306, everybody's new favorite baths, reports crowds even bigger than ever — and they already were bigger than ever, ever. And now, not just on weekends. Week nights never looked so good either. Remember, they're open nightly weeknights and around the clock on weekends.

But, warning: You must be a macho gay male to get in. It IS a private club for hot numbers only.

Last week's Let Us Entertain You Weekend was something else, especially the Saturday night party at the old Farmhouse building. Everyone in Houston must have been there.

Well, just about everybody. The disc jockey on KRLY must have been dying to get off and go himself, it sounded. It seemed every other song was dedicated to the place. We must have brothers everywhere!

That's it for this week. Got some dirt? Let the Star know.



243 WESTHEIMER
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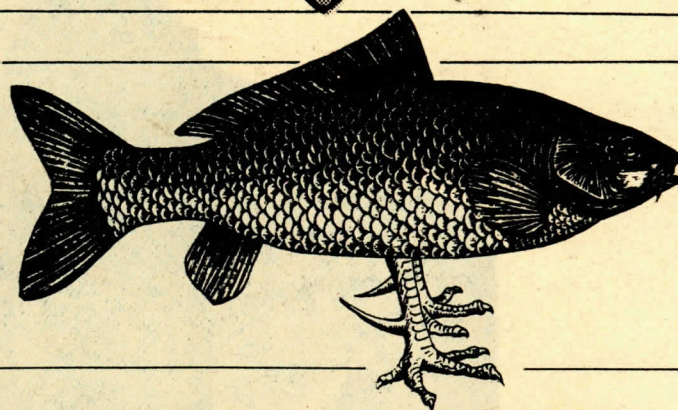
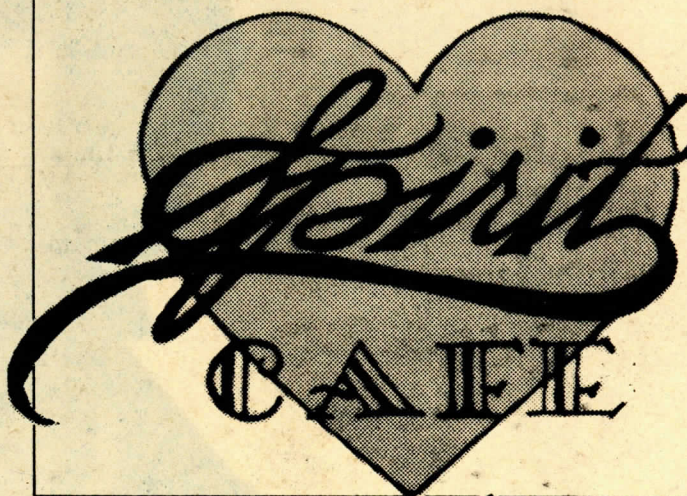
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'Agatha' is Redgrave's movie

AGATHA. Rated PG. Released by Warner Bros. Produced by Jarvis Astaire and Gavrik Lowey. Directed by Michael Apted. Screenplay by Kathleen Tynan and Arthur Hopcraft. Story by Kathleen Tynan. Starring Dustin Hoffman and Vanessa Redgrave, with Timothy Dalton and Helen Morse.

—O—

In 1926, Agatha Christie, the famous writer of detective novels, disappeared, provoking an enormous manhunt and sensational headlines. Eleven days later she reappeared without an explanation. To the day she died, Agatha Christie never revealed what happened to her during her disappearance.

Screenwriter Kathleen Tynan, working on the assumption that Agatha Christie would have been capable of concocting an ingenious plot had she been of a mind to do so, provides a speculative solution to the Agatha Christie mystery in *Agatha*.

Thanks largely to a brilliant performance by Vanessa Redgrave in the title role, this melding of fact and fiction has resulted, first, in a fascinating character study. Less interesting

is a brief, tame romance between Agatha and the American journalist (Dustin Hoffman) who first locates her. A third element the film reaches for — intrigue — is totally bungled.

Vanessa Redgrave is so accomplished a screen actress that she could probably turn the most paltry role into something interesting. The role of Agatha, because the true-life figure of Agatha Christie serves as inspiration, isn't exactly paltry, but it is skimpily written.

Nothing, however, can stop Vanessa Redgrave from making the most of every instant the camera is trained on her. What Redgrave creates, out of the subtlest gestures and the most exquisite facial expressions, is a portrait of a shy, proper woman, who is doubly shattered to learn that her husband wants a divorce. She is both emotionally upset to be rejected by a man she loves and horrified of the public scandal entailed in divorce in the



Lynn Redgrave

twenties.

As Vanessa Redgrave interprets the part, Agatha runs from her problems partly out of desperation, but partly because it is the only positive alternative open to her. From the perspective of the seventies, running away may seem like a primitive way for a woman to assert her independence, but within the context of upper class English society of the twenties, Agatha's move is daring, and the proof of that is the total uproar her disappearance causes. Women didn't act independently of their husbands in those days.

Though it is obliquely

expressed — born of an emotional dither — Vanessa Redgrave presents a study of a strong-willed woman far ahead of her time.

The character of Dustin Hoffman's journalist is more troublesome. Wally Stanton is brash and aggressive — qualities that lead him to Agatha — but little else.

He traces her to a resort hotel where she has gone, it turns out, to follow her husband's mistress. It falls to Stanton to discover exactly what Agatha is plotting. We are fed suggestive clues. Could Agatha Christie be planning a real-life murder?

Stanton befriends Agatha surreptitiously, hoping to trick a good story out of her, but he falls in love instead.

We can understand Agatha's attractiveness to Stanton — she's truly beautiful — but the chemistry doesn't work in reverse. Stanton is solicitous of Agatha, but we know he has ulterior motives, and she doesn't seem to trust him either.

The interesting part about whatever romance does develop between them is how understated it is. It all works to Agatha's advantage; she only seems stronger for not being swayed from her set course of love. Agatha simply overpowers Stanton; or is it that Vanessa Redgrave overpowers Dustin Hoffman?

The film's climax is a plodding mess. The strategy for building suspense is perfectly routine; Stanton finally understands Agatha's plan just as she's putting it into effect, and he races madly to save her from going through with it.

The editing rhythms are too long by half. Not only the rescue sequence itself, but everything leading up to it is so labored that the ingenuity of Agatha's scheme, which should have been one of the film's strengths, is lost on the audience.

Agatha makes a strong impression, despite this disappointment, for the character study, as its title suggests, is the film's aim. Director Michael Apted surely understands this, for he is most conscientious about providing the social fabric that supplies Vanessa Redgrave with her raw materials. *Agatha* is Redgrave's movie from beginning to end.

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SETH CAGIN

Kaplan is dead weight in 'Fast Break'

FAST BREAK. Rated R. Released by Columbia Pictures. Produced by Stephen Friedman. Directed by Jack Smight. Screenplay by Sandor Stern. Story by Marc Kaplan. Starring Gabriel Kaplan with Harold Sylvester, Randee Heller, Michael Warren, Mavis Washington, Bernard King.

—O—

Gabriel Kaplan is a dead weight at the center of *Fast Break*. The film is a very broad comedy about a college basketball team comprised of lovable outcasts. It panders so routinely to every cliché about sports and "making it" in America that only sharp, ironic performances would have redeemed it.

Fast Break can boast of some good bits of acting from supporting players, but Kaplan, in the lead where it counts most, ambles through the picture as if he were on the verge of falling asleep.

Kaplan plays David Greene, a clerk in a New York delicatessen whose dream comes true when he is given the chance to

assemble and coach a college basketball team. The only catch is that the college, Cadwallader University, has all the prestige of a fish market, a fact the president (John Chappell) hopes to change by organizing a championship ball team. In order for Greene to earn money, he has to whip Nevada State, one of the top teams in the country.

Greene recruits his team from the ghetto; each of its members has a strike against him. One is wanted by the police, another is sought by a hit man, and so on.

Hence, the strategy of *Fast Break* is clear. We're meant to identify with this underdog college and its underdog ball team as they set out to prove themselves against the toughest competition.

The film's payoff is the big game. Climaxing a film with a sporting event is the simplest way to generate

excitement. Watching the Cadwallader-Nevada State game in *Fast Break* is no different from watching a close game on TV when you're rooting for one team or the other.

The point is that though *Fast Break* does generate some excitement, it's an artificial excitement that has very little to do with the story, and thus leaves you feeling cheated.

The source of the problem is that, to the degree that Cadwallader is our sentimental favorite in the big game, we have succumbed to a crude and shallow manipulation of our sympathies.

Fast Break relies heavily upon the popularity and dubious charm of Gabriel Kaplan, and it jumps onto the *Animal House* bandwagon that celebrates collegiate infantilism. But most alarming is the film's coarse appeal to racial and sexual

bigotry. We are expected to believe in the innate athletic superiority of the characters expressly because they're ghetto blacks.

An extended subplot concerns antagonism toward someone who is wrongly thought to be homosexual, as if such hostilities were charming.

Charm is indeed the commodity most conspicuously absent from *Fast Break*. Rhoda Bates in a bit role as the wife of Cadwallader's president demonstrates the daffy possibilities within the subject, however limited they might be, as do Richard Bestoff as the unscrupulous team manager and K. Callan as the prissy English professor.

Director Jack Smight (*Midway*, *Airport '75*), however, evinces no feel at all for the cornball requirements of the material and *Fast Break* weighs in as a lifeless formula film.

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