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December 1996

OutSmart

Houston's Gay & Lesbian Monthly Magazine

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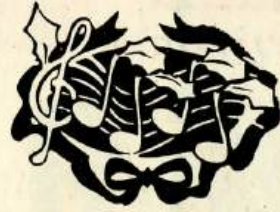
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OutSmart

Statement Of Purpose

OutSmart provides positive information to gay men, lesbians and their associates to enhance and improve the quality of our lives. Our goal is to build a bridge of communication and understanding between cultural and social communities that are separated by traditions of ignorance and misinformation, thus creating a healthier community for all of us.

Publisher/Editor in Chief Greg Jeu

Editorial

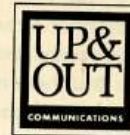
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December 1996

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Letters to the Editor

UGLY, INSULTING, AND CONFRONTATIONAL

I read with great interest Dr. Colleen R. Logan's "The Revolution Continues..." (*OutSmart*, Nov. 96) concerning the widespread misuse of the term "homophobia." As one who makes his living with the English language, I wholeheartedly agree that we do ourselves a great disservice—while letting our opponents off the hook—by suggesting they can't help their irrational fear of gays and lesbians, and therefore aren't truly responsible for their actions against us. I have thought this for some time, and I applaud Dr. Logan for pointing out this misnomer.

However, I can't say I support substituting the term "homoprejudice" for "homophobia." While "homoprejudice" is undoubtedly technically correct, it also seems to me a bit too "politically correct," trendy and, frankly, lacks any visceral power to move the reader or listener.

I would suggest there already exists in the lexicon a perfectly good word to describe the attitude and behavior of the likes of Jesse Helms, Phil Gramm, and Pat Robertson.

That word is "bigotry."

According to Webster's, bigotry is defined as "obstinate and unreasonable attachment to one's own belief and opinions, with intolerance of beliefs opposed to them."

Sound like it fits the bill? It's ugly, insulting, and confrontational. So are the actions of bigots. Enemies of the caliber of Helms, Roberston, et al. will surely laugh it off if we accuse them of "homoprejudice." It's way past time we call them on their behavior in clear, unvarnished English, and never mind sparing their feelings.

—Ken Hays
Houston

LEFT OUT, MADE FUN OF, RIDICULED, AND REJECTED

I am responding to the article ["The Price One Pays for Helping Others," by Nelson Vergel in September's *OutSmart*]. It really upsets me when people who know nothing about the deaf community speak out in this way. I want to shed some light on a subject that most of the American public isn't aware of or doesn't care to get concerned about.

One thing hearing people fail to realize is that there really is a deaf community. They have their own culture, and they have special needs because of this disability. This has been recognized and supported by our national government with the passage of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). Deaf people have been left out, made fun of, ridiculed and rejected. Why? Because they cannot hear and because they use a visual means of communication. It makes them appear different than us hearing people.

I am the "volunteer interpreter" who Nelson said was available at the June seminar. My reason for going to this seminar was to learn, not to work. My enjoyment of this seminar went right out the window when I had to interpret the whole thing for three hours.

I don't know exactly who sponsored Nelson Vergel's seminar. I thought Body Positive was responsible for providing an interpreter. Don't even presume that because I was there to interpret, anyone is off the hook. If I were not there, I am sure there would have been an even bigger issue at hand. I am very disappointed that an interpreter was not provided when I was told there would be one. I feel like the agencies that provide this type of informational session should be sympathetic to all people's needs, not just to the people who can hear.

I have no doubt that Nelson Vergel is doing his work partly for the benefit of the people who need it, and I am glad he is. If he lets this overshadow his conviction for doing it, then it must've been a lower priority than he leads us to believe.

Continued on page 6

Publisher's Perspective

During the holidays, it's easy to get wrapped up in the gift-giving frenzy. However, these past few years I have come to realize that many of my most treasured gifts came unexpectedly and weren't always wrapped in pretty paper. In fact, until I could "see" them as gifts, they felt more like demons torturing me.

One of these gifts came four years ago after my partner Joey died. We had a good relationship. Through our nine



Greg Jeu

years together our two lives became intertwined. Joey's family became my family and my family became his. When his will was left undone, things changed. Our house was no longer our home. It became the property of the Estate. Money in the bank was no longer ours. It also became property of the Estate. Then Joey's family was no longer my family. They became the Estate.

A few months later, because of legal technicalities, his family became the owners of our mortgage-free home. Now they wanted to be my landlords and rent my home to me. I agonized over what to do. The answer became clear one morning when I heard Joey's voice telling me, "You could keep the house if you really want it, but it will only impede you from where you need to be." That was all I needed. Home is where the heart is, and mine was no longer there.

On Christmas Eve, I received a registered letter from the Estate's attorney advising me not to move anything from the house unless I could prove personal ownership. Merry Christmas to you too. Chalk it up to their holiday spirit as they later reconsidered and let me keep most of our belongings.

Two days later with the help of my family and friends, I started unpacking and trying to settle into a new space. Starting over was not easy. Having the gift of friends like Daniel, who unfortunately went through a similar loss just a year earlier, helped immensely.

This past year, a house just two doors down from me went up for sale. Sadly, it was part of the estate of two men who had both passed from AIDS. Ironically, their families had differences and consequently sold it below its real value. It was a gift just for me that I now call home.

It took a couple of years to start getting over feeling victimized by a homophobic world, as well as a deep sense of loss. It was my first real exposure to the legal issues that we as gays and lesbians face each day. However, it was the catalyst I needed to start publishing *OutSmart* magazine.

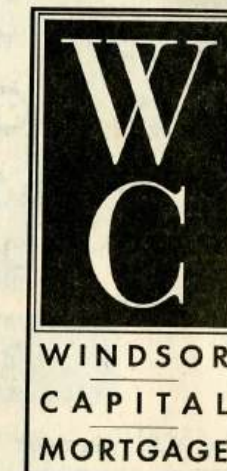
Looking for a perfect gift for your partner and family? Consider drawing up a will if you don't already have one. It can help keep your life's legacy in the hands of those you love. It is also a present that keeps giving even after we become ghosts of a Christmas past.

Happy holidays from the staff of *OutSmart* magazine.

Greg Jeu

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Letters to the Editor

Continued from page 4

His vehemently stated closing, "If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem," indicates he really doesn't know what the problem is. The problem isn't that someone is filing a lawsuit to get what they rightfully deserve. The problem is an agency that doesn't have the compassion or desire to treat all people equally.

—Edward Kelly
Houston

KUDOS, KUDOS, AND KUDOS

AIDS Foundation Houston, Inc. would like to publicly acknowledge Folly Ball Fest for their generosity in donating over \$5,000 and close to 5,000 pounds of food for Stone Soup. The primary goal of Stone Soup Food Assistance Program is to provide non-perishable and perishable food items as well as toiletry items to HIV-symptomatic individuals. Thanks in a large part to the generosity of Houstonians and charitable organizations such as Folly Ball Fest, Stone Soup is able to provide no-cost food and toiletry items to over 1,000 qualified clients on a regular basis throughout the year. AIDS Foundation Houston congratulates Folly Ball Fest for a very successful event and send heartfelt thanks for its donation and tremendous support.

—Sara Speer Selber
Executive Director
AIDS Foundation Houston

AND MORE KUDOS

Before another day passes, I want to extend my personal thanks for your support of the NAMES Project Foundation's display of the entire AIDS Memorial Quilt in Washington, D.C., notably through the generosity of your magazine. None of this would have been possible without the support of you and many others who gave space in their publications to spread the word about the need for volunteers. I appreciate the fact that you were always willing to help me in time of need. Thanks again for your generosity in helping to make DC '96 an extraordinary display of the Quilt in The Capital.

—Perrie Dolph
Volunteer Chairman
NAMES Project Houston

Please keep letters brief and to the point; we reserve the right to edit all letters as deemed necessary. Letters must include the phone number of the writer and should be sent to

Letters to the Editor
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or faxed to 713/522-3275
or e-mailed to OutSmart1@aol.com.

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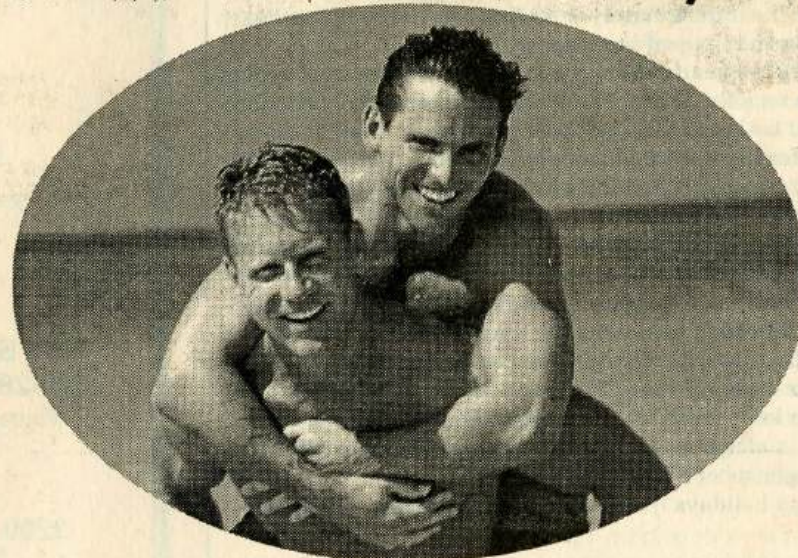
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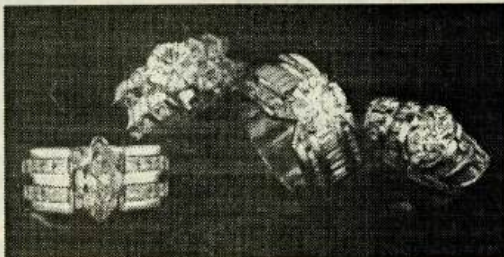
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TEXAS TRIANGLE REBORN

Publisher Kay Longcope cited community support for the return of the *Texas Triangle* on Oct. 24. The four-year-old weekly newspaper for the gay community in Houston and Austin had previously announced that it would go out of business on Oct. 10 because of growing debt.

A community meeting on Nov. 7 in Houston drew two dozen supporters who discussed ways to insure a future for the *Triangle*. The paper has recently acquired a new office at 3400 Montrose and a full-time Houston writer, former *OutSmart* associate editor Tristan McAvery.

"HEALING HANDS" RAISES FUNDS FOR HIV+ ART COURSE

The Art League of Houston opens the "Healing Hands" exhibit with a reception on Saturday, Dec. 7, 4 p.m., at the Moody Gallery, 2815 Colquitt. The exhibit includes prints by local artist which will be on sale. Proceeds will allow the Art League to continue providing free art courses for anyone with the HIV virus. For more information, call 713/523-9530.

PLANS UNDER WAY FOR GAY FILM FESTIVAL

Plans for a local gay and lesbian film festival are under way. The festival will take place over four weekends starting in mid-May. Organizers include the Museum of Fine Arts, DiverseWorks, Rice Media Center, Landmark Theatres, and the Southwest Alternative Media Project (SWAMP).

"It's been a long time coming," MFA's Marian Luntz says. "I know that it's going to catch on and be an annual thing. We just want to get the ball rolling."

PFLAG CHAPTER FORMS IN GALVESTON

The newest Texas chapter of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) has formed in Galveston. The next meeting of the group is Sunday, Dec. 15, 2 p.m., at the Health Merchant on the corner of 27th and Broadway. For more information, call the PFLAG Galveston Helpline at 409/744-7558.

DATES SET FOR LESBIAN CONFERENCE

Organizers have announced that the Texas Lesbian Conference '97 will be held at the Renaissance Hotel in Houston on May 16, 17, and 18. The theme is "Celebrating Our Visibility: A Decade of Lesbian Empowerment." Volunteers are needed at a planning meeting on Wednesday, Dec. 4, 6 p.m., at Suzanne Anderson Properties, 239 Westheimer. For more information, call 713/867-3934.

Continued on page 10

ASSISTHERS MEETS NEEDS IN LESBIAN COMMUNITY

Women With Life-Threatening Illnesses Find Support
 by Laurie Jones

Last April, a group of 25 women met together with a common vision. The group of physicians, social workers, ministers, police officers, entrepreneurs, and other professionals pooled their resources to form AssistHers. The 18-month pilot program provides assistance to lesbians in Houston faced with a debilitating illness or condition.

The genesis for the grass-roots idea came from Susie Rokes and social worker Tori Williams, the director of the local chapter of DIFFA (Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS).

"I had two women friends with cancer," says Williams. "My friend Susie Rokes and I organized a group of friends to deliver meals to these women and help them with their errands, transportation to their doctors, and provide emotional support. Susie looked at me one day and said, 'Let's do this on an ongoing basis with more clients and volunteers.'"

Rokes and Williams contacted friends and community leaders and created AssistHers. Williams says the group is committed to caring for women in need, breaking down barriers that lesbians face when assessing the health-care system and educating each other about important health issues.

Lesbians have played a significant role in the development of family planning clinics, battered women's shelters, AIDS hospices, and other social services, says Williams.

"Until recently we have failed to acknowledge the fact that significant numbers of lesbians are dying of cancer and other illnesses," she says. "AssistHers is an organization which takes the valuable expertise we have gladly given to mainstream social service systems and invests it into our own lesbian community."

The organization creates eight-person teams to provide support for clients. Although guidance is provided from a social worker or trained nurse, the support teams are volunteers from the community. As part of a support team, Christian spends time with her client for several hours each month.

"I was convinced that this was something I wanted to align myself with," says Christian. "The client who my support team helps needs assistance with trips to the doctor and other errands and emotional support for her partner. Our team works as a unit sharing information with each other and the client."

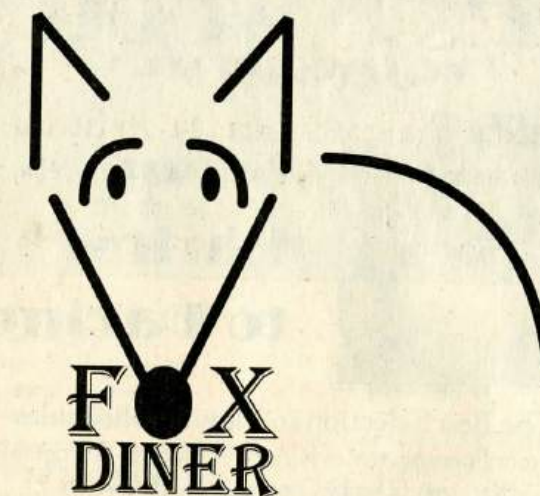
Williams says the team approach provides flexibility in scheduling and maximizes the resources of each team member. In addition to the support team there are other committees such as community outreach, client special needs, food transportation, and office management.

Charlene, 42, was AssistHers' first client. She is an occupational therapist who has lupus. On long-term disability, she values the support the volunteers have given her.

"There are many days when I don't have the strength to even grocery shop," she says. "I look forward to the weekly visits because it is so easy to feel isolated."

Charlene's support team helps with multiple chores, from walking her dog to changing light bulbs. With the help of the special needs committee, AssistHers even devised a way for her pup to stay in the unfenced yard without Charlene's constant supervision.

On January 24, AssistHers will host a fund-raising campaign called "A Progressive Dinner for Progressive Women." A bus will transport 54 patrons to four homes for cocktails, appetizers, a main course, and dessert. Tickets are \$50 for AssistHers volunteers and \$100 for non-volunteers. For more information about AssistHers, call 713/521-4628.



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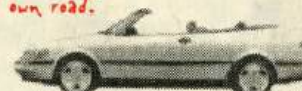
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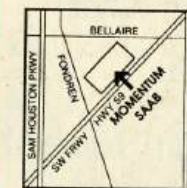


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NEWSBRIEFS/continued from page 8

STATE LEGISLATORS TO CONSIDER SAME-SEX MARRIAGE BAN

AUSTIN — State Rep. Warren Chisum, R-Pampa, filed a bill on November 12 that would ban same-sex marriages, even if legally recognized elsewhere. The bill says the state will not "give effect to a public act, record, or judicial proceeding that recognizes or validates marriages between persons of the same sex."

State law already limits marriages in Texas to male-female unions, but the prospect of Hawaii courts shortly recognizing same-sex marriages has prompted a score of states, as well as the federal government, to deny recognition of any such marriages.

HOUSTONIANS SUPPORT INSURANCE BENEFITS FOR GAY COUPLES

Houstonians strongly oppose same-sex marriages and adoptions, but a narrow margin favors health insurance benefits for same-sex couples, according to a recent survey designed by a Rice University student. The telephone survey of 204 Houstonians was funded by OutVote, a nonprofit group organized to register, educate, and motivate gays to vote.

INKLINGS FOR SALE

Pokey Anderson and Annise Parker are seeking buyers for the eight-year-old Inklings Bookshop. Located at 1846 Richmond, Inklings specializes in titles of interest to the lesbian community. The owners said the store has grossed over 1 million dollars in sales but needs more capital and energy to be competitive. Anderson says there is a definite need for a lesbian bookstore in Houston.

"I would hate to leave a legacy that the only way people can come out is to walk into Borders and stumble through, 'Gee, I think I might be a lesbian. Can you help me?' to some straight guy," says Anderson.

Parker and Anderson are looking for buyers with "energy, vision, and willingness to work hard." Anderson adds that it is important that the buyers are lesbians or a group where women have strong representation.

"As lesbians, we understand the needs of lesbians more than non-lesbians do," says Anderson.



Pokey Anderson

nationalbriefs

BOB DORNAN OUSTED, CLAIMS VOTER FRAUD

SANTA ANA, Calif. — Democrat Loretta Sanchez, leading the incumbent by 929 votes, declared victory on Nov. 13 over nine-term Rep. Bob Dornan (R-Garden Grove) after getting a congratulatory call from Vice President Al Gore. Her campaign was strongly supported by the gay community. Dornan, noted for referring to gay men as "homos" and for calling President Clinton "a pro-homosexual, draft-dodging pathological liar," has already said he will challenge the outcome. He claims some of the people who voted for Sanchez may not have been U.S. citizens. Orange County Registrar Rosalyn Lever said there is no evidence of voter fraud.

GAY VOTERS SUPPORTED CLINTON

WASHINGTON — According to a Voter News Service (VNS) exit poll, some 67 percent of the self-identified gay and lesbian voters in the Nov. 5 general election cast their ballots for President Clinton. The first such exit poll to ask gays and lesbians how they voted, conducted in the 1992 presidential race, found that Clinton received 72 percent of the gay vote that year, with the remaining 28 percent split about evenly between Republican George Bush and Texas billionaire Ross Perot. This year, the VNS poll indicated Republican Bob Dole received 18 percent of the gay and lesbian vote nationally, while Perot got only 10 percent.

'HARVEY MILK' OPERA TO BE RECORDED

SAN FRANCISCO — The San Francisco Opera Company says it will be recording the opera *Harvey Milk* by Michael Korie and Stewart Wallace. The opera company debuted a recently revised version of the opera, jointly commissioned by the Houston Grand Opera, the New York City Opera, and the San Francisco Opera in early November. The company said the recording will be with the Teldec label.

'JENNY JONES SHOW' GUEST GUILTY OF 2ND-DEGREE MURDER

PONTIAC, Mich. — Jonathan Schmitz, a guest on the *Jenny Jones Show*, has been convicted of second-degree murder for shooting and killing Scott Amedure, a secret admirer who revealed he had a crush on Schmitz during a taping of the talk show. Schmitz had been charged in the shotgun death of Amedure three days after the two were taped for a *Jenny Jones* segment on same-sex crushes. The show was never aired. Schmitz's lawyers



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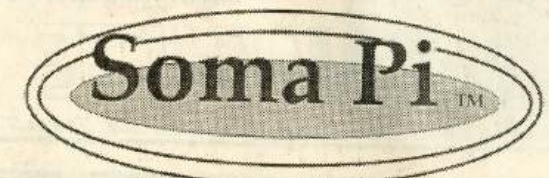
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argued that the show's producers had misled him into believing he was going to meet the woman of his dreams. They said he was publicly humiliated when the admirer turned out to be a man. Schmitz will face a sentencing hearing in December, and could be sentenced to as little as eight years in prison.

CLINTON'S SECOND TERM: SHALALA STAYING; FLEMING LEAVING

WASHINGTON — Patricia Fleming, the U.S. AIDS policy director and so-called "AIDS czar," has said she will quit the post early next year, one of several top Clinton administration officials who have recently announced their resignations as the president prepared to enter his second term in the White House. Fleming, who replaced the office's first director, Kristine Gebbie, is credited with helping to boost funding for research, treatment, and HIV-prevention programs.

Donna Shalala, Clinton's health and human services secretary, however, has announced that she will be staying on in her post during Clinton's second term in office. Shalala, the one-time University of Wisconsin chancellor, has generally gotten high marks among health advocates in the country during an era of decreasing federal funds for health and welfare programs. The day before she announced she would be staying on in the administration, Shalala said in New York that AIDS "vaccine research ought to be at the top of our priority list" during Clinton's second term.

ILLINOIS GOVERNOR SIGNS EXECUTIVE ORDER BARRING BIAS

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — With little publicity, Illinois Gov. Jim Edgar has signed an executive order barring state agencies from discriminating in hiring, promotion, or firing based on marital status, physical stature, or sexual orientation. Two years ago a proposed anti-bias bill prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation in the state passed one house of the Illinois Legislature but failed even to come to a floor vote in the other. Some rights activists say Gov. Edgar's move now sets the stage for a new push for a state law.

DETROIT RIGHTS GROUP THREATENS LAWSUIT OVER CAMPAIGN FLIER

DETROIT — The Detroit-based Triangle Foundation says it is considering a lawsuit against state Rep. Deborah Whyman over a campaign flier she used in attacking her opponent in the Nov. 5 elections which claimed the foundation supports the rights of pedophiles to have sex with underage boys. Whyman's opponent, Democrat Deborah Nesbit, had received contributions from several Triangle Foundation board members. A foundation spokesman, Jeff Montgomery, said the organization's bylaws say nothing about pedophiles.

"We've never supported sex acts between men and boys," Montgomery said. "There is nothing in our bylaws stating that... It's an absolute and blatant lie." Whyman narrowly defeated Nesbit in the election.

CALIFORNIA SOUTHERN BAPTISTS TO BOYCOTT WALT DISNEY

PASADENA, Calif. — After meeting at its state convention, California's Southern Baptists are calling for a boycott of Walt Disney products, parks, and films because of the entertainment giant's support of domestic partners benefits for its workers. Delegates passed a resolution to boycott Walt Disney Co. after meeting at the Protestant denomination's 56th annual state convention, charging that Disney has "turned its back on traditional family values." The Southern Baptists objected specifically to Disney's recent extension of benefits to the domestic partners of company employees comparable to the benefits the firm offers the spouses of married workers.

FBI ANNUAL HATE CRIMES DATA

WASHINGTON — The FBI has released its annual statistical report on hate crimes in the United States for 1995, indicating some 7,947 bias-based crimes reported to local police officials in more than 9,500 law enforcement agencies in the country. The FBI data indicates that 60 percent (4,800) of the reported incidents were racially motivated. About 16 percent (1,277) of the reported hate crimes were based on religion, the overwhelming majority of them (1,058) against Jews. Almost 13 percent (1,019) of the reported bias crimes were based on sexual orientation, according to the report. More than 70 percent of these orientation-based crimes (735) were against gay men, the report found, with less than 2 percent (146) of the reported incidents aimed against lesbians. Seventeen of these reported orientation crimes were aimed at heterosexuals, the report says.

SAN FRANCISCO BENEFITS MEASURE SIGNED INTO LAW

SAN FRANCISCO — Mayor Willie Brown signed a measure that makes San Francisco the first in the country to require firms and contractors doing business with the city to offer domestic partner benefits comparable to any spousal benefits they offer to their employees. The measure, unanimously approved by the city's governing board of supervisors, prohibits the city from engaging in business dealings with firms or contractors that offer their workers spousal benefits but don't have similar benefit programs for their employees' domestic partners. The measure covers not only businesses located in the city itself, but also firms that do business with the city, no matter where they're located. Supervisors said they have received inquiries about the measure from other cities with partners' registration programs, including New York and Boston.

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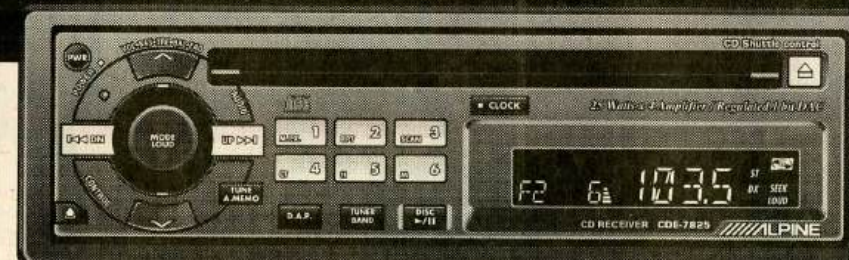
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INDIANA TOWN KEEPS GAY RIGHTS LAW

LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Worried over the likelihood of costly lawsuits, several city council members changed their initial votes in favor of repealing a 1993 anti-bias measure and decided to reject a proposal they had voted 5-4 in October to support. On its second reading of the proposal to remove all references to sexual orientation from the city's human rights protections, the council voted 6-2 against the measure, keeping the existing protections on the city's books. Several civil rights groups had threatened to sue if the city repealed its anti-discrimination protections. That concern only increased after Indianapolis attorney Lee McTurnan, who was hired by the city to analyze the legal ramifications of the proposed repeal, raised the prospect of a possibly complex and expensive legal battle if the repeal measure was approved. He cited the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling that Colorado's anti-gay Amendment 2 was unconstitutional.

FEDERAL APPEALS COURT NIXES NEA 'DECENCY STANDARD'

SAN FRANCISCO — A federal appeals court has struck down a law requiring the National Endowment for the Arts to consider "general standards of decency" in awarding financial grants to artists. The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said in a 2-1 ruling that the

standard was vague and gave rise "to the danger of arbitrary and discriminatory application." The 1990 law required the government-funded NEA to take into consideration "general standards of decency and respect for the diverse beliefs and values of the American public" when deciding on artists' applications for fellowships. The appeals court ruling stems from a Los Angeles lawsuit filed by four artists who were denied NEA fellowships based on the 1990 "decency standard." The four artists said in their lawsuit their art reflected concerns about violence against women, challenges to traditional notions of gender and sexuality, lesbian relationships, AIDS, and other social issues affecting gay people.



Quentin Crisp (l) with playwright Robert Patrick at awards ceremony.

NATIVE TEXAN HONORED FOR PLAYWRITING

NEW YORK — Robert Patrick, Kilgore-born pioneer gay playwright, received the Robert Chesley Foundation Award for Lifetime Achievement in Gay Playwriting at an October ceremony at New York's Algonquin Hotel. Patrick was honored for 30 years in the field. His works include *The Haunted Host*, *Kennedy's Children*, and *The Trial of Socrates*. He recently sold the film rights to *Temple Slave*, his novel chronicling the beginning of gay theater.

CANCELED CONVENTIONS COSTING CINCINNATI

CINCINNATI — Cincinnati newspapers and television stations have reported that the American Musicological Society moved its 1996 convention to Baltimore because of Cincinnati's 1993 measure prohibiting anti-bias protections from being extended to homosexuals. One TV news station cited convention bureau officials as saying that at least seven other conventions had pulled their annual meetings out of Cincinnati because of the anti-gay measure, which was modeled on Colorado's Amendment 2. City officials said the cancellations have cost the city more than \$24 million in lost convention revenues.

STORY IN SCHOOL NEWSPAPER PROMPTS REVIEW

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — A story about gay teens which ran in *The Lever*, the student newspaper at Palmer High School, has

prompted the local school board to discuss its policy on student publications. The story, written by student editor Mary Margaret Nussbaum, focuses on coming-out experiences, gay pride, and gay teen-age nightlife in Colorado Springs. After publication, Palmer principal Jay Engelin said he received six phone calls about the paper: two from parents who supported the newspaper's right to run the stories, two from parents who did not think the subject appropriate for a high school paper, and two from people who had no connection with the school or any students in it. The school district policy gives students the right to express diverse points of view and opinion in school publications they edit. School district spokeswoman Tracy Cooper said the handful of phone calls, however, were enough to prompt the school board to review the policy.

FUNDAMENTALIST GROUP WANTS TO KEEP MCC FROM CHRISTMAS PARADE

KEY WEST, Fla. — The Lower Florida Keys Ministerial Assn., a group of conservative ministers, is waging a campaign to keep the local Metropolitan Community Church from joining in Key West's annual Christmas parade. But the city's commissioners say they will give the fundamentalist group a parade permit only on condition that the association agrees not to discriminate against anyone. The association says

homosexuality is a sin and that it would not allow the MCC, which has a predominately gay and lesbian congregation, to participate. The conservative leaders said they were also concerned one of the city's gay businesses might want to include a float in the parade featuring scantily clad male dancers or some other "un-Christmas-like display."

N.C. COURT RULES GAY DAD CAN KEEP CUSTODY OF HIS CHILDREN

RALEIGH, N.C. — The North Carolina Court of Appeals says a gay father, Frederick Smith, can keep custody of his two children even though he lives with his partner. The appeals court unanimously overturned a lower court ruling that awarded custody of the two boys to their mother, Carol Pulliam, in Kansas. Judge Edwin Greene—writing for the three-judge panel—said the homosexual relationship does not constitute a substantial change in circumstances that would justify changing an earlier custody order. The court ruled that the two children appear well-adjusted, get good grades, and regularly attend school. The appeals court ruled that the lower court's ruling, which stated that the father's gay relationship exposes the children to improper influences, is the personal opinion of the judge and not supported by evidence.

National Briefs are compiled from GayNet reports.

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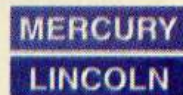
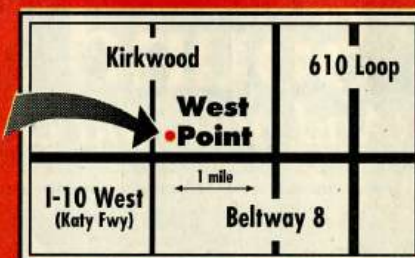
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OUT
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Protecting Religion From Politicians

When Candidates Claimed Endorsement From God, We Said Nothing

By Daryl Moore

I am no theologian. I was born and raised a Southern Baptist. Both my grandfather and my uncle were Southern Baptist ministers. I spent my fair share of time in the Baptist Church, in Sunday School, and in Vacation Bible School. I received a fairly decent education of the Bible.

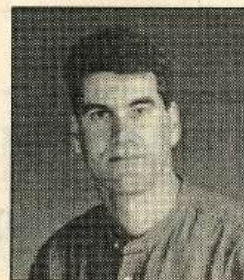
I am a Christian, at least by my definition of that religious term. I believe that God is the Creator and I believe in evolution. I believe in the Holy and Apostolic Catholic Church and believe women should be priests. I believe in the Bible, but I remind myself that it was written by ordinary men and has been translated by men into something other than its original text.

I also profess my undying allegiance to the separation of church and state, and I denounce any politician who claims that God is only on his or her side.

I apply traditional Christian standards to those who claim Christ's divine guidance in their politics. I resolved to do this after witnessing another incredibly nasty campaign in which mean-spirited individuals and hate-filled coalitions identified God as their campaign manager. As if God and Jesus didn't have more important things to do, they have now entered the political arena. Apparently, they chose candidates, attended po-

litical conventions, and even participated in drafting partisan platforms.

In fact, just before the election, one pronounced Christian even alleged his opponent was not a "true Christian" because he belonged to the Unity Christian Church. Color me and my religious education stupid, but I thought God was the only one who could make that call.



Daryl Moore

To coin a term used by candidate Dole, "Where is our sense of outrage?" We often sit idly by while our opponents lay claim to the religious and moral high ground. Apparently, we "liberals" have spent so much time trying to separate church and state that we do not know how to handle an attack from our opponents. When Republicans controlled by the Christian Coalition inject religion into political campaigns, we are usually silent.

It is hard to respond to a political adversary's assertion of divine guidance. We should not do it by injecting our own religious ideals into politics. We do it by comparing our adversaries' politics to their own religious standards. We simply ask that their platform be scrutinized according to the traditional religious mores they profess to be campaigning on.

When our opponents claim God is on their steering committee, ask

Continued on page 18

OUT
right

The Death of the Texas Democratic Party

Grassroots GOP Involvement Essential for Gay Rights

by Dale Carpenter

Start the dirge. Send a wreath. Get your shovel. The Democratic Party of Texas is dead. The only real question for gays and lesbians is, what do we do about it?

First, recall the dimensions of the Democrats' disaster. On November 5, Republicans won every single statewide race in Texas. The GOP now holds 20 of 29 statewide offices and is poised to take more in 1998. In a year in which an incumbent Democratic president ran up a huge majority in the electoral college, Bob Dole became the fifth straight GOP presidential contender to take the state. In a year in which Democrats picked up seats in the House of Representatives, the Texas congressional delegation became more Republican. The Texas GOP won all three races for the Court of Criminal Appeals, capturing a majority of that court for the first time. The GOP's 7-2 majority on the Texas Supreme Court held firm. The Democrats lost more ground in the state House of Representatives. And most observers expect that the GOP will win two more Texas Senate seats in upcoming special elections, giving the party a majority in the Senate for the first time since the 1870s.

The outlook in our own Harris County is also bleak for Democrats. Republicans won all but two judicial races. The GOP won the county

attorney's race for the first time and easily kept the Sheriff's office. Although there are still some safe Democratic fiefdoms, Sheila Jackson Lee's seat for example, they are growing fewer and farther between. Without any doubt, we now live in a majority-Republican county and state.



Dale Carpenter

For a gay community that wants to enact hate crimes legislation, protection from employment discrimination, and a repeal of the state sodomy law, among other things, this change in the political landscape is portentous. The Texas GOP has been actively hostile to any legislative initiatives protecting the basic civil rights of gays and lesbians. This past summer, the state GOP wouldn't even let Log Cabin have an information booth at its state convention. What are we to do? I suggest a two-pronged approach.

First, this means getting involved at the grassroots level in the GOP—attending precinct conventions, next held in March 1998. It also means showing up at regular party functions, and supporting with money and time and votes the campaigns of gay-friendly Republicans. Not everyone has the time or the stomach to do all of those things, but even some of it would be helpful. Although Log Cabin has begun to do these things,

Continued on page 18

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Out Left

Continued from page 16

them what God thinks about their policy of ending a school lunch program for indigent children. Ask them to explain how God would view refusing health care to people with AIDS or ending welfare assistance to the poorest Americans who want to work, but cannot. When our opponents announce they are passing a bill to defend the religious institution of marriage by outlawing same-sex unions, ask them why they did not outlaw adultery instead. When our opponents attempt to deem us outcasts because of our orientation, ask them why Jesus testified to the social outcasts of the biblical era.

It's time for religious liberals, Democrats, and moderate Republicans to accept the Christian Coalition's challenge. It's time to engage politicians and political coalitions in honest and open debate about "family values." We need to expose the hypocrisy of those who

teach hatred and division in the name of religion. Together, we can rescue religion from the radicals who lay waste to it for political gain.

I will never announce that my candidate is the only "true Christian" in the race. I will never say Jesus is a Democrat. To date, Jesus has never registered to vote in any partisan primary. I will never inject religion or Christianity into a political debate in order to claim that my political position is superior.

Instead, I will defend my faith while promoting the separation of church and state. I will do so by reminding political opportunists that Christianity should not be used as a sword to wave in political battle, but as a shield to protect religion from politicians. I hope all secularists will do the same.

Daryl L. Moore is a lawyer in Houston. He has a general practice and is board certified in civil appellate law.

Out Right

Continued from page 17

and achieved successes, many more people are needed. A good way to start helping is to join the local chapter of the Log Cabin Republicans. Meetings are held the fourth Monday of every month (December excepted) beginning at 7 p.m. at Renata's, 2006 Lexington. Call 529-9100 for more information.

Our proposed engagement with the Republican Party will help to dispel myths about gays held by many loyal Republicans. Gay political leaders never miss a chance to emphasize the importance of coming out as a necessary tool in the achievement of equality. We should apply the same principle to our engagement with the GOP. If just one openly gay person showed up and spoke out at every precinct convention in this county, I'll bet the local party would begin to change dramatically.

Further, we need to explain how equality for gays and lesbians fits into the traditional Republican values of limited government and individual

freedom. On the sodomy law, for example, rather than blathering on about the sexual revolution, we should explain how the law is inconsistent with a commitment to personal autonomy and can only be enforced by a big, intrusive government. On the hate crimes bill, rather than emphasizing special protection for gays, we should present it as a tough anti-crime measure that addresses an epidemic of lawlessness. Protection from employment discrimination does not give special rights to gays, but ensures that each employee will be judged on individual merit. And so on.

The second part of our reaction to the election should be that we cannot cede any ground on the question of *why* the election turned out as it did. At the national level, for example, Republicans will now furiously debate the reasons for Bob Dole's defeat. On election night, conservative commentator George Will began that debate

***"We must abandon
our lazy habit of
supporting Democrats
and engage the
Republican Party
on its own terms."***

by suggesting that Dole should have emphasized social issues rather than his tax cut. If the party concludes that Will is right, we're headed for a Buchananite in 2000. Our response must be that Dole was a weak nominee precisely because of the party's perceived intolerance on social issues.

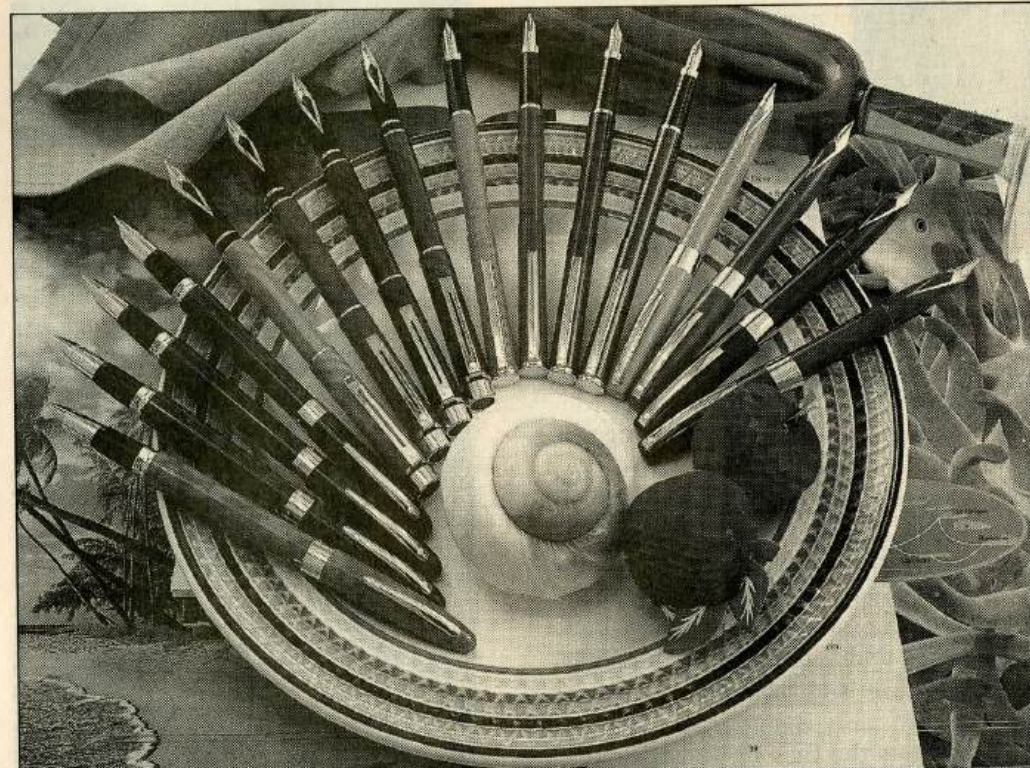
In Texas, we can argue with good reason that the GOP's sweep had nothing to do with social issues like abortion and gay civil rights. Those issues simply were not emphasized in most races. Indeed, the only Republican candidates who lost in Harris County, including the only two Repub-

licans to lose in judicial races, were closely associated with social and religious conservatives. John Devine, the darling of the local religious right, scored an embarrassing 7 percent in his race for Congress. Jack Rodriguez, a Republican candidate against Gene Green, ran the most homophobic campaign of all and got creamed 70 percent to 30 percent. The arch-conservative *Link Letter*, a religious right rag that routinely bashes gays in its pages, endorsed Jerry Burley for Congress against Sheila Jackson Lee. Burley got a whopping 6 percent of the vote, running behind even another Republican in the race. The November balloting showed that, in a general election at least, the religious right emperor has no clothes.

Texans are voting Republican because the GOP more closely represents their views on taxes, government regulation, criminal justice, and the like. Gay-friendly Republicans did well on election day. Dolly Madison McKenna, touted for her solid credentials as a socially moderate Republican on this page last month, easily bested her GOP opponents to make it into a runoff for Congress in District 25. Paul Womack, a Republican who pledged not to discriminate against gays and lesbians and got the endorsement of the state Log Cabin organization, won his race for the Court of Criminal Appeals. In fact, Womack pulled out larger majorities in urban areas like Harris County, suggesting that he picked up some traditionally Democratic voters, like gays and lesbians, in those areas. These candidates emphasized economic and law-and-order issues—and voters responded favorably.

The Republican Party is unfamiliar territory to many gays and lesbians. But we had better learn to walk on it, because after November 5 it's practically the only ground left.

Dale Carpenter, a Houston attorney, is state president of the Log Cabin Republicans. The opinions expressed in this column are his own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Log Cabin.



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COMING HOME, COMING OUT

A Gift You Can Give Yourself—and Your Family

by Kyle Young

"Mom, Dad—I'm gay."

"How nice, dear. Please pass the cranberry sauce," said Mom.

"That's swell," said Dad. "I can't wait to tell my golf buddies."

Mike Diunteda thought through all the possible scenarios. His parents might fully accept and understand that he is gay. Not likely. They could reject him all-together. Not likely either. Or his worst fear, they could say nothing at all.

Like Mike, the holiday journey back home for many gay and lesbian people is paved with the intention of coming out to parents. For many, it is important to have the discussion in person, rather than over the phone or through a letter. The annual trip home is one of the rare occasions when the whole family is together.

Brightly wrapped presents, twinkling lights and smell of warm gingerbread in the oven may not be the easiest environment to send parents into potential hysterics. Many gay folks simply lose their nerve. For some, though, there is an inner assurance that the time has come to leave the darkness of the closet. It simply is not bearable anymore, and a holiday trip home provides the opportunity to come out.

Coming Out in Person

Before their son came out last Christmas at the age of 24, Houstonians Jim and Marge Diunteda didn't have much information.

"I wasn't some sort of weird, extremely conservative person," Jim says, "but if somebody had stopped me on the street and asked me my opinion about gays or lesbians, I would have been pretty negative. It was ignorance."

Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) is an international organization with over 400 chapters. Its primary purpose is to keep families together. For many parents, getting involved in PFLAG is the quickest way to move past tolerance and acceptance to truly celebrating their gay child.

PFLAG Houston Helpline: 713/867-9020

PFLAG Houston Web Site: <http://www.pflaghtx.org>

PFLAG's National Office: 202/638-4200

PFLAG Houston will meet Sunday, January 5 at 2 p.m.
at Christ Church Cathedral, 1117 Travis.

Most parents get their information, or misinformation, about gays from the larger society. Being faced with the prospect of having a gay child may send parents into a great deal of fear and denial. For Jim, Mike's coming out last Christmas raised questions. He wondered what he had done during Mike's childhood that caused him to be gay.

"My immediate reaction was, *What the hell have I done wrong?*" says Jim. "I've always been somewhat of a workaholic, and my very first reaction went back to when he was just a child and I spent a lot of time at work. I blamed myself for Mike being gay."

Marge had different concerns.

"I really didn't have that feeling of what did we do wrong," Marge says. "Mine was, *Now what's going to happen to him? Is he going to be safe from disease, safe from harassment?* My first natural reaction was concern for his well-being."

Mike, who lives in Boston, says that coming out at Christmas was a matter of following his intuition.

"At that point, for my own well-being, it was really important, to be out in general," says Mike. "Certainly my family is a big part of my life, so telling them was important. It was for my own mental health."

Mike chose to come out to his parents several days after Christmas, two nights before he was returning to Boston.

"It was a typical *I have to talk to you guys about something really important to me,*" recalls Mike.

Although they had never discussed it with each other, his parents both anticipated what would follow.

"I want you to know that I'm gay," Mike said.

Jim and Marge were quiet.

"We weren't sure what were the right words to say," says Jim. "Both Marge and I had a lot of thoughts and questions in our minds, but we really couldn't pull them together, or didn't know how to ask them."

Mike made it clear that he had wrestled with his orientation for many years and he didn't expect his parents to fully understand overnight. He told them that he realized some of their expectations for him may have been shattered. He handed them some pamphlets from Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG).

"One of them was a little report written by a number of researchers," says Jim. "They were focusing on the whole

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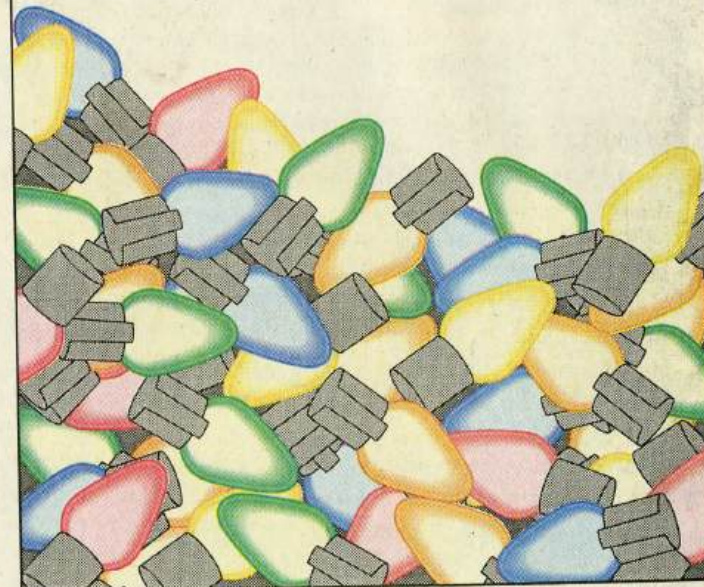
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question of choice. Reading that document was the single most important thing for me to do in that 24-hour period after Mike came out. It really did help me to deal with my own concerns about me causing this to happen."

Mike also gave them the PFLAG Helpline number for Houston. The next morning they called. Two weeks later they were at the monthly PFLAG meeting. The meetings start with an educational speaker. Following that, parents and gay people meet in small groups, sharing their stories.

"I knew that I was going to need help from people who had experienced the same thing before," says Jim. "I said, 'I don't know what this is going to be like, but we ought to at least try it.'"

"I remember driving in to that first PFLAG meeting," says Marge. "I remember saying to Jim, 'I don't want to be doing this.' I didn't mean that I didn't want to go to the group. I meant I didn't want any of this to be happening, and I remember feeling very negative, kind of putting a wall around myself. At the same time, though, I found the small group to be really moving."

They have been attending PFLAG for the last year. They say that getting to know parents who have traveled the same path, as well as meeting well-adjusted gay people, has lead them to accept their son. They want to move toward being publicly supportive of him.

"They say when a child comes out of the closet, their parents go in it," says Marge. "We are both in the closet. I've come close a couple of times to wanting to tell rela-

tives or friends, but I always find a way out. I just don't have the courage yet."

"I am probably a little further along than that, but I'm not anywhere near where I want to be," says Jim. "I really want to be at that celebration point. I want to be very comfortable talking to virtually anyone about this. I really am depending on my involvement in PFLAG to get me there."

Both Jim and Marge say that Mike's coming out has brought them closer to their son.

"I believe that while we've never had a bad relationship at all, it is better now that it was before," says Jim. "I can't put a finger on exactly what it is. I guess it's a deeper sense of caring from both of our perspectives."

Mike says that the coming out has allowed him to be more honest with his family.

"If you're not out to your parents, there's a certain amount of lying that you have to do, or not telling the full truth," he says. "If you're lying to your parents or if your evading their questions, of course all parties are going to feel some kind of distance."

Jim and Marge say that coming out in person was the right decision, and he had a good sense of timing.

"The day or two he was here before going back to Boston, I almost felt physically sick," says Marge. "If he had told us the moment he got here, the whole Christmas vacation would have been like that, I'm sure; but also, he didn't do it on the way back to the airport. It still gave us some time to talk to him more about it before he left."

Questions You Need to Consider Before Coming Out

1. Are you sure about your sexual orientation?

Don't raise the issue unless you're able to respond with confidence to the question, "Are you sure?" Confusion on your part will increase your parents' confusion and decrease their confidence in your judgment.

2. Are you comfortable with your gay sexuality?

If you're wrestling with guilt and periods of depression, you'll be better off waiting to tell your parents. Coming out to them may require tremendous energy on your part; it will require a reserve of positive self-image.

3. Do you have support?

In the event your parents' reaction devastates you, there should be someone or a group that you can confidently turn to for emotional support and strength. Maintaining your sense of self-worth is critical.

4. Are you knowledgeable about homosexuality?

Your parents will probably respond based on a lifetime of information from a homophobic society. If you've done some serious reading on the subject, you'll be able to assist them by sharing reliable information and research.

5. What's the emotional climate at home?

If you have the choice of when to tell them, consider the timing. Choose a time when they're not dealing with such matters as the death of a close friend, pending surgery, or the loss of a job.

6. Can you be patient?

Your parents will require time to deal with this information if they haven't considered it prior to your sharing. The process may last from six months to two years.

7. What's your motive for coming out now?

Excerpted from *Coming Out, A Guide for You and Your Parents* by T.H. Sauerma. Published by PFLAG Philadelphia; copies available from PFLAG Houston.

Hopefully, it is because you love them and are uncomfortable with the distance you feel. Never come out in anger or during an argument, using your sexuality as a weapon.

8. Do you have available resources?

Homosexuality is a subject most non-gay people know little about. Have available at least one of the following: a book addressed to parents, a contact for the local or national Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, or the name of a non-gay counselor who can deal fairly with the issue.

9. Are you financially dependent on your parents?

If you suspect they are capable of withdrawing college finances or forcing you out of the house, you may choose to wait until they do not have this weapon to hold over you.

10. What is your general relationship with your parents?

If you've gotten along well and have always known their love—and share your love for them in return—chances are they'll be able to deal with the issue in a positive way.

11. What is their moral societal view?

If they tend to see social issues in clear terms of good/bad or holy/sinful, you may anticipate that you will have serious problems dealing with your sexuality. If, however, they've evidenced a degree of flexibility when dealing with other changing societal matters, you may be able to anticipate a willingness to work this through with you.

12. Is this your decision?

Not everyone should come out to their parents. Don't be pressured into it if you're not sure you'll be better off by doing so—no matter what their response.

"If he didn't have the choice to come out in person, I think it would have been a lot more difficult," says Jim. "Thank God for Christmas, if it allowed him to be able to come out in person."

Two months after coming out to his parents, Mike told his brother Tony over the phone. He will be the best man in Tony's wedding this spring.

The Phone Call

A different couple, also by the name of Jim and Marge, heard the news during a phone call. Their son, Dennis, flew from Washington, D.C. to meet them in New York during the holidays in 1993. He planned to tell them, but the right moment never arrived. On December 29, two days after returning home to Houston, the Blacks got the call.

"Jim had answered the phone, and he said, 'Dennis wants you on the extension and he has something to tell us,'" recalls Marge. "I got on the extension and he said, 'I want you to know, I'm gay.' That's all he said, and I said nothing. Jim and I were in different rooms, and there was silence."

In the past, they had discussed the possibility of Dennis being gay. The call confirmed their fears.

"You start thinking, *There's not going to be a wedding, there's not going to be grandchildren*," says Marge. "You start thinking of all the things that you were planning and you look at the future and they're not going to happen."

Dennis told them that he would answer any questions they had. He gave them the phone number for Gail Rickey, a PFLAG mom in Houston, and told them to call her.

"We told him almost immediately that this was not going to affect our relationship with him," says Jim. "We were going to call Gail and talk to her about it, but whether he was gay or wasn't gay wasn't going to affect our relationship."

An hour after talking to Dennis, they called Gail and got information about the January PFLAG meeting.

"It was a very hard week. I found that the wee hours of the morning were very hard," says Marge. "I just lay in the bed crying."

Marge called her son with questions several days later. *Are you sure? Maybe you're bisexual. Did someone influence you when you were young? Why did you have to tell your office? How long have you known?* He told her he had known since he was 14.

"I have some pictures from over the years, and there's one of him when he was 14 with his brother and me," says Marge, "and all I could think of at the time was that he had nobody to talk to at age 14 when he said he was sure. He was 29 when he came out to his closest friends and his family. To have to bury that for 15 years was hell."

Once he answered her questions, she made a decision to educate herself. Dennis' parents arrived at the monthly PFLAG meeting several days later.

"That's where you first learn that [being gay] is something you're born with and you can't do anything about," says Jim. "Before that, you get a stereotype image of what it means [to be gay] and you don't think very much of it, because it just doesn't confront you."

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They have stayed involved in PFLAG, recently attending the national conference. They say they are accepting of their son and his new partner, Scott.

"It takes a long time getting used to, and that's something gay people need to understand," says Jim. "Even if the parents accept it, they're going to be thinking about it for a while and wondering why it happened and how it happened. It takes a while to figure out that it had nothing to do with either the child or the parent."

Both Jim and Marge suggest coming out in person if at all possible.

"Dennis said he didn't want to ruin our Christmas," says Jim. "Gay people must come out. They just have to tell the family sometime. At least around the holidays, the family is there and you have them together to tell."

Marge laughs, "I don't think you have to pick Christmas Day."

Preparing to Come Out

Tyler Reeves' parents are Mormon. He moved to Houston from Utah over a year ago to live with his partner, Doug. He is planning to come out to his family during a Thanksgiving visit.

"Every trip home has been *Should I? Shouldn't I?*," says Tyler. "I've been wanting to for a long time, and now that I'm living with someone, it's become more important. I need to let my parents know that this person is very important to me."

Tyler said being in the closet last Christmas was difficult for him. He feels confident that they already know he is gay, but they don't know how to approach the subject.

"I've always wondered why they haven't asked," he says. "I think it's probably because we never have really discussed sex."

While the decision to come out was scary for him, he also feels relief that he will soon have it out of the way.

"I actually am looking forward to it because I want to move on with my life," says Tyler. "I really feel like they don't totally know me, and for us to have a relationship, they have to know what goes on in my life."

Bob Bernstein is the father of a lesbian and author of *Straight Parents/Gay Children: Keeping Families Together*. His book recently received an award from the Gustavus Myers Center for the study of Human Rights. He is also involved in the Washington, D.C. chapter of PFLAG. He says coming out to parents can be very positive.

"We just hear it over and over again from the kids and from the parents, saying that there's a new closeness in the family," says Bernstein. "Whereas, carrying secrets around is the easiest, quickest way to disrupt family harmony."

He says that he has spoken to many gay people who are worried about how their parents will react.

"It seems to me that the overwhelming majority of the stories are positive, that parents react less negatively than [the child] anticipated," he says. "That doesn't mean that there aren't stories the other way. Sometimes parents' responses will be reversed from what's expected. They'll think Dad's going to be an ogre and mother will be lovely, and it turns out to be the opposite, so there are always surprises. My sense of it is that there are a lot more positive surprises than negative."

He says the holidays do create an opportunity to come out for many.

"It's a time of family reunions and family warmth and closeness," says Bernstein. "I think it stirs the impulse in the young people to try to take this step that will bring them closer."

He says parents ultimately getting involved with a group like PFLAG is the key to moving toward celebrating having gay children.

"Coming out and parents getting involved with other parents and gay people is a tremendously life-enriching experience," he says. "It's just so sad—the parents who are reluctant to take that first step to talk to somebody else about it. That can open the floodgates."

Most PFLAG chapters around the nation have a helpline, where moms and dads or gays and lesbians can call and talk with a parent. Norma Graves volunteers for the helpline in Houston. As the mother of a gay son, a lesbian daughter, and a straight son, she can empathize with the pain parents are feeling when they first find out. She says that when parents call, they most often want someone to listen.

"Everybody who does the helpline is able to immediately convey to the caller the lack of judgment and an atmosphere where you can say anything you need to say and it will be fine," explains Graves. "What people are looking for is somebody to confirm them in some small way and listen to their story—to help them feel less 'other.'"

Bernstein says that in addition to having the PFLAG number available for parents, the gay child needs to make sure they are personally ready for this step.

"The important thing is to be prepared for anything, to have contemplated all the possibilities," says Bernstein. "I would hope that they don't make that decision until they have thoroughly worked out in their own minds that this is something they want to do, regardless of what the outcome is going to be."

The path of coming out, to Bernstein, is part of what makes gay and lesbian people special and unique.

"It's part of the admiration that I feel for openly gay people," he concludes. "It's typical of the kind of courageous stuff that is regularly involved in their lives."

Recommended Reading

- *Beyond Acceptance: Parents, Lesbians and Gays Talk About Their Experiences* by C.W. Griffin
- *But Lord, They're Gay* by Sylvia Pennington
- *Can Homophobia Be Cured? Wrestling with Questions that Challenge the Church* by Bruce Hilton
- *Coming Out: An Act of Love* by Rob Eichberg
- *Coming Out to Parents: A Two-Way Survival Guide* by Mary V. Borhek
- *Coming Out Within: Stages of Spiritual Awakening for Lesbians & Gay Men* by C. O'Neill/K. Ritter
- *Different Daughters: A Book by Mothers of Lesbians* by Louise Rafkin
- *The Family Heart: A Memoir of When Our Son Came Out* by Robb Forman Dew
- *Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price* by W. Blumenfeld, ed.
- *Is It a Choice? Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About Gays and Lesbians* by Eric Marcus
- *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?* by Letha Scanzoni & Virginia Mollenkott
- *Just as I Am: A Practical Guide to Being Out, Proud and Christian* by Robert Williams
- *Loving Someone Gay* by Don Clark
- *My Son Eric* by Mary Borhek
- *Now That You Know: What Every Parent Should Know About Homosexuality* by Fairchild/Hayward
- *On Being Gay: On Family, Faith and Love* by Brian McNaught
- *Parents Matter: Parents' Relationships with Lesbian Daughters and Gay Sons* by Ann Muller
- *Positively Gay: New Approaches to Gay and Lesbian Life* by Betty Berzon
- *Prayers for Bobby: A Mother's Coming to Terms with the Suicide of Her Gay Son* by Leroy Aarons
- *Straight Parents/Gay Children: Keeping Families Together* by Robert Bernstein
- *Stranger at the Gate: To Be Gay & Christian in America* by Mel White
- *Two Teenagers in Twenty: Writings by Gay and Lesbian Youth* by Ann Heron, ed.
- *Uncommon Heroes: A Celebration of Heroes and Role Models for Lesbian and Gay Americans* by Samuel Bernstein, ed.
- *Understanding Sexual Identity: A Book for Gay Teens and Their Friends* by Janice E. Rench
- *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality* by Daniel A. Helminiak

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Dating Someone in the Closet Has Its Challenges.

by Kevin Isom

When we were growing up, my sister and I always viewed Christmas with a mixture of anticipation and discomfort. In our family, the gifts all coordinated, but the parents didn't. My sister and I would dread the charade of Christmas Day when we would pretend that we were a happy, shiny family. I remember one Christmas Eve, though. In a typical Memphis drizzle, late at night I heard what sounded like little hooves on the roof. I ran to the window and saw my dad on the roof over the garage. He was trying to make us think that Santa's reindeer had arrived. I thought to myself, "Maybe this'll be a good Christmas after all." Then I looked out the window and saw Mother putting the ladder away.

Having seen a mismatched couple in marriage, I'm very careful about prospective life partners for myself. I've learned that there are certain questions I should always ask potential dating partners. I always ask, "Are you out to your family?"

I was reminded of this recently. I'd dated a guy for a couple of months, during which time he'd said that his parents had to know but he hadn't told them. He had in fact told his sister two years earlier, but that really wasn't an issue, he said. After hearing him out, I bought the argument. I also believed in Santa Claus till I was 12.

Things were going relatively fine, until his sister flew into town. I dropped by his apartment before her arrival, and I noticed some changes. Among them, he had taken down my photo from his refrigerator door. I asked him about the new decor. He had taken the photo down, he said, so that his sister wouldn't feel uncomfortable and to protect his privacy. He left up a photo of himself as Joan Collins in Halloween drag. The logic escaped me.

I blew up. He calmed me down. His arguments seemed rational, and, moreover, he suggested that I needed to empathize and to recognize that different people come out at different speeds. As a lawyer, I cried misrepresentation of fact in my earlier interrogatories. But I decided to let it slip. He really was a good guy, after all.

Once the sister was gone, I figured things would go back to the way they were, though I knew I would have nagging doubts. Then two weeks later his parents flew

into town. Before they arrived, I talked with him on the phone. He said that his parents would be with him for a week, and that he would talk with me "soon." Translated from closet-speak, that means "see you in a week."

That was when I realized my mistake. Whenever I have dated anyone more than casually and my parents



Kevin Isom

have come into town, I have invited my boyfriend along on outings with us. I have made no secret of our relationship. I would expect no less for my heterosexual sister, and I expect no less for me. Now, though, I suddenly found myself on totally unfamiliar footing. It was one of those eye-opening moments, like the time I learned that my last name, Isom, is apparently an ancient Gaelic term meaning, "the sheep have an-

thrax." I realized I couldn't date this man any more.

I tend to shy away from phone trauma, ever since I had that nasty run-in with Judy, the *Time-Life* operator. So after his parents left, I called him to suggest that we get together to talk. When we did, I told him I felt devalued by his behavior, and that I was too old to feel that way. It has that disturbing kinship to being marked-down goods, and I'm not ready to be relegated to K-Mart yet. He replied that I had a blueprint by which I lived to which I expected others to conform. There were a lot of folks out there, he said, who weren't out to their families—guys I would never know because of the standard I imposed. I begged to differ. I could know them and like them as friends. I just couldn't date them. He reasoned that he would tell his family at the right time and that there was no reason to come out to them unless he was in a committed relationship. I felt like Cinderella flinging soggy pumpkin from my fingers.

The logic of coming out to the family when you're in a relationship—and theoretically have a reason to come out—doesn't hold. In the first place, until you're out, you treat any partner like a second-class citizen whenever the family is in the picture. Photos coming down from fridges belie any statements to the contrary. In the second place,

coming out while you're in a relationship can put so much stress on the relationship that it might well end anyway. You can rarely anticipate what the coming out experience will be like. It can be better or worse than expected. But you're putting a relationship at risk of implosion if the coming out experience goes worse and not better. You're taking a human shield before you go into battle. That ain't fair to the shield—ask any hostage. There are people like me out there who respect a certain amount of courage. I've always hoped to marry a man, not a mouse.

Perhaps I'm being too harsh, expecting others to conform to my standards. But maybe it goes deeper than that. I remember a few years ago when an Atlanta mayoral candidate addressed a gay group. At the end of the meeting, a nice-looking man in his fifties stood up and said to the candidate, "Mr. Lomax, I appreciate your coming, because it shows you think we're okay." Without skipping a beat, I stood up and said, "With all due respect to the gentleman in the rear, I've never thought I wasn't okay."

That's the point. I'm okay. My family's okay. My partner will be okay with my family. I reasonably expect him to be out to his family and for me not to be hidden from them. I'd even like to look forward to Christmases together.

Now if I can just get Mother to leave the ladder alone...

Kevin Isom is an attorney and writer in Atlanta. His columns appear in newspapers and magazines throughout the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain.

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This note from a reader is typical of many—I hate the holidays! They make me depressed and lonely because they remind me that I don't have a Norman Rockwell kind of life. And I hate the hypocrisy and the commercialism. Every year I go into credit card debt buying presents for people I hardly ever see. I don't really get along with my family, but my parents always expect me to come home. I'd like to tell them I just want to stay in town this year and be with my friends, but they make me feel guilty whenever I even suggest it.

The holiday season provides a good living for retailers and psychotherapists. Every year at this time the whole country goes on a spending spree, and millions get depressed.

Every culture has its own holidays and festivals, usually invested with spiritual and ethical meaning. They often happen around the time of the winter solstice, the darkest day of the year, when the sun is lowest in the sky. Many societies have chosen this time of the year to reaffirm their dominant hopes, beliefs, and values with celebrations and gift-giving. What does it tell us about our own spiritual and emotional condition that Christmas—the religious holiday which the majority in this country believes to be the most sacred, a day that is supposed to represent love, peace, salvation, and hope—is for so many an ordeal to survive and a time of depression and even despair?

For gays and lesbians, the holidays can be a special challenge because the emphasis on family togetherness reminds us of the painful estrangements from families that many of us have to live with.

Holiday depression isn't inevitable, and there are things we can do to make it easier for us to stay happy and relaxed during this time of the

year. Here are four ideas which I personally find helpful—

1. *Slow down.* Between Thanksgiving and January the pace of life seems to quicken for most of us. We have to throw or attend holiday bashes, shop for presents, visit friends and relatives, travel, decorate, bake, send out cards...or do we? My personal holiday survival plan for some years now has involved a deliberate strategy of slowing down. Last

take a drive in the country or some leisurely walks—whatever it is that helps you cool out. Make an effort to have “quiet times.” Get off the frantic “celebration” treadmill. Celebrate as much as you want to but not one minute more than you enjoy.

It might be helpful to use quiet and alone time to make plans and resolutions for the new year. I know that many people consider this old custom tired and meaningless, but

every year I find myself encouraging clients to do it. When it is done with care and attention, it can do much to improve the quality of life. The first step in achieving any goal is to visualize it clearly. When our goals for the next 12 months are set down in clear language, we are far more likely to achieve them. Otherwise, they remain vague dreams tucked away in our minds.

2. *Keep only those traditions which you enjoy and which are personally meaningful.* Do you enjoy buying gifts for all your friends? Then have at it. But if you don't, or if you really can't afford it, don't let a sense of obligation drive you to do it anyway. You may want to give gifts that you make yourself or bake treats you can give to people. Or you may want to make a donation to your favorite charity in the name of everyone on your list. Or you may just want to forget the whole thing. The point is to have the kind of holiday you want

to have rather than the one you are “supposed” to have.

3. *Take extra good care of your health.* It's as if December is the month when we are required by law to over-drink, overeat, under-sleep and under-exercise. We promise ourselves that we will change all of this in January. Why not get the jump on all of your friends and join that gym in early December. If December is a

month of culturally induced stress, why add to it by stressing our bodies? Make good self-care a priority.

4. *Reaffirm your own guiding values.* The holidays are often criticized as a time of complete commercialism and hypocrisy. There is no denying that there is truth in the criticism. Christmas, the primary holiday of the “religion of love,” is supposed to be about loving and sharing. All too often it is a time of mere tokenism,

“If you feel an unwanted obligation to go ‘home’ for the holidays, it might help to give some serious thought to who your family really is.”

characterized by showy acts of generosity which are forgotten or abandoned by January. And yet there is something a little too facile about this kind of criticism. First of all, what culture has ever lived up to its dominant values? And second, criticisms of the hypocrisy of “society” are a time-honored but cheap way to feel smug and morally superior without ever having to ask oneself if we are living up to the values that “society” is neglecting.

What if you were to make a decision to use this season as an opportunity to renew your own commitment to your own altruistic values? What if you were to ask yourself how and in what way you might give something of yourself to others this year? What if you made a commitment that this giving was not going to be just holiday tokenism but the beginning of something that would continue through the coming year? If we were to do this, the hypocrisy of others would probably weigh on us less. There is nothing which relieves loneliness more than service to other people.



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I have a friend who commits himself every December to do at least one act of service to others. He treats it as a game which has definite rules. Whatever he decides to do must be expensive to him in terms of time, money, or effort. The recipients must be unable to repay him in any way and, ideally, must not ever know that he is the giver. Last year he spent all his holiday gift money on teddy bears

**"Get off the frantic
'celebration' treadmill.
Celebrate as much as
you want to, but not
one minute more than
you enjoy."**

and other stuffed animals for the children at a local homeless shelter. Only the director of the shelter knew he was the gift-giver. On Christmas

Day he used his skills as a chef to help cook Christmas dinner for all the people staying there. His photo album is filled with pictures of many children hugging the stuffed animals he bought for them. He tells me that he has been doing these anonymous acts of giving for 10 years and that they have completely changed the holidays for him. Whether he is in or out of a relationship, and regardless of how much money he has to spend, he is not depressed anymore during the holidays. I have learned a lot from this man's example and hope I can emulate it.

Finally, the note from the reader brings up the whole question of going "home" for the holidays. One question to think about is, "Where is 'home' during the holidays?"

When heterosexuals marry, they go through a rite of passage which tells the people around them that they are separating from their family of origin and are to be considered as new families themselves. When straight couples marry, their new residence becomes their "home"—it's

not just their "place" or their "apartment." Unfortunately for gays and lesbians, we don't have any rites of passage recognized by the larger society which signify that we are really on our own and have new "families" to which we owe primary loyalty. We

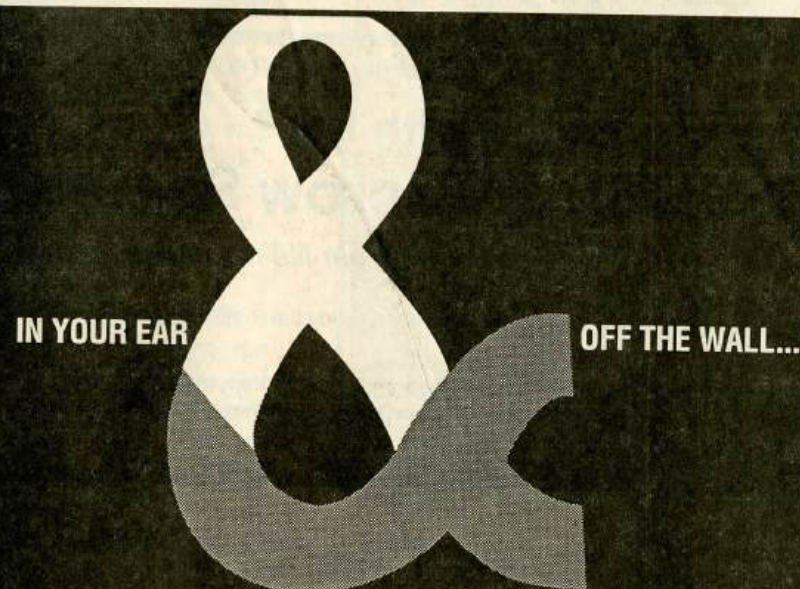
**"Have the kind of
holiday you want to
have rather than the
one you are 'supposed'
to have."**

may have lovers, but many parents seem incapable of thinking of them as anything more than "roommates." We may have close friends whom we love and cherish as our family of choice, but our parents may still think of them as "just friends." They may believe that "family comes before friends" and expect, as a matter of course, that our place during the

holidays is with them. Even parents who regard themselves as very accepting of their gay offspring's "lifestyle," all too often still think of them as adolescents who are more or less perpetually away at college. "Home" is still where the parents are.

If you feel an unwanted obligation to go "home" for the holidays, it might help to give some serious thought to who your family really is. Who are the people you love the most? On whom do you depend for emotional support in times of trouble? Consider that these people are your family, whether you are biologically related to them or not. You have the right, and some would even say the duty, to spend significant times in your life with these people. If you don't want to go "home" for the holidays, it may well be because you are already home.

Tom Moon, MFCC, is a psychotherapist in private practice in San Francisco. Call or fax him with questions or comments at 415/626-1346.



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MARIETTE HARTLEY

Deathtrap Star **Kisses** Lynn Redgrave—and Tells

by Blase DiStefano



Mariette Hartley is probably best known, regrettably, for Polaroid commercials she made with James Garner in the late '70s. The series of ads was so popular that many viewers thought the pair was married. She even had a T-shirt made—I am NOT Mrs. James Garner. Those too young to remember the commercials might recall "My Two Loves," a well-intentioned 1986 TV movie. Hartley's heterosexual character had an affair with a lesbian, played by Lynn Redgrave.

She has starred in plays, musicals, and an autobiographical one-woman show. Her time in front of the camera has included five television series, countless TV movies, and more than a dozen feature films. She has been honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Nominated for an Emmy Award six times, Hartley won Best Actress in 1979 for her role in a special two-hour "Incredible Hulk." In 1987, she spent a year hosting "The CBS Morning Program." Presently, you can catch her in the recurring role of Lea Thompson's mother on the NBC sitcom "Caroline in the City." This month, Hartley stars with Elliott Gould in "Deathtrap" at Jones Hall.

Blase DiStefano: Do people still think you're James Garner's wife?

Mariette Hartley: Now, it's done more in the past tense. "We always thought you *were* married to James Garner," and I always say, "Well, I wouldn't have him, he's got bum knees. You never marry a guy with bum knees." And that usually puts an end to the whole question.

In your 1990 book, *Breaking the Silence*, you said your grandfather "argued that institutions like the Boy Scouts and the YMCA could lead to homosexuality"... Isn't that incredible?

...and that "Girls were even more in danger because they held hands, kissed, and slept in the same bed at pajama parties." What effect did that have on your view of homosexuality when you were growing up?

I have no idea where I came from. I *do* know that none of that has ever affected me. Never, never. But my mother was deeply affected by it. One of the comments she made—this was after my father had died—we were walking across the street, and I held her hand and she said, "Don't hold my hand. People will think we're lesbians." I of course stopped holding her hand, as only a good daughter would do.

In this issue of *OutSmart*, we're focusing on non-traditional families and their holiday traditions.

Boy, am I ever an example of that. I mean, we're gonna be performing [*Deathtrap*] on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day! Talk about non-traditional.

Do you know gay people who have a difficult time adjusting to the holidays?

I don't think it has anything to do with whether you're gay or straight. The holidays are a terrible kind of social pressure. I've spent a lot of traditional Christmases and created a lot of traditional Christmases, and I *love* traditional Christmases. But I think it's true for both the gay and straight communities, that you just have to stay in the now, creating the best Christmas with what you've got.

Since you're the spokesperson for American Suicide Foundation, do you happen to know if the percent-

"I held her hand and she said, 'Don't hold my hand. People will think we're lesbians.'"

age of gay suicide is higher than others?

There's an absolutely wonderful book by a young man who is gay whose father committed suicide. It's called *Why Suicide?* He and I recently had an article in *USA Today*. I don't keep up with the actual statistics, but my hunch is that teenage suicide is often based on gender confusion and depression that's non-medicated and the inability to talk about the secrets. The crack seems to be when someone leaves them—"My girlfriend left me, so what's the point of living?" But my hunch is that it opens up another chasm of things that they had no control over and didn't know how to talk about. We are as sick as our secrets, and without making it sound too cute, the reason I'm such an advocate of mental illness and talking about suicide is that there are so many myths that have to be broken and so much education that has to be done. I believe there is absolutely no shame with these biochemically induced situations, and I believe gayness is one of those.

How long did your affair with Lynn Redgrave last?

Well, it would have gone on forever if...

But it only lasted two hours, right?

[Laughing] Well, yes, it was a two-hour movie [*My Two Loves*, 1986]. But she's a good kisser. If I was ever gonna have

an affair with a woman—I'm fairly heterosexual, and I've had plenty of chances up until now, but the choice has always been heterosexual—she would be high on the list. She's just a gem of a woman. It was a wonderful show and a very gutsy show. It was a subject nobody had touched on until then, except *That Certain Summer* [1972]. I just feel that the only way people can understand what it's like to be in somebody else's shoes is perhaps through someone they trust. And I think, at least in those days, I had—and I don't why—a sense of normalcy for people. So if I could do that, then it could happen to anybody. And I also thought it was a very interesting concept of a woman

who had been involved in a straight relationship, but in her vulnerability—it was kind of a cop-out—was pursued by this woman.

I guess that's just one of many kinds of relationships that happen. I can sure see that. In my divorce, it was just devastating, so I do understand that need to connect. But I don't know that it would have to be an apology as in the movie, but that's the way it was done, and that's OK. There were no answers. Hopefully, some people felt validated by it. I do believe in the lesbian community there was an enormous sense of relief and validation, at least from the response I got from it—and continue to get from it, by the way. We got to some level of society with it, and that's good.

Considering it was 10 years ago, it was a breakthrough.

It was astonishing. And I'm very proud of it.

Mariette Hartley stars with Elliott Gould in Ira Levin's Deathtrap, the 1978 hit Broadway play and the fourth longest-running play in Broadway history. The play runs from December 24-29 at Jones Hall. Tickets range from \$34-\$40 and are available at all Ticketmaster locations; to charge by phone, call 629-3700.

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Finding Meaning in the Holiday Season

by Colleen R. Logan

The gay search for family & renewal is a choice.

Let's face it, the holiday season can either be really, really great or absolutely horrible. There just doesn't seem to be much middle ground. I still painfully remember one particularly horrible holiday season when I didn't get a job that I wanted, "the job of a lifetime," "the only job I ever wanted," "a job that was the perfect match for my skills and training." As a result, I managed to not only ruin my holiday season but, of course, everyone else's too! Understand, that pales in comparison to those who have lost a loved one and must face the holidays alone or those who feel isolated because their families have rejected them. However, because we experienced these events during the holidays there is at least one thing we have in common. The pain is magnified. The loss of hope is extraordinary and the holidays lose their meaning.

Our expectations for the holidays are inextricably linked to our experiences as children. As a child, the holidays can be magical. It was a time filled with anticipation and hope—hoping for presents asked for and daring to hope for any number of unexpected surprises. This is not to say that every child has rosy holidays. For some of us, the holidays only served to exaggerate the dysfunction of a barely tolerable family situation. As adults, the feelings of dashed hopes, broken dreams, and bittersweet memories all tend to be elicited by the sights and sounds of the holiday season. As a result, we find ourselves trying to make up for lost time. We expend an enormous amount of time and energy forcing the holidays to be great. Maybe we choose to avoid the holidays altogether. Either way, we still end up feeling empty and miserable.

Finding meaning in all of this is a formidable task for anyone. However, if you're gay or lesbian there is an added twist. The holidays, as they exaggerate everything

*"The cultural denial
and silence about
who and what we are
is deafening at this
time of the year."*

else, also magnify our isolation. Think about it. Holidays are about family—families eating together, families exchanging gifts, posing for pictures, and sharing good cheer. That doesn't

usually include gay and lesbian sons and daughters, aunts and uncles, cousins and parents. The cultural denial and silence about who and what we are is deafening at this time of the year. Is it any wonder many feel depressed and lonely or want to run away and hide, resurfacing sometime in January?

Going home to our immediate families may not be a choice. Some of us have been rejected outright because we are gay. However, for many of us, it's more likely that if we choose to go home with our partners we'll end up participating in our family's brand of "Play House." "Let's pretend we don't know" or "let's pretend your partner doesn't exist" or even "let's pretend you're just friends." Some couples choose to avoid dealing with it altogether and just go their separate ways at the holidays. Each partner goes to his or her immediate family, and perhaps celebrates together at another time. Others try to tough it out, attempting to integrate their partnership into the family circle in whatever way they can.

Many of us form our own extended families. We gather with them to find fellowship and holiday cheer. Oftentimes, these extended families include past lovers, with whom we have maintained close friendships. This particular tradition seems to be a somewhat distinctive characteristic and represents a wonderful testimony to both our uniqueness and inclusivity. Some turn the

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tables on the norm and invite parents and siblings to our homes, on our turf. That way our own relationships are the foundation for the family gathering. Still others create their own traditions. This may include inviting friends over to decorate the tree, each one contributing an ornament. Other ideas are to open a gift-a-day or volunteer to help others. For many gays and lesbians, the holidays provide a rich opportunity for spiritual expression. We boisterously celebrate Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, Christmas, or Winter Solstice. We are particularly inspired by the glorious music which accompanies the holiday celebration.

In all the hustle and bustle of the season, it is clear that in anything we do, we're searching for meaning. Some of us are trying to recapture the feelings we had as children, and others are trying to create those feelings we had only dreamed of. Our search is made even more difficult because we are an oppressed group. How do we as gays and lesbians find meaning and purpose in a hostile world? How can we find meaning in a holiday season that does its best to ignore us? What choices can we make that will bring joy to us and our loved ones, renewing our spirits with hope for the future?

Prior to beginning our search for meaning, we have to make a few assumptions. First of all, we need to recognize that the holidays are important. This may be hard to accept, particularly for those of us who view the holidays with a cynical eye. Most of us, even if it's buried deep down inside, yearn for a truly happy and meaningful holiday season. Admit it. Why else would we spend so much time grumbling about it or trying to avoid it? The second assumption is that the holidays are about family. This notion is certainly paradoxical and a source of great stress for many gays and lesbians. We struggle to define and manage relationships with our immediate families and work toward forming our own families with our partners and friends. The third assumption is

that the holidays are a time for renewal, a time to fill our cups and prepare for the coming new year.

As this holiday season rapidly approaches, we have another opportunity to search within ourselves and identify what the holidays mean to each one of us. If this search seems fruitless or comes up empty, challenge yourself to ask why. Is it because you're reluctantly leaving your partner yet another time to meet the obligatory task of going home? Is it because you're anticipating the whirlwind of decorating the house, knowing full well that the glitz is skin deep and emptiness lurks just below the surface? Is it because you'll end up buying numerous expensive gifts and yet still feel miserable and isolated? Take heart, this is the year to make a difference. Make a choice to find meaning this holiday season.

One way to find meaning this holiday season is to be true to ourselves as gays and lesbians. Be who you are, with pride. That does wonders for finding purpose and meaning in life, for bolstering self-esteem and self-worth. Choose to do something that is meaningful to you. Create a new tradition, one that lifts your spirits and fills your soul. Spend quality time with your partner. Renew the bonds that brought you together and truly celebrate the love you have for one another. Spend time with friends and loved ones. Soak up each other's fellowship and good cheer. As a single person, take this opportunity to form new friendships and strengthen ones that already exist. Risk being "part of" the holiday festivities rather than choosing to escape and isolate yourself. Take time to serve others who are less fortunate. All of us can find meaning this season. It is our choice and it is our right.

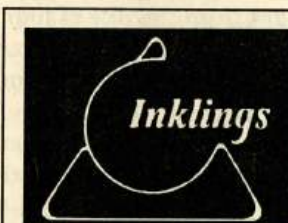
Colleen R. Logan, Ph.D., LPC, is a visiting assistant professor at the University of Houston-Victoria. She teaches graduate counseling at the UH-System in Fort Bend County. She is also in private practice.

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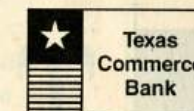
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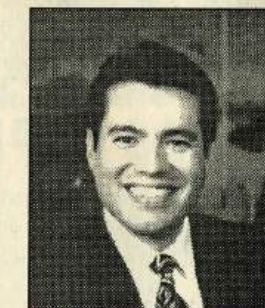
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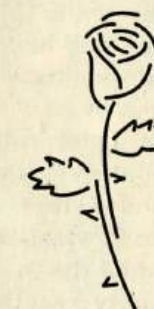
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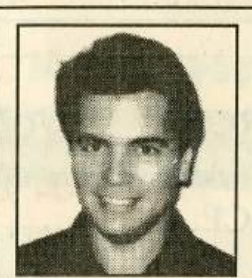
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Queer Science

Pioneering Psychiatrist Seeks Role of Genetics in Orientation

by Simon LeVay

Tall in stature, gracious in manner, the 60-something psychiatrist strolls among Boston's medical Brahmins at a private showing of the art of Winslow Homer. The paintings bring to life another age's ideal of masculinity—outdoorsy, extroverted, straightforward. Richard Pillard personifies our own—urban, complex, searching, but still fulfilled by action and achievement.

I'm pleased to be spending an evening with the Boston University professor, who I have only met briefly before. Although he is not especially well-known to gays and lesbians outside of the Boston area, Pillard has been making important contributions to our community for many years. In 1971 he co-founded Boston's Homophile Community Health Service, one of the first gay-run counseling services in the United States. In the following year he came out in the press. It was the first unequivocal coming-out by an American psychiatrist. Later in 1972, Pillard drafted a resolution for the Northern New England District Branch of the American Psychiatric Association. It argued for the deletion of homosexuality from the APA's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. The

resolution was adopted. Eventually, spurred on by a number of gay-friendly psychiatrists and a platoon of feisty gay activists, the resolution became the basis of the APA's famous 1973 vote—the vote that liberated queer Americans from the tyranny of psychiatric diagnosis.

Over a Chinese dinner after the show, Pillard tells me and a couple of gay Boston University medical students a little about his personal life. Unlike some of us gay men, Pillard doesn't recall lusting after male movie stars from the age of four. In fact, he was in a happy and sexually fulfilling heterosexual marriage until he was 33. During this time he fathered three daughters. Even after he separated, he had several other girlfriends. But one night in 1967, driving home in his Porsche, he picked up a male music student—and that was all she wrote. Pillard is now in a happy, six-year relationship with a much younger man.

Although a late bloomer in gay terms, Pillard seems to have been well-endowed with gay genes. His father was probably gay, judging from diaries that Pillard read after his death. So too are his brother and sister. One of his daughters is bisexual. She is now married to a man and expecting a baby. It's perhaps not



Simon LeVay, Ph.D.

surprising, then, that Pillard should have embarked on a lengthy study of a possible genetic influence on sexual orientation.

During the '80s he collaborated with James Weinrich on a study which established that both male and female homosexuality clusters in certain families. If one person in a sibship is gay, the chances of finding others is increased by fivefold or more.

Pillard knew that this kind of clustering doesn't by itself distinguish between nature and nurture. He therefore embarked, with Michael Bailey and others, on a study of twins. The results were striking. About half of the genetically identical co-twins of gay men and women are themselves gay. Only about a quarter or less of the non-identical co-twins are gay. These

"About half of the genetically identical co-twins of gay men and women are themselves gay."

findings suggest that the family clustering of homosexuality is caused, at least in substantial part, by genes predisposing to homosexuality, rather than by the common environment that siblings experience. Equally, however, the twin findings indicate that gay genes are not the only cause of queerness. If they were, all the identical co-twins of gay people would be gay.

Pillard is now engaged on a collaborative attempt to replicate and perhaps extend the 1993 study by Dean Hamer's group at the National Cancer Institute. Hamer reported that a particular region near one end of the X chromosome carries a gene influencing sexual orientation.

Since Pillard was so involved in the deletion of homosexuality from the DSM, I asked him whether he thought the diagnosis "gender identity disorder of childhood" should

also be deleted. The term is the medical moniker for gender-bendingly queer kids. "I think it's a cultural diagnosis," he said. "If these same kids grew up in a culture that had a place for them, they would not be in conflict or distress, and no diagnosis would be relevant."

"That said, these children are still suffering and can benefit from sensitive treatment. And having a diagnosis," he added with a smile, "allows the psychiatrist to get paid."

Back in L.A., I e-mailed Pillard with some follow-up questions. He summarized his answers with the following: "I'm triply lucky—being gay, being a father, and being a member of this noble profession."

Simon LeVay, Ph.D., is well-known for his research on the "gay brain." He is the author of Queer Science (MIT Press, 1996) and the co-author of City of Friends. He is also the co-founder of the Institute of Gay and Lesbian Education in West Hollywood. He can be reached in care of OutSmart or at SLeVay@aol.com.

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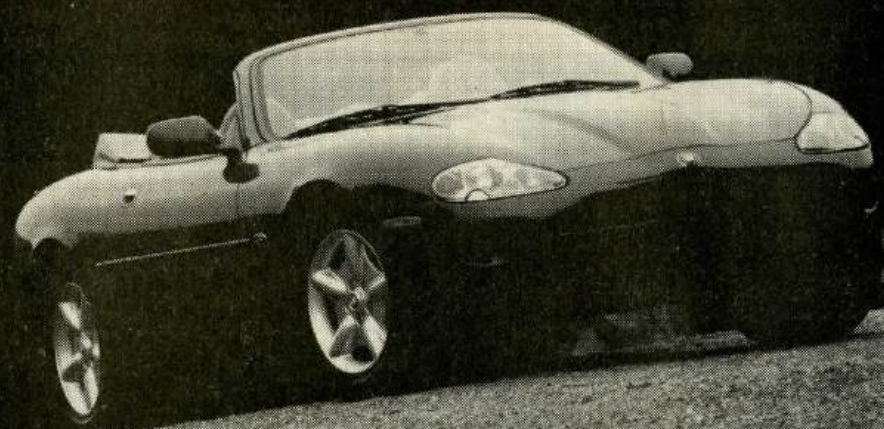
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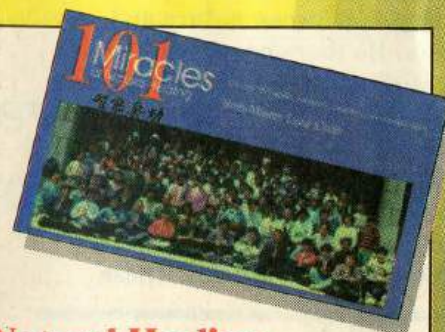
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Dysfunctional

Rob Nash Comes Home to Houston for the Holidays

by Alan Davidson

12 Steps to a More Dysfunctional Christmas Returns

Rob Nash as Mildred, the grandmother in *12 Steps to a More Dysfunctional Christmas*, at Stages Theatre, November 29-December 31.

Native Houstonian Rob Nash now calls Los Angeles home. In addition to writing for *Genre*, a national magazine for gay men, Nash is known nationally as a talented playwright, actor, and stand-up comedian. He frequently returns to Texas to perform his three one-man plays which center around a fictional Houston family. The original *12 Steps to a More Dysfunctional You* introduced audiences to the likes of Mildred, the matriarch of the family; Fred, her HIV-positive gay son; Margo, her Northern daughter-in-law;

Windsong, the 12-steppin' new-age lesbian child of the goddess; and Matt and Ashley, Margo's equally disturbed children.

This holiday, Nash returns to Houston with *12 Steps to a More Dysfunctional Christmas* which chronicles the twisted holiday antics of the Smith family.

Alan Davidson: How much in the 12-Step plays are autobiographical?

Rob Nash: I'm a writer. I make things up. I use things I hear and people I meet and experiences I've experienced as jumping-off points to write fiction. My favorite grandmother is a lot like

Mildred. I'm not HIV positive, but a lot of my opinions and politics come out of Fred. My best friend Robert in high school inspired Matt. Robert was so cool because he was so fucking angry all the time, and I wish I could be that angry. My sister, Nicole, talks like Ashley even though she's 31. When I was compulsively recovering from everything back in my 12-stepper days, I was a lot like Windsong.

Do California audiences get the Texas humor?

Not much of it. They don't get that Houston is hot and full of mosquitoes, but they get the big-hair Republican jokes.



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What techniques have you found that help you as a committed writer?

Deadlines. Nothing forces the work out of me like knowing I've committed to produce it by a certain date.

But for the fledgling writer who doesn't have deadlines...

The fledgling could join or create a group of writers who prepare and present quick assignments like scenes or short stories or—God forbid—poems. They meet regularly and present what they're working on to each other and, *voilà*, a deadline. Also, there's the sacred "writing time" ploy—I have to write an hour a day or I have to sit in front of the computer from 1 to 3 tomorrow. Make it a part of the daily and weekly routine.

Any tips for using one's own life experiences in weaving fiction?

Yes. You could tell it as it happened, but don't make yourself the victim, the martyr, or the hero. Your audience will always see through that because you aren't being very honest with yourself. Everyone is the fool, the victim, the hero, the martyr, the clown. Give your characters a good combination of the above. And get some perspective on your own experiences. I think my own life needs some augmenting to be worthy of the stage, because I'm a spoiled white boy. Who wants another spoiled-white-boy story? There are a lot of autobiographical writers out there who have no idea how boring their lives are to the rest of us. Be humble enough to know if your story is interesting enough for others to hear.

How can we really do that when so many mediocre pop personalities generate boring autobiographies?

We can refuse to buy the boring autobiographies, and we can refuse to sell out to the image makers who study "what the public wants" and then sell us back what market studies say we want. A good case in point is all the goddamn fags and dykes who run Hollywood and don't give us back who we are. Only straight actors can play the few measly gay roles that are finally coming out of Hollywood. When Jaffe Cohen went on *Comic Strip Live* and when Lea DeLaria went on *Arsenio Hall*, they proved that America was ready to see out-gay-comedy. Who knows how long ago America was ready. We'll never know, because Hollywood sat on its closeted homosexual ass and didn't do the right thing. And it continues to sit on its fat, closeted homosexual ass. "Oh, Ellen can't come out! Ellen can't come out!" Bullshit. The lesbian wedding on *Friends* and the lesbian kiss on *Roseanne* sent ratings through the roof. *The Birdcage*, that pathetic remake of the brilliant original, *La Cage Aux Folles*, raked in the money. Queer and queer-friendly America wants to see queers in movies, TV, and theater. The curious homophobes who watch anyway are getting much-needed exposure.

How does a man with your point of view live in Los Angeles?

Two words: CREDIT CARDS.

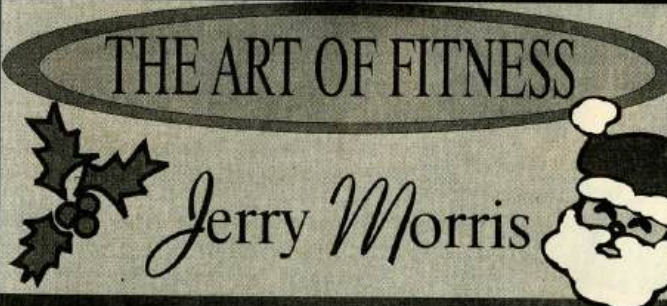
L.A. seems to be a rather superficial environment for someone with your concerns.

There are superficial people everywhere. There are deep, cool people everywhere. I've turned L.A. into a challenge. I'm going to figure out how this fucking town works, girlfriend, and when I do I'm going to work her like the whorebitch she is.

For those who have seen *Dysfunctional Christmas* before, are there any new twists?

Yes, I just got off the phone with the evil new artistic director of Stages, Rob Bundy, who wants new scenes in *Christmas*. He already got me to rewrite one scene because he is evil and bad. I cursed his name and swore he would never get such a commitment out of me again. Well, that bastard wants new scenes and *new characters* out of me. Evil, Evil, Evil man. So, young writers, another way to get work out of yourself is to have an evil satanic artistic director ask for you to push yourself to improve and expand what you have. At this point, as far as *Christmas* is concerned, the rewrites haven't been finished. And you might perhaps be seeing characters only spoken of in the other plays: characters like Bill, the father, or Harvey, the grandfather, and Moonbird, Windsong's lesbian partner. Who knows? As long as the Evil Rob Bundy keeps manipulating me into improving *Christmas*, any gay-damn thing can happen.

12 Steps to a More Dysfunctional Christmas plays from November 29-December 31, Wed.-Sun., 8 p.m., & 5:30 p.m. Sundays. Call 713/52-STAGE for tickets.



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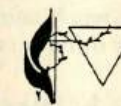
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Royston Langdon

(with the glam-rock band Spacehog)

(Out, 11/96, James Patrick Herman)

"I'm reasonably straight, but I've had plenty of experiences with homosexuality and stuff. I don't think any of us [in the band Spacehog] are unfamiliar with the 'homosexual experience'—we just don't work that bisexual thing."

Eric Dover

(with the glam-rock band Imperial Drag)

(Out, 11/96, James Patrick Herman)

Eric Dover, married lead singer and guitarist with the band Imperial Drag, "brags, 'I've spent all of my life in drag.' And in a straight, less pretty Boy George-ish kind of way, he is a drag queen. Fittingly, then, Imperial Drag's first single . . . is called 'Boy or a Girl,' and it contains the line 'I feel straight, but I'm not so sure.'"

"A lot of people tell us that 'Boy or a Girl' is very homoerotic," Dover brags. "We thought glam rock was the perfect vehicle for a song about sexual paranoia and gender-bending and everything gorgeous. It's sexually based music, which is great for an era when people are afraid of their own sexuality. Now is the time to put blush on your face and keep people wondering."

Vinnie Dombroski

(with the glam-rock band Sponge)

(Out, 11/96, James Patrick Herman)

"... [Vinnie] Dombroski is straight and wants it known that 'it takes a real man to wear a dress, as they say' [Dombroski's wardrobe contains pieces of actual women's clothing], though he claims that 'being a man has nothing to do with that fleshy dolly between your legs.'"

George Michael

(singer/songwriter)

(The Big Issue via The Houston Chronicle, 11/11/96)

"I've wondered what my sexuality might be but I've never wondered whether it was acceptable or not." . . . [George] Michael, a heartthrob for women and also an icon in the gay community, insisted that he would never publicly clarify his sexuality. "Anyway, who really cares whether I'm gay or straight? . . . If every gay pop star and actor in the world came out it wouldn't make any difference to the gay community."

Herb Ritts

(photographer)

(The Advocate, 11/12/96, Charles Isherwood)

"... Ritts came to see the importance of revealing he is gay [on the 1993 NBC special, The Gay '90s] when he began to receive letters from kids who'd seen the NBC program. 'I got a lot of letters from 15-year-old kids who were from the Midwest, saying, 'It's so great you did that. I was lost. I wanted to kill myself.' These were things I never had to go through. It's not that I'm naive, but when it's not in your realm and you suddenly get one of these letters, you realize how important it is that there be encouragement for gay people. I don't really consider myself a role model, but just being comfortable with what you do and what you are can be useful. A lot of young people need to see people that way. It makes it better for them.'"

Matthew Perry

(actor on sitcom Friends)

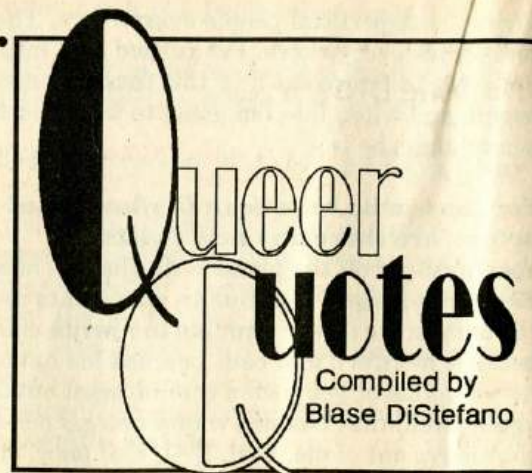
(The Advocate, 11/26/96, J.V. Auley)

"... David Crane, [Friends'] out cocreator and one of its executive producers, denies that Chandler [Matthew Perry's character] is gay. 'He's straight,' says Crane. 'He's not gay and in denial. His father may be gay, but he's not.'"

"... 'We didn't go into this determined that Chandler would be straight,' he says. 'If we had cast a different actor—who was gay—there was the option that we would have taken the character in that direction.'"

"It's a holdover from the self-hatred period," says Emmy award-winning TV writer Bruce Vilanch. "We have this need to make someone who is attractive gay, because then it makes it OK for us to be gay."

"Former KNBC-TV Los Angeles entertainment reporter Garrett Glaser agrees with Vilanch. 'It's wishful thinking,' Glaser says. 'I can't tell you how many people have said to me, 'Tom Cruise is gay,' or 'Richard Gere is gay.' These guys are really open about gay stuff, they have lots of gay friends, and because they're good-looking and sympathetic, they get labeled as gay. It kind of bothers me. Why shouldn't we give these straight guys a little space?'"

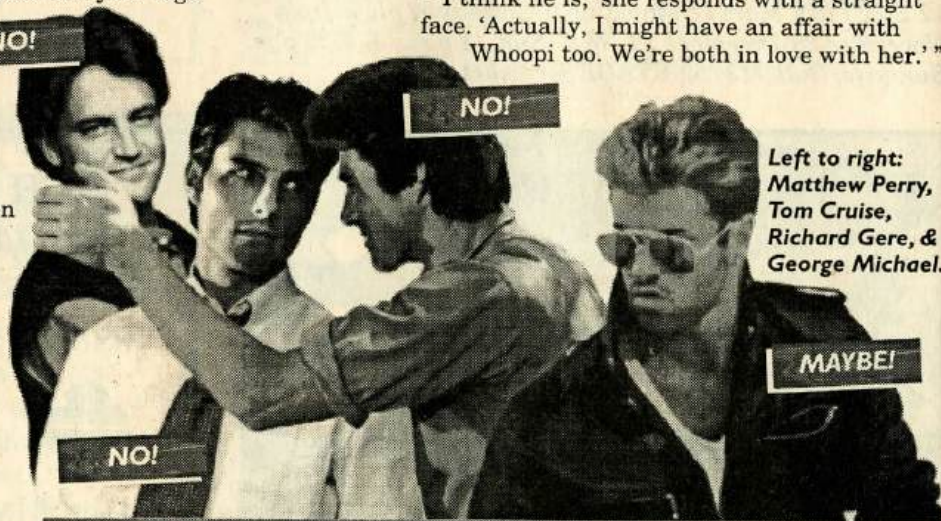


Diane Sawyer

(TV journalist)

(Entertainment Weekly, 11/8/96, Jess Cagle)

Diane Sawyer says that her husband, director Mike Nichols is spending the day with Whoopi Goldberg, rehearsing for a benefit performance of the one-woman show Nichols mounted on Broadway in 1984. After hearing from her friends that Sawyer has a sharp sense of humor, the impertinent reporter tests it by asking whether her husband and Goldberg might be having an affair. "I think he is," she responds with a straight face. "Actually, I might have an affair with Whoopi too. We're both in love with her."



Left to right: Matthew Perry, Tom Cruise, Richard Gere, & George Michael.

Rita Mae Brown

(author)

(The Advocate, 11/12/96)

"... Why isn't it addiction when a congressman is loaded on prescription drugs? We know they're not on cocaine, or they'd stay awake when Congress was in session. . . ."

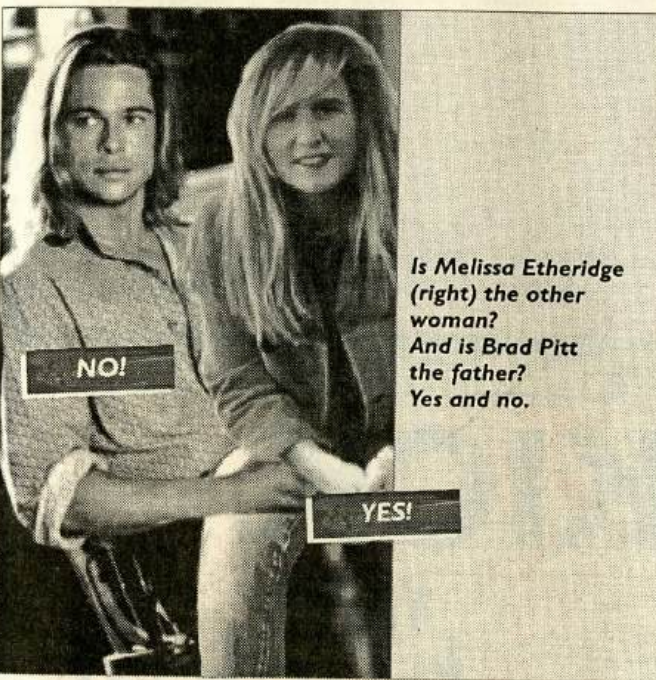
Joan Rivers

(comic)

(Art and Understanding, 10/96, Glenn Gaylord)

Glenn Gaylord: Is it refreshing to just talk about AIDS for an interview?

Joan Rivers: No, it's terribly upsetting and very aggravating, because you figure if you can get to the moon, if you can find out that there is life on Mars. . . If you took all that money and put it into research, we would have a cure for AIDS. . . It's just so insane. I think that priorities are so whacked out. It makes me very sad that we're sitting here talking 12 years later. . . even though I am only six years older! . . .



Is Melissa Etheridge (right) the other woman? And is Brad Pitt the father? Yes and no.

Melissa Etheridge

(singer/songwriter)

(Newsweek, 11/4/96, Mark Miller)

Mark Miller: You've said you don't want to talk about how you conceived, but the father is rumored to be Brad Pitt. Any truth to that? [Both laugh uproariously.]

Melissa Etheridge: We called him up and said, "Congratulations, Brad, you're a daddy!" All you can do is just laugh about it. But it is absolutely not Brad. . . .

Miller: Some people will ask, "What about the father's role?" Isn't that an important part of raising a child?

Julie Cypher: We will have male figures. And they will have two round-the-clock coparents. What else could they need?

Etheridge: They will not live in a . . .

Cypher: [laughing]. . . girl vacuum?

Etheridge: That's not our life.

Cypher: Besides, we have Daddy, I mean Brad Pitt, around!

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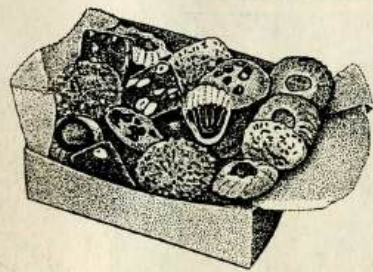
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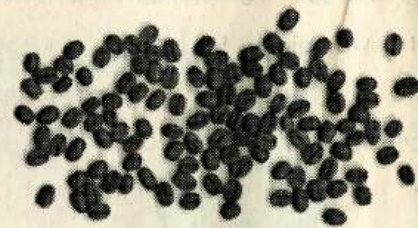


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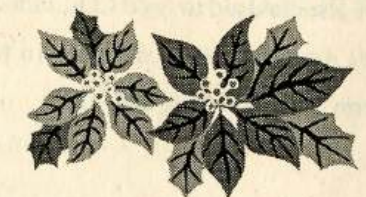
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Want to get out of the house? Why not ski the Rockies, sip champagne in Paris, snag a tan in Aruba, or head down under for Mardi Gras? If that's your idea of a Christmas gift, call **UNIGLOBE First Choice Travel**. You can even plan the trip and slip the plane tickets in your honey's stocking for a December 25th surprise. This is another one of those gifts that fits all. Call 713/667-0580 or 800/856-1835 or stop by 2236 W. Holcombe Blvd.



GIFTS FIT FOR A MAGI



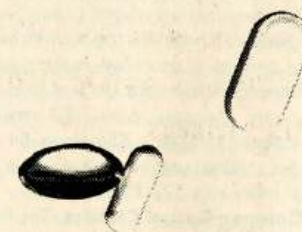
It's a Wonderful Life! Is someone on your list just this side of a celebrity stalker? Give them a pic of their favorite celeb from **Hollywood Frame Gallery Custom Framing** at 2431 Bissonnet. They've got movie art, celebrity autographs, you name it. (Sorry, no Polaroids of Lourdes yet.) Come in before December 22 and get \$25 off any purchase of \$100 or more. Call 713/942-8885.



Have a child prodigy? Got a niece or nephew who's Mensa material? Be a smart Santa and give something from **The Teacher's Store**, 1001 S. Allen Genoa. The Teacher's Store offers quality gifts for the "educated" consumer—toys that teach. Right now, get one wooden puzzle for only \$10.95 and get a second one free! And all GeoSafari products are 10% off. Call 713/944-2306.



If you're tired of not being able to get in touch with someone, here's the perfect gift for you both. **Premier Paging**, 12220 Murphy Rd., has a full line of affordable pagers, accessories, and cellular phones. That way, love's only a phone call away. Mention **OutSmart** and receive free delivery and a free gift with every purchase. Call 281/575-8500.



In the true spirit of Christmas, **Prince Street Market's Buyer's Club** was formed to make available vitamin, herbs, and health products at low cost to those with HIV/AIDS and other life-threatening illnesses. Share in the spirit of the season. Purchase gift certificates in any denomination starting at \$10 by calling 713/880-2338.



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If you're looking for a special gift for that "Angel" in your life or let's say you'd love to tell a certain "Grinch" to hit the road...then call Skip Willett with **West Point Lincoln Mercury, Buick, KIA!** Skip can help you find a shiny new car for that special "Angel" or a pre-owned vehicle for as little as \$3,000; so there's no chance that the "Grinch" will steal your Christmas as you send them down the road on their Merry—or is that Mary—little way...Ho Ho Ho! Katy Freeway at the Kirkwood exit; 713/529-2611.

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Calendar of Events

Nov./Dec.

Through Dec. 13 The Red Ribbon Toy Drive serves children from all ages up to 15 who are infected or affected with HIV/AIDS. Most of AIDS Foundation Houston's (AFH) clients live on a fixed income, and AFH would like to help them provide gifts for their children. In order for AFH to coordinate and distribute donations, they ask that they be delivered *unwrapped* to AFH @ 3202 Wesleyan by 5 pm, Friday, Dec. 13. Anyone providing AFH with their name & address will receive a written acknowledgment of their donation. DiverseWorks will be hosting performances by the Express Theater of *The Yellow Boat*, where there will be a container for toys. DiverseWorks is located at 1117 E. Freeway (for directions, call 223-8346; for tickets, call 759-1314). For information on wish lists or other info, call AFH's event line @ 629-9255, or if you are interested in volunteering for this event, call Kristi Conway @ 623-6796.

Through Dec. 31 *Titanica*. On the evening of April 14-15, 1912, the *Titanic* rammed a massive ice-

berg & began taking in water. Too few lifeboats for the thousands of passengers resulted in the world's greatest maritime disaster. Only some 800 people were spared from the freezing waters. Human remains of the passengers who perished have long since vanished, but ample evidence of their terror & confusion lay scattered across the deck of the giant passenger liner, frozen in time. *Titanica* was filmed during an expedition in 1991. The *Titanic* now lies 12,500 feet deep in two sections. Ironically, IMAX audiences will get a better view of the ship than the crews in the submersibles who peered through their tiny portholes. *Titanica* incorporates historical footage & introduces audiences to one of the survivors and her childhood memories of that perilous night and escape from the ship. Wortham IMAX Theatre, Hermann Park across from Miller Outdoor Theatre. For more info: 639-IMAX.

Through Jan. 5 *Miracle on Main Street*. Houston's only outdoor ice-skating rink! *Sun.-Thurs.*: 11 am-11 pm; *Fridays*: 11 am-12 am; *Saturdays*: 10 am-12 am; *Weekdays* \$5, weekends \$6, skate rental \$2. Downtown Houston, 1000 block of Main St. @ Lamar. For more info: 654-8900.

Hair for the Holidays

• The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical •

The curly, fuzzy, snaggy, shaggy, ratty, matty, shining, gleaming, streaming, knotted, twisted, beaded, braided, powdered, flowered, bangled, tangled, and spangled phenomenon called *Hair* is being revived this holiday season. With its first rock hymn, *Hair* begins with the hope that mankind is moving into the Age of Aquarius—"when peace will guide the planets, and love will steer the stars." The 31-song score moves on to such now-famed favorites as "Let the Sunshine In," "Easy to Be Hard," "Hair," and "Good Morning Starshine." Mark Wilson—a native of Silsbee, Texas, who directed several musicals there before moving to New York 13 years ago—will stage this back-to-the-roots production, featuring a

new song, "Hippie Life," written by original lyricist James Rado and composer Galt MacDermot. In Wilson's vision, "A drafted teenage boy makes the decision of his life (or death) amidst burning in-



cense blacklights, screaming guitars, bongos, Buddha, Jesus, Hare Krishnas, acid, pot, rock and roll, lava lamps, flowers, parents, cops, and candles in a ritualistic celebration bursting with great music, drugs, breasts, balls, and heart." *Hair* will run December 19-31 for seven performances only at Cullen Per-

formance Hall on the University of Houston campus, Entrance 1. Tickets range from \$13.69-\$35 (\$10 extra on New Year's Eve) and are available by calling 521-RADO(7236) or through Ticketmaster @ 629-3700.

December

1 Tree of Remembrance. Co-sponsored by Body Positive and The Houston NAMES Project in conjunction with the City of Houston, this event is held yearly and is described as "the Houston HIV Community's annual celebration of those we love." The lighting and decorating of the tree has become a source of comfort, healing, and closure for many whose close involvement with AIDS has included so many painful moments. This "Night of Music Celebrating Life" will include seasonal music, the reading of names, and the hanging of tree ornaments honoring loved ones. Bring your plastic or paper ornament with you the night of the event and register your loved one's name with one of the volunteers. This year's ceremony will be held on World AIDS Day, 6:30 pm @ the Metropolitan Multi-Service Center on West Gray. Parking has been arranged at the First Interstate Bank parking garage @ Waugh & West Gray and in the front & back of the center.

1 & 5 Festivals of Light: Santa Lucia. Honor Santa Lucia, Sweden's symbol of light. During Sweden's dark winter days, Lucia brightens the sky with her shining crown of candles. Visitors will make traditional Swedish ornaments & learn the story of Santa Lucia. *Sunday*: 1-2 pm; *Thursday*: 6:30-7:30 pm @ the Children's Museum, 1500 Binz. \$5/person, \$4 seniors 65 yrs. & older, children under two & museum members free. For more info: 522-1138.

3 Compaq Casual Classics. The first concert in a new series, the Houston Symphony Compaq Casual Classics debut with music director Christoph Eschenbach performing & conducting Beethoven's First Piano Concerto. Ravel's *Boléro*, unique in its infectious rhythms, delightfully showcases the orchestra. These 80-minute concerts are hosted by Houston Symphony conductor-in-residence Stephen Stein. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana, 227-ARTS.

6 Girls With Guitars CD Release Party. Come celebrate the release of *This Is the Life*, Girls With Guitars' debut recording. Girls With Guitars performs from 9-10:30 pm, and the party continues with music by Lesli Wood. Party till midnight @ Ovations, 2536 Times Blvd. Cover charge \$5. For more info: Denise Horowitz @ 728-4802.

6 Mary Hall is a guitarist and vocalist whose original music blends masterful new age acoustical 6- & 12-string guitar with powerful, soul-searching lyrics & guitar synthesizer to create a unique style and story all her own. She will sprinkle her set with some Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, Kenny Loggins, and others. 9 pm at Ms. B's, 9200 Buffalo Speedway (The Ranch). For info: 388-2656.

6 Pharoah Sanders Ensemble: *Message From Home*. Ferrell (Pharoah) Sanders is a musician whose deeply passionate playing is always scrupulously disciplined and whose creativity encompasses a wide range of musical expression. For this per-

formance, the saxophonist shatters the walls between African musical worlds and jazz as he did in his newly released album, *Message From Home*. 8 pm @ Cullen Theater, Wortham Theater Center. For more info, call Da Camera Music Center @ 524-5050.

6-8 The Gay and Lesbian Switchboard of Houston (GLSH) will be conducting training for phone staff volunteers Friday-Sunday. GLSH is staffed entirely by volunteers and is nearing its 15th year of serving the community. To volunteer or for more information: 529-3211, or to leave message: 529-9615.

6, 8 I Can't Sleep (J'ai Pas Sommeil). In the mid-1980s, Thierry Paulin, along with his lover, murdered more than 20 elderly Parisian women. This 1993 film is inspired by that true crime. It is a densely textured contemplation of intersecting lives: Daiga, an aspiring Lithuanian actress; Théo, a quiet Antillian musician and carpenter who longs to return with his child to his native land; and Théo's brother, Camille, an eerily beautiful transvestite who haunts the nights of Paris. The director, Claire Denis, gradually reveals the underlying connections between this particular group of disconnected Parisians. *Friday* @ 9:45 pm, *Sunday* @ 6 pm at the Museum of Fine Arts' Brown Auditorium, 1001 Bissonnet, 639-7515.

7 Drop In, Switch On. The Houston Women's Caucus for Art's (HWCA) annual fundraiser and party includes a silent auction of switchplates, mirrors, & lamps decorated by artist/members; a jazz trio; refreshments; & a raffle drawing. \$5 admission (refreshments provided free, cash bar available). 6-9 pm @ The Firehouse Gallery, 1413 Westheimer (on the curve). For more info: 520-7840.

7, 8 Festivals of Light: Chanukah. Celebrate this Jewish holiday & learn about the eight days of candle lighting. Visitors will build their own menorahs to celebrate Chanukah. *Saturday*: 11 am-12 pm & 1-2 pm; *Sunday*: 1-2 pm @ the Children's Museum, 1500 Binz. \$5/person, \$4 seniors 65 yrs. & older, children under two & museum members free. Info: 522-1138.

7, 8, 9 African-American pianist Terrence Wilson, who has already established a reputation as one of today's most gifted young instrumentalists, makes his debut with the Houston Symphony performing a lush piano work from the Romantic repertoire. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana, 227-ARTS.

8 PFLAG Houston's "Holiday Housewarming Party." PFLAG Houston is moving. Plan on joining them for this exciting time of friends, family, food, & fun! The new facility will provide PFLAG with more space for monthly meetings as well as a more central location that is easily accessible & served by public transportation. The party will be catered, & res-



Girls With Guitars invite you to their party celebrating the release of their new CD. 9 p.m.-midnight, Dec. 6 @ Ovations.

Lifetime Television Recognizes "World AIDS Day"

• Movies Reflect Families' Struggles •

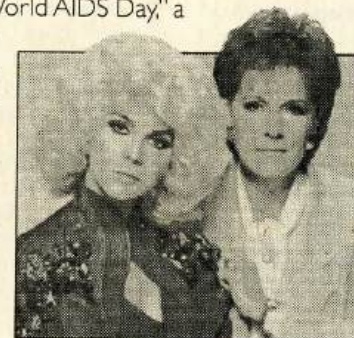
In 1988, the United Nations' World Health Organization declared December 1 to be "World AIDS Day," a

day that would draw global attention to this disease. Despite recent promising medical news, the need for a "World AIDS Day" in 1996 is unfortunately still here. Lifetime Television commemorates the war against AIDS on Sunday, Dec. 1, with three films that portray the struggles that PWAs and their families must endure.

And Then There Was One, 11:00 a.m.

This Lifetime Original Movie is the true story of two happily married writers who, after several years of fertility treatments, finally fulfill their dream to have a baby. The dream turns into a nightmare, however, when the whole family is diagnosed with AIDS, which they battle together. Amy Madigan won a Cable ACE "Best Actress

in a Movie/Miniseries" Award for her performance. Dennis Boutsikaris co-stars.



Ann-Margret and Julie Andrews play mothers of gay lovers in *Our Sons*. Hugh Grant plays one of the sons.

Something to Live For: The Allison Gertz Story, 1:00 p.m.

Molly Ringwald stars as Allison Gertz, the true story of a young woman who contracted AIDS from a single one-night stand. Her life and those of her friends and family are dramatically changed as she fights the disease and the

prejudices and misconceptions that often accompany it. Martin Landau co-stars.

Our Sons, 3:00 p.m.

Film and stage legends Julie Andrews and Ann-Margret star as two very different women who develop a special bond as they struggle to accept their sons' romantic relationship and the fact that one son has acquired AIDS. Hugh Grant co-stars as one of the sons.

ervations are required. The party will be held @ 3 pm @ their new location: Christ Church Cathedral, 1117 Texas Ave. Reservations are \$10 per person and can be made by calling Susan Upchurch @ 995-9777 or via e-mail at susanup44@aol.com.

8 A Christmas Songfest is an evening of caroling & festivities benefiting The Assistance Fund & Omega House. Basically a sing-along of Christmas music—some sung with reverence, some strictly tongue-in-cheek—the audience as well as professional entertainers are fully involved in the singing in a relaxed party atmosphere. Jerry Atwood, who started this tradition in his home, accompanies with his synthesizer "orchestra." Channel 51's Dayna Steele, Channel 11 weatherman Dan Meador, and KRBE morning show host Maria Todd will keep things hopping as emcees. \$45 ticket (reserved tables for 10 start at \$500) includes open bar, buffet dinner, & silent auction. 6:00 pm @ the Edwin Hornberger Conference Center, 2151 W. Holcombe. Info: Ed Inderwish @ 683-0485.

12, 14, 15 Festivals of Light: Las Posadas. Families that celebrate this holiday put candles in paper bags to line the streets & light up the night. Come celebrate by making a luminaria to light up your path & also make a tin ornament. *Thursday*: 6:30-7:30 pm; *Saturday*: 11 am-12 pm & 1-2 pm; *Sunday*: 1-2 pm @ the Children's Museum, 1500 Binz. \$5/person, \$4 seniors 65 yrs. & older, children under two & museum members free. For more info: 522-1138.

14, 15 The Gay Men's Chorus of Houston will present "Simple Gifts," a program of holiday music, at the First Unitarian Universalist Church, 5200 Fannin @ Southmore. *Saturday* @ 7 pm, *Sunday* @ 2:30 pm. Tickets \$10. Call 521-SING.

19, 21, 22 Festivals of Light: Christmas. Carols, colorful lights, & beautiful stained-glass windows. Visitors will capture the essence of light through creative stained-glass windows. *Thursday*: 6:30-7:30 pm; *Saturday*: 11 am-12 pm & 1-2 pm; *Sunday*: 1-2 pm @ the Children's Museum, 1500 Binz. \$5/person, \$4 seniors 65 yrs. & older, children under 2 & museum members free. Info: 522-1138.

26, 28 Festivals of Light: Kwanzaa. During Kwanzaa's 7 nights of candle lighting, families pay tribute to African-American traditions. Visitors will learn about the 7 principles of Kwanzaa thru crafts/storytelling. *Thursday*: 6:30-7:30 pm; *Saturday*: 11 am-12 pm & 1-2 pm; *Sunday*: 1-2 pm @ the Children's Museum, 1500 Binz. \$5/person, \$4 seniors 65 yrs. & older, children under 2 & museum members free. Info: 522-1138.

31 Celebrate '97 Hollywood Style! Fourth Annual Community New Year's Eve Party (presented by Bering Community Service Foundation & Bayou City Boys Club, Inc.) benefits Bering Community Service Foundation. \$80 ticket includes dancing, open bar, hors d'oeuvres, & midnight breakfast buffet. 9 pm @ The Wyndham Warwick Hotel. Valet parking available. For tickets or more info: 524-9304.

Theater

• **Annie.** "Leapin' Lizards!" You'll see it at Theatre Under The Stars before it heads for Broadway! TUTS mounts the 20th anniversary revival of *Annie*, a fresh, new production of Broadway's 1977 "Best Musical" Tony Award winner. Nov. 29-Dec. 15 @ The Music Hall. For info: 622-8887.

• **Bah, Humbug!** is an irreverent look at holiday traditions with some beautiful traditional carols included. Dec. 13-28 @ the Country Playhouse, 12802 Queensbury (sth. of Town and Country Mall). Info: 467-4497.

• **A Chorus Line.** the second longest-running musical in the history of Broadway, won the Pulitzer Prize for drama and New York Drama Critics Award for best musical. Through Dec. 7 @ the Country Playhouse, 12802 Queensbury (south of Town and Country Mall). For info: 467-4497.

• **A Christmas Cactus** is a "Scrooge-like" detective comedy by Eliot Byrrum. Through Dec. 13 @ Theatre Suburbia, 1410 West 43rd @ Oak Forest, 682-3525.

• **A Christmas Carol** is the story of the miserly old Scrooge who discovers the true meaning of Christmas. Thru Dec. 29 @ the Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave., 228-8421.

• **Christmas Party of One.** Three astrologers go in search of the true King, two women set up a "Picture Yourself With Jesus" photo booth in the mall in the hopes of thwarting shoppers' plans to see Santa Claus, a dancing traveling salesman convinces Joseph to marry Mary, someone is stealing all the artifacts of Christmas, and a married couple comes face to face with an angel. Sounds more like the *National Enquirer* than a Christmas musical. This A.D. Players' offbeat seasonal romp runs Nov. 27-Dec. 31 @ Grace Theater, 2710 W. Alabama, 526-2721.

• **The Compleat Works of William Shakespeare.** In this irreverent romp, three male actors parody most of the characters in all of Shakespeare's plays. Relying partly on audience participation, this performance is an entertainment for the entire family (well, almost the entire family). Through Jan. 11 @ New Heights Theatre, 339 W. 19th St., 869-8927.

• **Deathtrap** is the comedy classic thriller by Ira Levin, starring Elliott Gould & Mariette Hartley. It remains one of the longest-running plays in Broadway history. The New York production played 1,800 performances & was nominated for four 1978 Tony Awards including Best Play. The successful play spawned the motion picture starring Michael Caine, Dyan Cannon, & Christopher Reeve. Dec. 24-29 @ Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana, 227-ARTS. (See interview with Mariette Hartley on page 32.)

• **Hair** (See sidebar on page 52.)

• **An Ideal Husband** is a 100-year-old jewel from the pen of one of the English language's wittiest playwrights, Oscar Wilde. The first self-styled star of English letters, Wilde was famous for his epigrams, and *Husband* is rife with them: When Lord Caversham criticizes his son for his superficial conversation, the son replies, "I love talking about nothing, father. It is the only thing I know anything about." The son lives by Wilde's dictum, "Treat all trivial things seriously, and all serious things with studied triviality." Thru Dec. 22 @ Main Street Theatre/Chelsea Market, 4617 Montrose, 524-6706.



Top to bottom: Scott Tesh, Mark Roberts, and Jason Douglas parody Shakespeare at New Heights Theatre through January 11.

• **John & Jen** is an intimate musical about a sister & brother from the 1950s through today. Music/lyrics by Andrew Lipka; book/lyrics by Tom Greenwald. Through Dec. 22 @ Theater LaB Houston, 1706 Alamo, 227-ARTS.

• **The Man Who Came to Dinner.** Sheridan Whiteside, a famous critic & radio personality, lands in the lap of the Stanley family home when he slips & falls on their doorstep. Funny situations abound during Whiteside's recovery as he literally takes over the house during the holiday season & all try to cater to his every whim. The style of the late '30s & early '40s shines through this comedy. Dec. 6-Jan. 11 @ The Company Onstage, 536 Westbury Square, 726-1219

• **Sing a Christmas Song.** Set in

Harlem, this holiday play is loosely based on Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Ebenezer Scrooge is now a greedy, callous Harlem businessman visited by the ghosts of Christmas past, present, & future. Hip hop dialogue & rap-like verse add to the contemporary urban trappings of rhythm & blues, Motown, and gospel. Through Dec. 28 @ Midtown Art Center, 3414 LaBranch, 520-0055.

• **The Yellow Boat** is a celebration of a child's life & a tribute to children's courage & strength. It is based on the true story of David & Sonja's son Benjamin, who died in 1987 from AIDS-related complications contracted through a blood transfusion. His buoyant imagination & artistic talent helped him to transform his physical & emotional pain into brilliant colors & shapes

in his drawings. Presented Dec. 4-15 @ DiverseWorks, 1117 East Freeway (I-10 @ N. Main). For info/reservations: 759-1314.

Radio/TV

• **After Hours** (Radio) Saturdays, midnight to 3 am. Featuring the QMZ (Queer Music Zone) with Jimmy Carper. KPFT 90.1 FM.

• **Lesbian & Gay Voices** (Radio) Thursday, 9-11 pm. Features, news, music, interviews, reviews, and commentary. KPFT 90.1 FM.

• **AIDS Talk Houston** (TV) Access Houston Community Television (AHCT); showtimes are listed in local television guides under AHCT channels (Warner—Ch. 17; TCI—Ch. 41; Phonoscope—Ch. 72; Optel—Ch. 07).

• **Montrose 77006** (TV) is a fresh mix of gay & lesbian comedy, politics, and on-the-scene reports of activities in the Montrose area. For further information or to advertise your group activity, organization, or business: 902-2231 (24-hr. voice mail). Access Houston Community Television (AHCT); showtimes are listed in local television guides under AHCT channels (Warner: Ch. 17, TCI: Ch. 41, Phonoscope: Ch. 72, Optel: Ch. 07).

Art/Photography

• **The Art League of Houston** is offering free art classes for people with HIV. The ongoing course meets every Thursday & Friday from 1-4 pm at the Art League, 1953 Montrose. Mixed media projects for the artist and non-artist. Constructive art-making in a relaxed atmosphere. Focus is on the healing power of art. For information, call 523-9530.

• **Collection...100 Butterflies** is an exhibition of butterfly paintings by former Houston resident Sally Chandler. 100 images of butterflies are arranged in large panels that together form an enormous, brightly colored work of art. The artist sees her butterflies as messengers from nature, reminders of our symbiotic relationship with the natural world and an affirmation of its beauty and fragility. Through Jan. 2, 1997, @ the Cockrell Butterfly Center, Houston Museum of Natural Science, One Hermann Circle Dr. For more information, call 639-4629.

• **Earlie Hudnall Jr.** has been photographing his African-American community for the past two decades. "A unique commonality exists between young and old," he says, "because there is always a continuity between the past and the future. It is this commonality which I strive to depict in my work." Hudnall grew up in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and has lived in Houston since the early '70s. Photographs by Hudnall & Eudora Welty are being presented through Dec. 4 @ John Cleary Gallery, 2635 Colquitt, 524-5070.

• **Daniel Lechon's** traditional oil paintings and drawings. Through Dec. 6 @ Toni Jones Gallery, 1911-C W. Alabama @ Hazard, 528-7998.

• **Jesse Lott's** sculptures. Through Dec. 6 @ O'Kane Gallery, University of Houston-Downtown, One Main St., 221-8042.

• **Lari Pittman** is a Los Angeles-based painter. This mid-career survey includes 25 of his monumental paintings which address political, sexual, and identity issues in America. Through Dec. 31 @ the Contemporary Arts Museum, 5216 Montrose, 526-3129.

• **Reconfigured: Six Approaches to Figurative Painting** focuses on the work of six Houston area painters who use the figure as their central subject matter. This exhibition showcases a variety of styles and approaches in 40 works which share the figure as subject; however, the artists interpret the figurative tradition in radically different and personalized ways. Through Dec. 1 @ the Glassell School of Art, 5101 Montrose, 639-7500.

• **Reconstructedness** is an exhibition of seven artists who have lived and worked in North Texas. These artists' works are composed of found and constructed objects. Through Jan. 4 @ DiverseWorks, 1117 East Freeway (just off North Main @ I-10), 223-8346.

• **Ring in the holidays** with 15 diverse artists. Through Jan. 4 @ Archway Gallery, 2013 West Gray, 522-2409.

• **The Singular Object** is a group exhibition of Texas artists. Whether in painting or sculpture, each artist will present a unique approach to the object, as icon, and as trigger for psychological and philosophical dialogue. Through Dec. 4 @ New Gallery, 2639 Colquitt, 520-7053.

• **Splendors of Ancient Egypt**, the largest exhibition ever presented by the MFA, will feature Egyptian art from Germany's Pelizaeus Museum. It will showcase more than 200 antiquities that offer a panoramic view of ancient Egyptian Civilization which encompasses over 4,500 years of pharaonic history—from the clove of the Predynastic Period to the 1st century A.D. Through March 30 @ the Museum of Fine Arts, 1001 Bissonnet, 639-7300.

• **The Tongass: Alaska's Magnificent Rain Forest** is an exhibit of 42 color photographs by seven nature & wildlife photographers. The Tongass National Forest in Alaska is the U.S.'s largest national forest & part of the largest non-equatorial rain forest in the world. Virtually untouched by outside influences for 3,000-5,000 years, this ecosystem has continually replenished itself & remained in delicate balance. Images in the exhibition capture the beauty of the land & hint to the enormity of the resources to be found there. They also colorfully depict the rain forest wildlife and some of the native people who live in the Tongass. Through January 1 @ the Houston Museum of Natural Science, Hermann Park across Miller Outdoor Theatre, 639-IMAX (Spanish: 639-4603).

• **Eudora Welty** is one of the South's greatest writers, but as she was just beginning to write the short stories and novels that would make her a national treasure, she traveled as a publicity agent. The photographs she took from that period are in this exhibition. "They are among hundreds made by me in the late '30s and early '40s in the state of Mississippi," she says. "If a value persists in them, it is because life, in those poor times, speaks for itself in the unchanging language of movement and gesture, and looks undefeately back at the camera's eyes." An exhibition of photographs by Welty and Earlie Hudnall Jr. is being presented through Dec. 4 @ John Cleary Gallery, 2635 Colquitt, 524-5070.

• **When Two or More: New Typologies** and **Dan Estabrook: Interior Views.** In *Typologies*, the featured artists deal with issues of identity & individuality. In *Views*, Estabrook creates a collection of fabricated 19th-century photographs about the desire to find meaning hidden in the accidental patterns & stains of old pictures. Through Dec. 22 @ Houston Center for Photography, 1441 W. Alabama, 529-4755.

• **Various.** An exhibition of the works of Larry Crawford (acrylic), Jim Martin (watercolor), & Harlan W. Skarphol Jr. (watercolor pencil & ink). Through Nov. 30 @ Hyde Park Gallery, 711 Hyde Park. For more information, call 526-2744.

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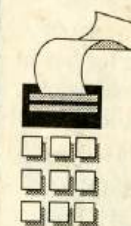
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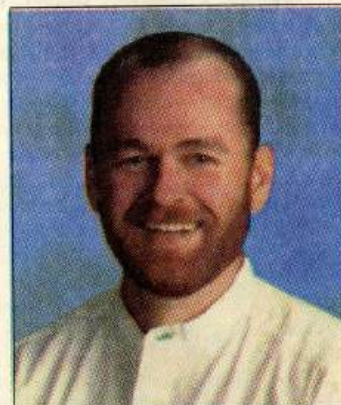
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Classes/Seminars

• **The Art League of Houston** is offering free art classes for people with HIV. The ongoing course meets every Thursday & Friday, 1-4 pm at the Art League, 1953 Montrose. Among other media, the course offers lessons in painting, printmaking, and ceramics on a rotating basis. For information, call 523-9530.

• **Love, Lust, & Intimacy** explores the connection between relationships, intimacy, & self-esteem issues. 4th Tuesday of each month, 7-9 pm, AFH office, 3202 Wesleyan, 623-6796.

• **Montrose Clinic**, a private nonprofit organization, offers "Next Step" bimonthly classes to newly diagnosed HIV-positive persons. The classes are anonymous. Class topics will include health issues, nutrition, safe sex, legal issues, & medications. Clients will receive an immune system panel, which will include a CD4 (T-cell) count, RPR (syphilis) test, CBC (complete blood count), and a TB skin test. All of these services are free to the client. Contact 520-2000 to make reservations for an upcoming class (space is limited). Class schedules (all classes are 5:30-8 pm, except for those designated): Dec. 3, 5, 9 (Spanish), 17, & 19; Jan. 7, 9, 13 (Spanish), 21, & 23; Feb. 4, 6, 10 (Spanish), 19 (1:30-4 pm), & 20 (1:30-4 pm); Mar. 4, 6, 10 (Spanish), 25, & 27.

• **Rainbow Ranglers**, a gay country & western dance club, teaches beginning level dance every Thursday at 8:30 pm & advanced level dance every Wednesday at 8 pm at Brazos River Bottom, 2400 Brazos. Dance classes are free & open to the public. Info: 880-0670.

• **Sex, Toys, & Videotape** explores the diversity of ways to enjoy safer sex. 3rd Tuesday of each month, 7-9 pm, AFH office, 3202 Wesleyan, 623-6796.

• **Southern Country Houston** provides country and western dance lessons, exhibitions, and charity events to benefit service organizations. Free dance lessons are offered every Tuesday, 8-10pm, at The Ranch, Plaza 9200, 9200 Buffalo Speedway. Call 648-9340 or write to P.O. Box 1502, Houston, TX 77252-1502.

• **That Dam Debate: Safer Sex for Lesbians**, a seminar presented by Nancy Ford, sponsored by AIDS Foundation Houston, last Thurs. of each month, 9:30 pm, Plaza 9200, 9200 Buffalo Speedway, 666-3464.

• **The Truth About Chiropractic** is a free presentation by Norri J. Collier, D.C., based on the most current medical research. It will provide info (1) on how not to be one of the 140,000 people who die yearly because of mistakes/misuse of prescription medications, (2) that doctors of chiropractic receive more hours than medical doctors, (3) on the numerous randomized controlled studies that show the benefits of chiropractic compared to many therapies used by medical doctors, (4) on the chance of a stroke following a chiropractic adjustment to be between 1 in 1 million & 1 in 20 million, (5) on wellness & preventive care, (6) on refuting the idea that aches are a natural part of the aging process & how to age ache-free, (7) on how to prevent infections, nerve damage, fatigue, & immune system weakness, (8) on how to avoid common mistakes like taking Tylenol daily & ignoring aches & pains "because they're normal." Tuesdays, 6:15-7:30 pm, 5433 Westheimer, Ste. 1111, RSVP: 623-6305.

Community

• **AIDS Equity League**, a nonprofit organization dedicated to insuring equitable treatment of the gay and lesbian community in local HIV/AIDS decision-

making. 2nd and 4th Tuesdays, 12 noon, Charlie's Restaurant, 1100 Westheimer, 524-9966.

• **EXXON Gay & Lesbian Employees** (EGLE) meets monthly at the Montrose Library to discuss workplace issues, empowerment, social events, etc. For more information, please call 522-6212.

• **Gay & Lesbian Switchboard Houston** (GLSH) is a nonprofit all-volunteer organization offering the community information & referrals to businesses, legal and medical professionals, and a variety of organizations. It also provides information on HIV/AIDS, coming out, etc. P.O. Box 66496, Houston, TX 77266-6469, 529-3211. GLSH also operates the Hate Crimes Hotline, 529-9615.

• **Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Teachers Network** (GLSTN). The goal of GLSTN is to make schools safe for everyone—straight and gay. All interested persons are invited to attend the Dec. 18 meeting @ 7:30 pm, followed @ 8 pm with a parent panel discussion. First Unitarian Universalist Church, 5200 Fannin @ Southmore. For updates: 529-4571.

• **Greater Houston Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce** (GHGLCC) fosters & promotes the economic development & vitality of gay, lesbian, & supportive businesses and professional organizations in the greater Houston area. The chamber facilitates the exchange of ideas, resources, information, & networking opportunities for its members. Promoting a positive change of the diversity of gay & lesbian citizens, and to further strengthen our position in society, the chamber provides opportunities for the personal, professional, & social growth of its members. Membership in this organization in no way infers sexual orientation, preference, or gender identity. Meets the first Monday of each month. For more info: 523-7576. (Thursday, Dec. 12: Networking Mixer with beverages & refreshments @ Suzanne Anderson Properties, 239 Westheimer, 529-8484.)

• **HIV/AIDS Treatment Mixer**, open forum for sharing information, 4th Tuesday of each month, 7-9 pm, 2700 Albany, Ste. 205, 527-8219.

• **The Homeless Pet Placement League** is a nonprofit animal welfare organization that rescues and rehabilitates stray and abandoned cats and dogs. To inquire about volunteering, foster care, or adopting, call 862-PETS.

• **HOPE Project** (HIV Outreach, Prevention, and Education) provides HIV/AIDS information to the African-American community. Board meetings are held every second Wednesday of the month. Contact the HOPE line at 587-6914 for more information.

• **Houston Gay & Lesbian Political Caucus**. 1st Wednesday of each month, 7:30 pm, 2700 Albany, 3rd floor, 521-1000.

• **Houston Pride Band** provides musical entertainment for the lesbian and gay community. They are seeking musicians of all skill levels and instrumentation. Rehearsals are held at Dignity Houston, 1307 Yale on Wednesdays from 7-9 pm. Contact Russell at 524-0218 or e-mail HousTxBand@aol.com.

• **Log Cabin Republicans**. 4th Monday of each month, 6:30 pm (social), 7 pm (meeting), Renata's, 2006 Lexington, 529-9100.

• **OutVote**, a nonprofit organization dedicated to registering, educating, and motivating our community to vote. For more info: 520-VOTE or 522-9837.

• **Pride Committee of Houston**, executive meeting (7 pm, 1st Tuesday of each month) and general meeting (6:30 pm, 3rd Tuesday of each month), 2700 Albany, 529-6979.

• **Q-Patrol** is dedicated to the prevention of hate crimes against gays & lesbians, patrols the bar areas in Montrose, & is always looking for volunteers. If you

have at least one Friday or Saturday night per month, please call 528-SAFE (7233).

• **Rice GALA** (Gay and Lesbian Alumni Association) seeks gay and lesbian alumni of Rice University. Contact Neal Tannahill at 526-6718 for more information.

• **Roundtable—The Houston Philosophy Forum** is open to anyone who is interested in civilized and open discussion on the topics of the day. 7 pm on the 1st & 3rd Wednesdays of the month @ Café Artiste, 1601 W. Main. For more info: Jackie @ 779-8620 or Beth @ 728-5590.

• **Texas Human Rights Foundation**, a statewide, not-for-profit legal agency, advocates on behalf of the lesbian, gay, and HIV community and publishes the booklet *AIDS and the Law: Know Your Rights*. If you feel you have been discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation or HIV status and need legal advice or attorney referral, call their toll-free number, 1-800-828-6417.

• **The Texas Lesbian Conference** (TLC). Remember the conference in 1993? Well, get ready—it's going to happen again. But this one will be even better, because we will be celebrating a decade—yes, that's 10 years!—of our visibility & empowerment! It will take place at the same hotel (the Renaissance Houston), and we're planning speakers, entertainment, & workshops that will knock your socks off! Though it won't take place till May 16-18, we need your input & help now. For info, call our recorded voice mail message @ 867-3934, & if you'd like more info or would like to volunteer for one of our committees, leave your name & phone number, and we'll be back in touch with you.

• **Women's Action Coalition** (WAC) is an alliance of women committed to direct action on issues affecting the rights of all women, Wednesdays, 7 pm at Tooties, P.O. Box 131148, Houston, TX 77219-1148, voice mail 867-9581.

Health

• **AIDS Housing Coalition Houston** runs the nonprofit TLC House program, a 90-day, gay-positive, emergency house for PWAs in transition. For more info about joining, call 521-1613.

• **AssistHers** tries to help women live as normally as possible while coping with a life-threatening or debilitating illness. Eligible for service are women whose emotional, social, or sexual relationships are primarily with other women who have a debilitating or life-challenging disease, illness, or condition. Assistance may extend to a woman's partner, caregiver, or family. Services are provided regardless of ability to pay, & regardless of age, race, ethnicity, or economic status. PO Box 131605, Houston, TX 77219-1605, 552-9445.

• **AVES** (Amigos Volunteers in Education & Services) provides social and healthcare services to HIV-positive individuals. 4126 Southwest Frwy., Ste. 1717, 626-2837 or 1-800-981-2837.

• **The Center for AIDS** (CFA) is an information & advocacy organization working to accumulate knowledge and to share information regarding the latest medical treatments & scientific advances in the field of HIV/AIDS. The CFA advocates both locally & nationally for better treatments & better access to care for persons living with HIV/AIDS and strives to keep the Houston medical & affected community informed, updated, & involved in the search for a cure. The CFA holds monthly, informal meetings for persons with HIV/AIDS & other interested persons to discuss treatment options. For more info: 527-8219.

• **Lesbian Health Initiative** (LHI) is a nonprofit

organization working to improve the health of lesbians and bisexual women in the Houston area. 1st Tuesday of each month, 7 pm, Montrose Counseling Center, 701 Richmond. Call Pokey Anderson @ 526-7828 for more info, or write LHI, P.O. Box 130158, Houston, TX 77219.

• **Milam House** is a housing facility for HIV-positive persons who, because of health, social, and/or economic conditions, are unable to provide for their own basic human needs. We are seeking volunteers to help with everything from shift work to administrative and fundraising. If you can help, please contact Dallas at 520-9248 or e-mail us at ahvlntr@neosoft.com.

• **Montrose Counseling Center** offers numerous counseling groups, including groups for men & women living with HIV, people in recovery, lesbian survivors of cancer, survivors of sexual abuse, people living with chronic pain, lesbian survivors of domestic violence, & many more. For more info (24 hrs.): 529-0037.

• **Next Step** is a free confidential program of information and medical testing for persons who are HIV positive. Provided by Montrose Clinic. Call 520-2000 for schedule and to register.

• **Tobacco-Free Greater Houston** will provide a list of smoke-free restaurants in the Houston area. The group works to promote health through the reduction of youth access to tobacco & the promotion of a smoke-free environment. For a free guide, send a SASE to Tobacco-Free Greater Houston, P.O. Box 890769, Houston, TX 77289-0769.

• **Thomas Street Health Center Council** is an elected advocacy group that advise the hospital district on matters concerning Thomas Street AIDS Clinic. Meetings are open to public comment and participation. 2nd Wednesday of each month, 2 pm, 3rd floor conference room, 2015 Thomas St. @ Paschall off N. Main, 793-4000.

• **Women's Clinic** Montrose Clinic is now offering a women's health clinic. Visits include complete examination by gynecologist, lab work, medication, & referral if needed. Fee is \$40; but no one will be turned away. Every Wednesday, 5-8 pm, by appointment only, 520-2000.

Religion/Spirituality

• **Dignity Houston** is dedicated to the welfare of gay/lesbian Catholics and their friends, and meets Saturdays at 7:30 pm, 1307 Yale, Suite H, 880-2872.

• **Kolbe Project** is an ecumenical outreach to gays, lesbians, and other sexual minorities modeled after the ministry of St. Francis of Assisi. Potluck and community-concern programs, first Thursdays, 7 pm. Healing Service, second Thursdays, 7 pm. Spiritual Direction by appointment; HIV/AIDS hospital chaplaincy. For information, call 522-8182.

Social

• **20 Something** is a caring, informative, social community for les-bi-gay persons & their friends coming together in a safe & positive atmosphere to share, learn, & build friendships. For more info, contact Carrie, Julie, Daniel, Guy, or Darby at 315-6786 (voice mail).

• **BiNet Houston** has changed their meeting format to a social-oriented group. BiNET Houston is a social/support/educational group which is open to bisexuals and bi-friendly individuals. Due to our changed format, we no longer meet at MCCR church. For more information: 467-4380. It is best to call from 6-10 pm most

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evenings; otherwise, leave a message, and a representative will return your call utilizing utmost discretion.

• **Bluebonnet Young Democrats.** As a member of this lesbian/gay/gay-friendly group of young Democrats in Texas, you will have a chance to make a great impact. Possible projects for next year include trips to Austin, community forums, & other fun activities. Voice mail 632-9974 or pager 786-0493.

• **The Chain Gang Cycling Club** provides friendly cycling opportunities for members & friends of the gay & lesbian communities in metropolitan Houston. RSVP required for the following activities: Dec. 1—meet @ Pacific St. side of Heaven, 10 am, 15-mile ride; Dec. 20—Holiday Party, 7 pm, call 863-1860 for details; Dec. 21—meet @ north side of Memorial Park soccer field, 11 am, 12-mile ride; Dec. 28—meet @ Pacific St. side of Heaven, 10 am, 15-mile ride. To join or for more information: 863-1860.

• **Females in Search of Trouble (FIST)** is a social group of women who explore the S/M, B/D, and fetish lifestyle. Monthly meetings and social events. Write: 7534 Carew, Houston, TX 77074 or call 772-5826.

• **Garden And Yard Society (G.A.Y.S.)** is a newly formed gay gardening club for women and men. Bring your gardening friends and supporting partners. For more information: Regina @ 862-3922 or Vickie & Clyde @ 661-6378.

• **Gay & Lesbian Health Professionals** meets monthly, providing socials, speakers, networking, and practitioner referral line. For information or a referral, call 523-4700.

• **Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Alliance at the University of Houston (GLOBAL)** is a social, political, and support group for the university GLB population and its supporters. Everyone is welcome. The group meets weekly on Wednesdays at 4 pm in the University Center. For more info: Brandy Merritt at 808-0752.

• **Gay Men's Chorus of Houston** rehearses Thursdays, 7-10 pm @ Grace Lutheran Church, 2515 Waugh. Formal music training is not required, and singing & non-singing members are welcome. For info, leave message @ 521-SING.

• **HeartSong Women's Chorus** rehearses monthly at varying locations. New and former members welcome! Call 947-1488 for information.

• **Houston Area Bears** is a social organization for "bears" (hirsute men) of all sizes and their admirers. Their monthly social is held on the second Saturday of each month at the Venture-N, 2923 S. Main, 8 pm. For further info: The Grower Line, 867-9123.

• **Houston Outdoor Group (HOG)** is a social group for gay men and lesbians who enjoy the outdoors. Activities include camping, hiking, horseback riding, canoeing, etc. Day trips, weekend trips (typically a two- to four-hour drive from Houston) and extended trips to places such as Wyoming, Canada, and the Cayman Islands. The general HOG monthly meeting is held the 4th Thursday of every month, 7-9 pm, at the Assistance Fund Bldg., 1116 Jackson Blvd., one block north of Fairview, west of Montrose. Call 526-7688 (KAMP OUT) or write to P.O. Box 980893, Houston, TX 77098. (HOG Holiday Party, Dec. 7 @ 3 pm. Call 526-7688 for info.)

• **Lambda Rollerskating Club** invites all ages to join in the fun every Wednesday, 8-10 pm, @ Starlite Skating Rink, 8075 Cook Rd. @ Beechnut. Admission is \$5 (+ \$1.25 for skates). For info: 933-5818.

• **Lesbian & Gay Potluck** The Lesbian & Gay Unitarian Universalists (LGUU) cordially invite you to bring a dish and join them every 4th Friday of the month, 7 pm, First Unitarian Universalist Church, Crane Fireside Room, 5200 Fannin. For more info: 526-5200.

• **Lesbians in Business (LiB)**, a lesbian empower-

ment group, promotes lesbians, jobs and businesses. 3rd Friday of each month, 6:30 pm, Innova Bldg., 20 Greenway Plaza, 529-0077.

• **Lone Star Nudist Group** For gay or bisexual men who wish to share nude experiences. Singles and lovers welcome. Monthly meetings. Nude social events, massage group, and out-of-town gatherings. Call 866-8847 for more information.

• **Minority & White Men Together (MWMT)** is a social club made up of black, brown, red, yellow, and white men. We are committed to tearing down the walls of racial misconceptions and stereotypes. Our goal is to reach a better mutual understanding by forging new interracial relationships and friendships through social and political activities. For more info & an invitation to the next Sunday mixer: Michael at 867-9511.

• **Prime Timers Houston** promotes social activities for the older gay and bisexual male. Some of the activities they participate in are theater, dining out, movies, potluck dinners, card games, and weekend daytrips. For more information, call 867-3903.

• **Rainbow Fishing Club.** To get on the free mailing list for the new fishing club for gays and lesbians, call John @ 523-6381.

• **Rainbow Riders** is a bicycling club for womyn which meets every Sunday morning. All womyn are welcome regardless of ability and experience. For further information, call Cookie Davenport, 869-1686.

• **Scriptwriters/Houston** is a stage and screen writer's support and networking group. Meetings are the 1st & 3rd Mondays of every month, 7:30 pm @ Jones Theatre at the University of St. Thomas, Yoakum @ Alabama. Free. For info: 707-5194 or 523-9291.

• **Texas Gay Rodeo Association** is a nonprofit organization, with chapters in Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, and Houston, that promotes and stages an annual rodeo event as well as engaging in fundraising activities throughout the year. For more information on the Houston chapter, write to P.O. Box 130585, Houston, TX 77219-0585 or call 777-1444.

• **Texas Medical Center Lambda** is an association of bisexual, gay, lesbian, transgendered, & gay-friendly faculty, staff, & students at the Texas Medical Center. One community service or social event per month plus meetings the second Monday of each month, 7:30 pm @ Toopees, 1830 W. Alabama. Page for more information: 284-7206.

Sports

• **Houston Tennis Club**, an affiliate member of the Gay and Lesbian Tennis Association, welcomes men and women of all ages and skill levels. They meet Wednesdays & Fridays from 7:30-9 pm & Sundays from 9 am-12 noon at Memorial Park Tennis Center. To join, call 875-2891.

• **Houston Women's Flag Football League (HWFFL)** is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating opportunities for women to play football. We are looking for players, coaches, referees, cheerleaders, & league/team sponsors. The league plays 4 games on Saturdays from 9 am-1 pm @ Wilson Elementary School on Fairview, between Mandell & Yupon. The league shows the videotapes of the games on Sundays @ 4 pm @ Ms. B's, located on Buffalo Speedway. League play will continue through Feb. 1, 1997. For info: 315-9368.

• **Houston Women's Softball League** is a nonprofit organization for women who enjoy the sport of softball. For more info, write to P.O. Box 70666, Houston, TX 77270 or call 721-6854.

• **Team Houston for the Games, Inc.** is a nonprofit organization to educate & inform all people about gay/lesbian sports competitions & to encourage participation in the Gay Games and Cultural Festival. The next Gay Games will take place in Amsterdam, Aug. 1-8, 1998. For more info, write to Team Houston, P.O. Box 66405, Houston, TX 77266-6405 or call 935-1060.

Support Groups

• **AIDS Alliance of the Bay Area**, support group for those infected and affected, Tuesdays, 7-8:30 pm, 17511 El Camino Real, #159. For more info: 488-4492.

• **Astro Rainbow Alliance for the Deaf**, general meeting every 2nd Friday of the month, 7:30 pm, Montrose Clinic, 215 Westheimer, 869-2287 via Texas Relay 1-800-735-2988.

• **Crossroads** is a support group for gays and lesbians who are currently in full-time church work, have been in the past, or are pursuing their calling. It is not exclusively for pastors, but is open to chaplains, administrators, musicians, or music-, youth-, and educational-directors. Meets the third Saturday of each month, and there are socials throughout the month. Call 681-9082 for dates, time, and place.

• **Empowerment for Living**, a weekly HIV-positive and -negative support program and potluck supper, Tuesdays, 6 pm, MCCR, 1919 Decatur. For more information, call 861-9149.

• **Gay Fathers of Houston** is a support group of gay men who meet every Monday, 8-9:30 pm at Grace Lutheran Church, 2515 Waugh, to discuss problems gay fathers share. For more information or directions, call 861-6181.

• **Gay Male Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse.** Montrose Counseling Center is offering a therapy group designed to provide a safe environment for men who share this type of experience to work together to resolve the impacts of the trauma on everyday life. Services are provided on a sliding scale basis, and insurance is accepted. Certain restrictions apply. For further information: Shane Hennessey at 529-0037.

• **Gulf Coast Transgender Community** meets 2nd Saturday of each month (cross dressing required). Open discussion 1st & 3rd Thursday of each month (cross dressing not required). P.O. Box 66643, Houston, TX 77266-6643, 780-4282.

• **Houston Gay & Lesbian Parents (HGLP)** support group meets to discuss issues pertaining to today's gay families. If you have children or plan to have children, this support group can help with issues like coming out, ex-spouse problems, step relationships, etc. Meets at MCCR library, 1919 Decatur, the second Tuesday of every month, 7-8:30 pm, 284-4939. (On Saturday, December 7: HGLP Family Activity—Making Gingerbread Houses, 4-6 pm @ MCCR Fellowship Hall, 1919 Decatur.)

• **Lambda Center A.A.** 1201 W. Clay, Houston, TX 77019. For meeting times: 521-1243.

• **Living in Process Groups.** Ongoing mixed group for men & women 3 Wednesday evenings per month. Ongoing gay men's group 3 Thursday evenings per month. Call Eric Mayo at Living in Process Southwest for more info: 622-7250.

• **Living With HIV Support Group.** For anyone whose life is touched by HIV. Meetings include a relaxing meditation, information about community resources, and occasional speakers. The group meets Thursdays from 7-9 pm in room 117 at Unity Church

of Christianity, 2929 Unity Drive at Hillcroft. For further info, call 782-4050. At the December 12 meeting, the guest speaker will be Nelson Vergel on *Wellness Restoration (PoWer—Program for Wellness Restoration)*.

• **Male Survivors of Sexual Assault** is a support group designed to provide a safe, confidential environment for men to talk about their experience and their struggles in society around the issues of male sexual assault. Call Diane Williams at the Houston Area Women's Center, 528-6798, ext. 246, for more info. All services are free of charge and confidential.

• **Muscular Dystrophy Association**, Houston/Gulf Coast, provides monthly support groups for adults with neuromuscular diseases, for people with ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease), for parents of MDA children, and Spanish-speaking groups. For the most current info on these ongoing groups, call the MDA office at 522-3941.

• **Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians And Gays (PFLAG)** Houston—general meeting with small group discussions, 1st Sunday of each month, 2 pm, St. Francis Episcopal Church, 345 Piney Point Rd. PFLAG Houston Helpline: 867-9020.

• **Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians And Gays (PFLAG)** Galveston County—3rd Sunday of each month, 2 pm, @ The Health Merchant, 27th & Broadway, 409/744-3200 or janettexas@aol.com.

• **PROTECT** (People Respecting Ourselves Through Establishing Community and Trust), an HIV-negative support group, provides a safe place to share experiences, strengths, and hopes in an effort to remain HIV negative. Tuesdays, 7-8:30 pm, Bering Church, 1440 Harold. For info: Marty at 520-7870.

• **Support, Equality, and Awareness, at Shell (SEAShell)** is a Gay & Lesbian Employees Group whose mission is to provide support for members & co-workers, promote equality for employees regardless of sexual orientation, and create awareness in

management of issues & concerns affecting people in a diverse workplace. For info: Robert @ 544-4246 or Rick @ 544-7098.

• **Tau Chi Chapter of Tri Ess** is a local support group for heterosexual male crossdressers and their wives or partners. For info: Brandi at 409/856-6759.

• **Texas Association for Transsexual Support (TATS)** is a peer support group devoted to serving the emotional, social, & educational needs of transgendered persons, their partners, families, & friends. For more info, call 827-5913 or write to TATS, P.O. Box 142, Bellaire, TX 77401.

• **Texas Commerce Bank's Diversity P.R.I.D.E. Team** welcomes you to be a part of equality. P.R.I.D.E. stands for People Recognizing Individual Differences Equally and is a gay & lesbian diversity team to provide support & direction by turning equality into reality. Our mission statement reads: "To support the inclusion of gay & lesbian individuals as valued employees of Texas Commerce Bank. We will work to create an awareness within the organization & community—building opportunity & self-esteem—which will lead to equality." Meets every 3rd Wednesday of the month, 5:30 pm. For info: Harold Shultz @ 216-6740 or Richard Bielec @ 655-5423.

• **Women's Network** is a support group for lesbian and bisexual women. 2nd & 4th Wednesday of each month, 7-9 pm, Montrose Counseling Center, 701 Richmond, 529-0037.

Youth

• **20 Something** is a caring, informative, social community for les-bi-gay persons and their friends meeting in a safe and positive atmosphere to share, to learn,

and to build friendships with each other. For more information, contact Carrie, Julie, Daniel, Guy, or Darby at 315-6786 (voice mail).

• **Just For Us (JFU)** is a social and support group for youth in the 6th through 12th grades who have gay or lesbian parents. Sponsored by Houston Gay and Lesbian Parents. 284-4939. (On Saturday, Dec. 14: Holiday in the Park at AstroWorld. For more info: 284-4939.)

• **Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals (HATCH)** is open to gays and lesbians, age 15-21. Meets Fridays from 7:30-10 pm & Sundays from 6:30-9 pm. Call 942-7002 for location and information.

Wish Lists & Volunteers Needed

• **AIDS Foundation Houston, Inc. (AFH)** relies on volunteers to help meet the needs of its more than 3,000 clients. Choose from over 20 different volunteer programs, working days, evenings, weekdays, weekends, on the front lines, or behind the scenes. You'll join a talented pool of over 600 volunteers working in art therapy, the buddy program, the Stone Soup garden, helper, or pantry programs, hospital visitation, information & referral, and numerous other programs. Whether you can commit to 4 hours a month or 40 hours a week, AFH needs your time & talent. Call the volunteer department @ 623-6796 or use the worldwide web @ <http://www.aids-help.org>.

• **AssistHers** tries to help women live as normally as possible while coping with a life-threatening or de-

Continued on page 74

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1. Black Tie Boys: Clay Brooks & Scott Sims at the Black Tie Dinner.



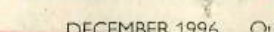
2. Dynamic Duo: Reyna Moore & Sandy Leifeste at the Black Tie Dinner.



3. Texas Triangle: Houston Ballet's Andrew Edmonson & the *Houston Voice*'s Matthew Pennington at the *Texas Triangle*'s community meeting.



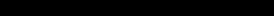
4. Award Winner: Representing *OutSmart*, Laura Hudman accepts a John Kellett Foundation Award from John Kellett. The award for "Community Outreach to Youth" was in response to last January's issue of *OutSmart* which focused on gay youth.



5. At Work: Corporate Network Group (CNG) members Alan Eyler, Stacy Tzapares, Harold Schultz, Kerry Gosler, Robert Bliss, Richard Bielec, & Rick Schroeder at Baba Yega's.



6. Out Youth: Lara Smith (20 Something), Glenn Levy (Rice PRIDE), and Scott Chalupa (HATCH) present a panel about gay youth to state social workers.

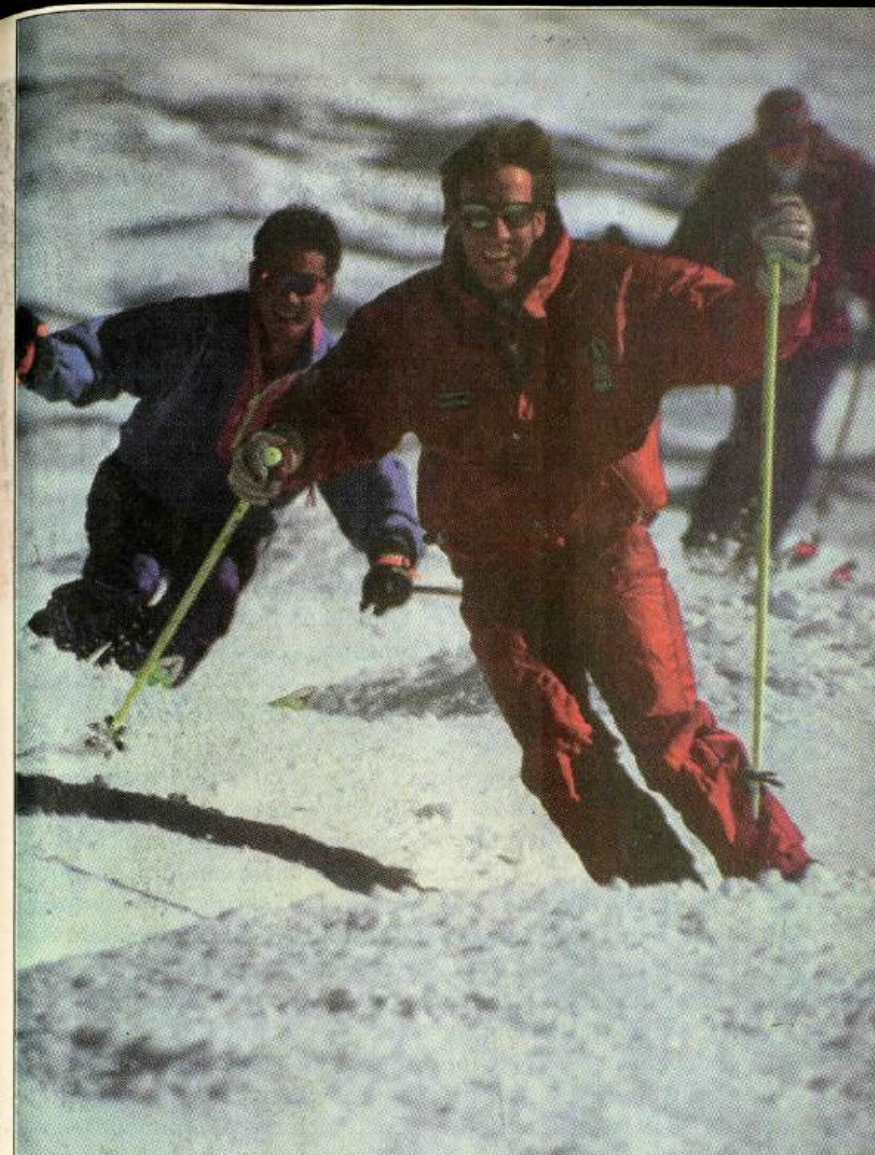


7. Fabulous Evening: Penny Johnson, Erin Frederick, Missy Myatt, & live auctioneer Sydney Seaward at the Black Tie Dinner.

8. On the Air: KPFT's Gay & Lesbian Voices staffers Joan Devlin, Mark Sikes, Clyde Johnstone, & Glenn Holt.

9. Social Workers: Evelyn Champion, Sue Long, Beleyne, & Travis Peterson at the National Assoc. of Social Workers state convention.

10. Lesbian Live: Gay parenting postergirl Melissa Etheridge rocks the Houston Summit.



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Gay Ski Sprees

CHILLING CHOICES FOR WINTER TRAVEL

by Sandra Wilkins

ASPEN, COLORADO • January 25-February 1 (Aspen Gay Ski Week)

Celebrating its 20th anniversary, Aspen Gay Ski Week is the granddaddy of these events. The spectacular 1997 lineup is expected to draw over 5,000 vacationers. There are so many special events and parties on tap it will be hard to find time to ski. One of the nicest things about Aspen's week is activities that will appeal to both men and women. Lesbians will be happy to know that Kristin Peck and Mariah Hanson of Club Skirts and the Palm Spring's Dinah Shore Weekend have planned several

women-only events, including an opening party at Club Freedom.

Aspen boasts great galleries, shops, and restaurants. If you enjoy people watching, you'll be in paradise. Film buffs may want to take advantage of the local gay film festival.

Aspen is a great place to learn to ski or improve your abilities. Every day during Gay Ski Week, the Aspen Ski Schools at the various mountains will offer exclusively gay classes at all levels of ability. The new rave, snow boarding, is a big hit at Aspen. A special three-day program will

guarantee you'll learn to board. All this for around \$150 total. If you don't ski, but want to play on the mountains, spend a day on a snowmobile for around \$100.

It makes sense to plan early for this one, and try to fly directly into Aspen if at all possible. There's no need for a car once you're situated. Shuttles abound for transportation to the several ski areas. Aspen itself is completely accessible on foot. Packages start around \$980 per person. They include seven nights hotel accommodations in down-

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town Aspen, six days ski-lift tickets, and discounts on ski rentals. You'll also get an exclusive and valuable "Event Pass" for entrance into the parties and venues. Airfare to Aspen is currently \$323 or so, but if you wait to book, the fares will soar as seats become less available.

MONTANA • January 11-18, February 22-March 1, March 15-22 (Big Sky)

The folks organizing the Montana downhill weeks have reserved accommodations at Red Lodge, a turn-of-the-century mining town. From there, they move on to Chico Hot Springs midweek, and culminate at Big Sky. Montana skiing is legendary. You won't find crowded slopes, and it's quite a different experience from the resort mentality. Their package is priced at \$1,475 and includes all lodging, ground transportation, lift tickets, most meals, and 24-hour guides. Airfare to Billings is additional, around \$388 at present.

THE FRENCH ALPS • January 18-25 (Club Hommes)

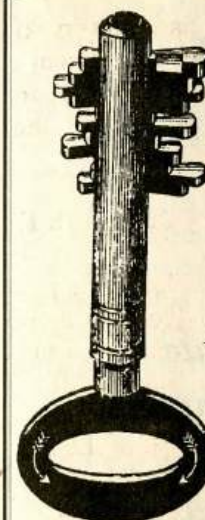
Back in the '70s, when I lived in London, I spent an entire Christmas week skiing the Alps in Alpbach, Austria. Talk about a fairy-tale holiday: picture-perfect Alpine village, sleeping under goose down comforters, and midnight mass on Christmas Eve. The tiny 14th-century Catholic church was lit with hundreds of candles held by the congregation. It was a romantic week of sleigh rides, mountains, and ski runs that defied my imagination at the time. It was not however - "gay," but then it was over 20 years ago. The Club Hommes package is for gay men only, limited to 100 participants. It's reasonably priced at \$1,049 for seven nights, which includes accommodations at Club Med Les Arcs and all meals. Air from Miami or New York is an additional \$650.

WHISTLER, CANADA • February 2-9 (Altitude '97)

Last year, I visited Whistler, a stunning village 80 miles north of Vancouver. The U.S. dollar is still holding strong against the Canadian dollar, which makes out-of-pocket expenses like food and drink 30-percent cheaper. Add to this the beauty and cleanliness and friendly folks in Canada, and this is a great vacation choice. The Whistler area of British Columbia shares almost exactly the same flora, fauna, and topography as the European Alps. With a wonderful variety of ski runs, it's a great place for beginners and experienced ski buffs alike.

The planners for the Altitude '97 Whistler experience have great events lined up for the whole week. Their basic package starts at \$939 per person, double occupancy. It also includes round-trip transfers from Vancouver to Whistler, seven nights studio condo accommodations, and five days dual mountain lift tickets. Air from Houston to Vancouver is additional, currently around \$334.

Sandra Wilkins is owner and president of The Travel Partnership, Inc. For further information, call 713/526-4471.



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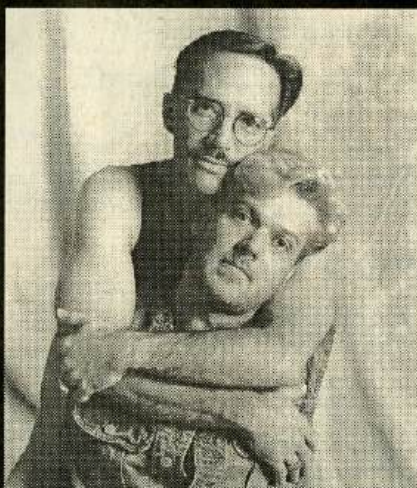
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by Roy Oakes

"[N]utrients can reduce or eliminate
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[of HIV disease]."

Lark Lands, M.S., Ph.D.

While a good diet goes a long way toward improving your body's immune function, HIV-positive individuals must also undertake the arduous task of exploring dietary supplementation. It's a daunting, but necessary, step and an important component of good nutrition.

Taking one multiple vitamin/mineral pill daily is not enough for the HIV positive, nor is taking the FDA's recommended dosages. I started my program of supplementation in 1988 after reading Dr. Laurence Badgley's *Healing AIDS Naturally*. My program included the "ace" vitamins A (as beta-carotene), C, and E; a B-complex; the minerals zinc, germanium, and selenium; plus coenzyme Q10, digestive enzymes, evening primrose oil, lecithin, spirulina, ginseng, and garlic extract. I learned to listen to my body, learned to let it tell me if I was doing the right thing. Not very scientific, but very telling in the long run. I figured that if my CD4 counts increased or stabilized, if I remained well or had only minor ailments, if I felt more energetic, then my program was working. I also started a regimen of Chinese herbs and other body-related work, which I will discuss more fully in a future article. After six months on this program, my CD4 count rose from around 90 to over 690. I knew I was on the right track and maintained the regime with minor variations for a number of years.

When my lover James became ill, I didn't stay current with new developments in alternative therapies. I even stopped taking supplements for long periods of time and did little to alleviate the stress in my life. It was a confusing and challenging time, and I questioned my desire to continue living. After James' death, the extent of the toll on my immune system became



Roy Oakes

clear when my CD4 count dropped below 190 in the summer of 1995. I knew that it was time to reexamine my protocol. I found that the landscape of HIV and nutritional supplementation had grown immensely, although you still have to dig to find information. The biggest change I've noted is the wealth of scientifically supported information available now. I've turned to three sources of information to help me determine the new course for my program.

Dr. Philip Whitley:
Biological Medicine

In Santa Fe, I work with Dr. Philip Whitley, a chiropractor who also practices a health-care modality called biological medicine. The

system was developed in France and incorporates the principles of Claude Bernard Beauchamp, a nemesis of Louis Pasteur in the late 1800s. Where Beauchamp advocated strengthening the body terrain, Pasteur promoted fighting germs after they were inside the body—which is the fundamental principle of "modern" medicine. It's said that Pasteur, on his deathbed, admitted that his system was flawed and that strengthening the body was the better way. By that time, however, the concept of eradicating disease after it was present in the body had taken hold.

Using a computer to measure various factors in blood, urine, and saliva samples, my biological-medicine doctor determined how well my body processed nutrients, among other things. He developed a supplementation program to increase the efficiency of processing. In addition to nutrients, I take glandulars, antibacterial and antifungal products specific to my needs. Periodic retesting determines progress and changes to the protocol. This takes part of the guesswork out of what my body needs, and I do feel better. To complement this modality, I've found two other sources of information dealing more specifically with how HIV affects the body and what people with HIV need. They are Dr. Lark Lands of Colorado and the Direct AIDS Alternative Information Resource (DAAIR) of New York City.

Dr. Lark Lands: Core Nutrients
I first heard Dr. Lands speak last April. She is a health educator and

consultant who worked six years as a research scientist in Washington, D.C. Combining this skill with her personal interest in HIV, she has helped thousands of HIV-positive people develop integrated health-care programs incorporating conventional and complementary therapies. Fundamental to her protocol is a core list of nutrients beneficial to all people with HIV.

Research has shown that HIV and the drugs used to treat HIV and opportunistic infections deplete many nutrients from the body. Dr. Lands' core list includes a bioavailable multiple vitamin/mineral; vitamins C (as ascorbic acid), A (as beta-carotene), B12, and E; and an antioxidant formula to help control free radicals, acidophilus (friendly bacteria), alpha-lipoic acid, coenzyme Q10, essential fatty acids, glutamine, N-acetyl-cysteine (NAC), selenium, and zinc. This list and the supporting research are described in detail in her forthcoming book, *Positively Well: Living With HIV as a Chronic, Manageable, Survivable Disease*. The book can be ordered by calling 800/542-8102.

Dr. Lands offers telephone consultations to create or fine-tune a protocol specific to your needs for a fee of about \$100. Her recommendations are based on your medical history, current problems, a list of all conventional and complementary or alternative therapies you're taking, and the results of recent blood work. She can be reached at 303/569-0194, Monday through Friday, between 3 and 6 p.m., Houston time. It's well worth the cost to help make sense of the

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overwhelming amount of information
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DAAIR

Earlier this year, a friend sent me an impressive packet of information from DAAIR containing fact sheets on nutritional supplementation, news articles, and an application to join. DAAIR is part members-only buyers club, part information resource. They also fund research for many of the products they sell with an eye to their use in managing HIV. Recently I was in New York and had the opportunity to meet with Fred Bingham, founder of DAAIR and long-term survivor of HIV/AIDS. Membership gives access to the buyers club and includes a product catalog and a book called *Comprehensive Goals for Managing HIV Infection*, both over 125 pages. Periodic updates are also sent to members. This is the best resource I've found for comprehensive coverage of the latest scientific information about alternative treatments and HIV. In addition, a 1,500-page alternative treatment literature Web site is available at <http://www.immunet.org/daair>.

The sample fact sheets Fred shared with me are quite extensive. Each describes a specific nutrient and how it works, gives data on deficiencies noted in studies of HIV-positive individuals, provides any known toxicity, suggests the best forms in which to take the nutrient, and how it should be taken. The comprehensive goals advocate a well-rounded, integrated approach to managing

HIV by strengthening the immune system and increasing the body's ability not only to absorb nutrients but to counteract the toxic effects of many HIV/AIDS drugs and increase their efficacy.

Doing the Work

In addition to being willing to do the work it takes to learn about your body and the nutrients it needs, it is important to remain open to the constantly changing landscape of understanding HIV. Because both the information and my body keep changing, I hesitate sharing my exact protocol. The key to finding the right nutritional supplementation is a willingness to do the work again and again. Learn to turn the daunting into the empowering. Claiming our right to health is a big commitment. Because HIV is a wily virus, it is of the utmost importance that you discuss any changes or additions to your program with your physician or health-care providers. I encourage all HIV-positive individuals to seek out a physician who is either knowledgeable about nutritional supplementation or, at the very least, is willing to work with you in your search. Remember whose body it is and whose health you are dealing with. Don't be afraid to take the plunge and do your utmost to strengthen your body.

Former Houstonian Roy Oakes lives in Taos, New Mexico, where he is pursuing a writing career. He has been living positively with HIV for over 13 years. Comments can be sent to his e-mail address: oakesr@laplaza.org.

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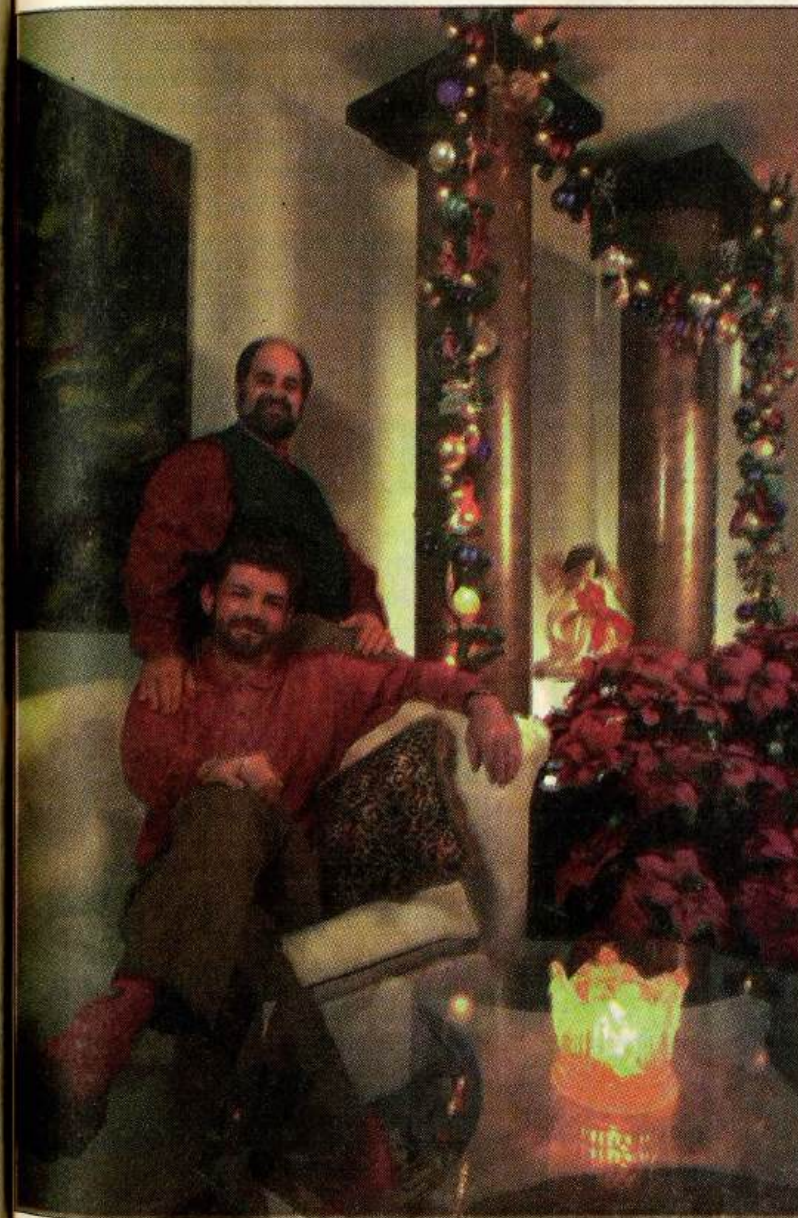
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OUTSMART AT HOME

Jolly Holiday

by Tim Brookover

photography by Theresa DiMenno



Schwartz and West share custody of Gertrude with a friend. She commutes between households.

David Schwartz & Ray West
celebrate the season
with a festive dollop of humor
and Gertrude, the mannequin.

Ray West (seated) and David Schwartz celebrate both Christmas and Hanukkah in their home in Willow Meadows. The gold columns crafted by the couple were once stage props in a Miss Camp America pageant. The holiday decorations in the clean-lined family room, above, include a pine garland woven with ornaments and Gertrude the mannequin in her holiday finery.

During December, Gertrude, a statuesque department-store mannequin, presides over Ray West and David Schwartz's home like the spirit of Christmas camp. Drop-dead fabulous in her red frock and supermodel hateur, Gertrude is the embodiment of her caretakers' exuberant holiday mood. These two men obviously revel in the season's sparkle and festivities—and the more festive, the better. Dedicated readers of this magazine will, in fact, remember Ray as the cover boy on last year's December issue, for which he wore stacks of colorful wrapped packages on his head, a la Carmen Miranda, and flashy tree baubles dangling from his earlobes.

Soon after Thanksgiving each year, the decorations go up in their home in Willow Meadows: pine garlands hung with glass ornaments and toys, banks of red poinsettias, a tree draped in twinkle lights, mounds of gift boxes in gleaming metallic wrap, cunning holiday garb on West's prized collection of Barbies. In a prominent place in the living room sits a delicately painted, contemporary ceramic menorah, evidence that two faiths dwell in this house ("I'm an equal-opportunity gift receiver," Schwartz quips). On each of the eight evenings of Hanukkah, Schwartz and West light one of the blue tapers, and on one of the holy nights Schwartz, who is the cook in the family, makes a batch of traditional potato latkes. This year, though, for the first time, the couple will travel to Kansas City to observe part of the

holiday with Schwartz's family. For Christmas, they will then return home to celebrate with West's mother and father, his brother and sister-in-law, and their young children. The household is completed by Skeeter, a Lhasa Apso marking a first birthday this month, a whippet named Andy, and assorted tropical birds.

During the season, the couple visit hospital patients. "That's the most rewarding thing we do at Christmas," West says.

"We're planning a very family-oriented holiday this year," West says. Their idea of family extends beyond the relatives. Every year, West and Schwartz take holiday gift bags filled with treats and little necessities—from toiletry items to socks—to AIDS patients in local hospitals as part of the annual program organized by Body Positive Houston. They also visit with patients at Casa, A Special Hospital. "That's really the most rewarding thing we do at Christmas," West says. "We get so much back from it."

Like family, the community holds an important place in West and Schwartz's lives. West has served as president of the People With AIDS Coalition of Houston since



August 1995. Joking that a West presidency makes him "first spouse," Schwartz, a systems analyst for corporate clients, says his involvement stems from West's enthusiasm for charitable work. They are also active in the Miss Camp America pageant and fundraiser and Outrage, the

social group that raises money for AIDS organizations. In October, they joined the Houston contingent to help unfold the NAMES Project quilt on the Mall in Washington, D.C. "It was the first time I saw the whole quilt on the Mall," West says. "It was overwhelming." Schwartz adds, "We got to meet so many wonderful people that weekend."

"I'm an equal-opportunity gift receiver," Schwartz quips.

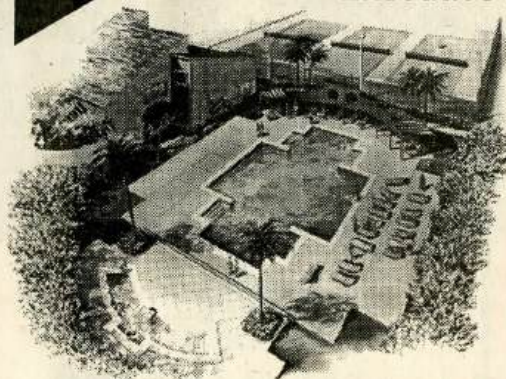
West and Schwartz, a couple for three years, surround themselves with friends. Impromptu parties for 20 and often more are not unusual. Many of these usually lively events become traditions, like the First Annual Joan Crawfish Boil. For a recent excursion to San Antonio to celebrate West's birthday, they hired a bus

to transport their guests, including Gertrude, who became a popular subject for tourist cameras in the Alamo City. Among West and Schwartz's chums, though, their most legendary gatherings take place on Thanksgiving. Each holiday receives a theme, and not one inspired by either Currier and Ives or Norman Rockwell. Past years have seen Tropical Thanksgiving, the Japanese Thanksgiving, and the Liberace Thanksgiving, certainly a tribute to an American as unlike a Pilgrim as you can get. This November was Disco Thanksgiving ("Stayin' alive, stayin' alive," West croons the grateful tune of the day). Unlike the turkey days in more conventional homes across the country, in this house a mirrored ball twirled from the ceiling, and a soundtrack worthy of the Copa in its heyday thumped through the rooms. As she does every year, Gertrude stood in the family room, a mute yet glamorous muse for two men who so rejoice in the holidays.

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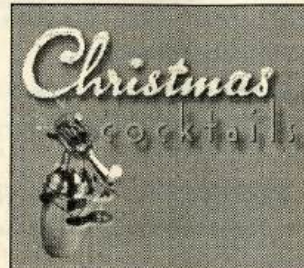
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Serving Christmas Cocktails

Lounging Up Your Holiday Open House

by Kyle Young

Break out the martini glasses and ask your guests to don their best gay apparel—polyester suits and gold mini-dresses. Turn your dreary annual holiday open house into something with a bit more spice. Music sets the mood for a party, and vintage '50s and '60s "lounge" music is all the rage. As part of their Ultra-Lounge series, Capitol Records has just released *Christmas Cocktails*. The CD features the slinky, sultry sounds of re-issued bachelor pad holiday tunes.



You'll have to break out the limbo bar for Billy May's "Rudolph, The Red-Nosed Reindeer Mambo." Ray Anthony's "Christmas Trumpets" will bring visions of the Tijuana Brass in go-go boots. After Jimmy McGriff's sul-

try organ on "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town," you'll expect to see Santa and the elves decked out in smoking jackets, puffing on Cohibas.

With 72 minutes of holiday cheer, *Christmas Cocktails* will carry your party from Nat King Cole and Dean Martin to Peggy Lee and Nancy Wilson. Digitally remastered from their original tape sources, these holiday grooves offer a crystal clear vibe.

Also, check out the "Lounge" sections at Cactus Music or Soundwaves. With CDs like *Mondo Exotica* and *Bachelor Pad Royale*, you'll find numerous titles to round out the music selection for your get-together.

Christmas Cocktails For Your Lounge Party

Hot Toddy

- 1 teaspoon Sugar
- Small piece of Cinnamon
- Slice of Lemon garnished with Cloves
- 1 1/2 ounce Rye or Brandy
- Boiling Water

Place a spoon in an Old-Fashioned glass, put in sugar and dissolve it with a little hot water. Add the cinnamon, lemon, and whisky and fill the glass nearly full with piping hot water. Stir gently. Grate a little nutmeg on top and serve.

Hot Tom & Jerry

For two 6-ounce servings:

- 1 Egg, separated
- 2 ounces gold Label Rum
- 1 ounce Brandy or Whiskey
- 2 teaspoons Sugar
- 6 ounces Hot Milk

Beat egg yolk, adding sugar. Stir in liquor, then egg white, well beaten. Pour into glasses or mugs, adding hot milk. Sprinkle with grated nutmeg.

We hope you will enjoy "OutSmart at Home," our new design and lifestyle section. Drop us a line if you have an idea for something you would like to see in future issues.

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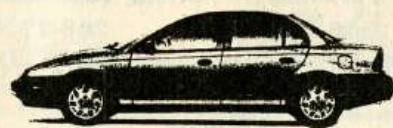
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Avoiding Financial or Legal Confusion After a Death

*Early Organization Prevents
an Extra Burden for Your Partner*

by Bill Green

Organizing your financial and legal documents in case of your death isn't as morbid as it sounds. In fact, it can help prevent confusion for lovers, surviving relatives, and friends if an expected or unexpected death occurs. Here are some answers to commonly asked questions —

My partner and I have wills. What else should we do to ensure our wishes are followed if we both die?

Make sure someone besides your significant other knows your burial preferences and the location of all important documents—wills, insurance policies, and investment plans. Also, provide them with a list naming your accountant, lawyer, and financial adviser. Easy access is vital, so carefully plan where the documents are stored. A safe deposit box may be ideal.

How can I be sure my wishes will be carried out if I become incapacitated?

Choose a person you trust—a partner, close friend, or relative—and give them a durable power of attorney.

This enables the designated person to make decisions on your behalf. Keep in mind, some banks and brokerage firms may require you to fill out separate forms. Also, draft a living will, which states your wishes regarding life support in case you are unable to make medical decisions for yourself.



Bill Green

How important is a will if my family knows how I want my assets distributed?

It is extremely important. Among other things, a will specifies how you want your assets distributed. If you have minor children, who do you want to care for them? If you die without a will, the state decides who receives your assets and in what amounts—regardless of what you may have told your family.

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Families don't always follow your wishes. If you own assets with your partner, it is absolutely imperative that both have a will to protect each other's interests.

Are there other documents besides a will that are important to check periodically?

There are several. Each year you should review insurance policies, investment plans, and any other documents naming beneficiaries to see if changes are needed. Make sure someone else besides your partner knows where these documents are located in case you both become incapacitated. You also should evaluate your life insurance policies to make sure the amount is adequate and verify property ownership and titling.

"If you own assets with your partner, it is absolutely imperative that you both have a will to protect each other's interests."

I'm worried that my family might have to pay high estate taxes after my death. What should I do? Since we are not protected by state or federal laws regarding surviving spouses, I cannot stress enough the importance of proper estate planning for gays and lesbians. First, estimate your estate taxes. The first \$600,000 of assets owned per person isn't taxed by the federal government. Generally, your life insurance proceeds will be added to your other assets in arriving at your taxable estate. If you need help, a professional financial adviser can assist in determining the amount your estate will be taxed. There are several steps you can take now to lower your estate taxes, such as establishing trusts or giving monetary gifts.

William L. Green, CPA, is a certified financial planner with Green/White Advisors. Send your financial questions to Bill c/o OutSmart or call 713/869-1144.

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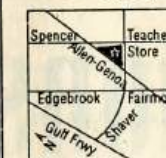
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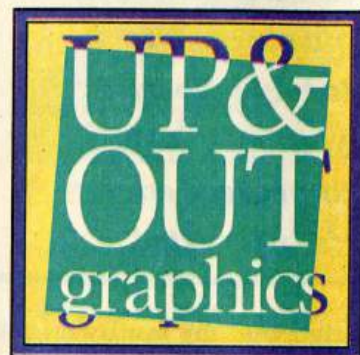
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Calendar/Volunteers/Continued from page 59
bilitating illness. Volunteers are trained & supervised in the provision of direct care such as emotional support, meal preparation, shopping, hospital & home visits, pet care, plant & lawn maintenance, transportation, & other assistance. Volunteers work as members of a Care Team, which is assigned one client, so it is realistic to expect 2 visits/week from volunteers. 552-9445.

• **AVES** (Amigos Volunteers in Education & Services) volunteer wish list: 1) fluent, or at least functional, in English & Spanish; 2) comfortable discussing sexual matters with total strangers; 3) comfortable with various ethnic & sexual cultures; 4) able and willing to commit at least two hours a week; 5) able to staff the hotline during office hours; & 6) willing to make a long-term (at least six months) commitment. 4126 Southwest Frwy, Ste. 1717, 626-2837 or 1-800-981-2837.

• **Camp Hope**, for children living with HIV/AIDS, needs sleeping bags, snacks, suntan lotions, insect repellents, toiletries, minor medical equipment (e.g. thermometer), toilet paper, toiletry kits, camper duffel bags, bed linen, fruit juices, soft drinks, and so forth. For more info: Mecie Hardin or Mike Mizwa, 623-6796.

• **Casa de Esperanza** needs clothes, sizes birth to 14; shoes; socks & underwear; children's videos; diapers and diaper wipes; food; art supplies; and toys for the shelter that serves abused and HIV-infected children. P.O. Box 66581, Houston 77266-6581, 529-0639.

• **Child Advocates** needs volunteers to help serve the nearly 3,800 children in Harris County who are in foster care because of severe, life-threatening, soul-threatening abuse. To help get these children into homes that are safe, loving, & permanent: 529-1396.

• **Crisis Intervention of Houston** needs volunteers for 24-hour crisis-intervention & suicide-prevention hotline that requires 53 hours of training & a commitment of 4 hours a week; cash contributions for hotline & counseling programs. P.O. Box 130866, Houston 77219, 527-9864.

• **Gay & Lesbian Switchboard Houston** (GLSH) is a nonprofit all-volunteer organization offering the community information & referrals to businesses, legal and medical professionals, and a variety of organizations. It also provides information on HIV/AIDS, coming out, etc. P.O. Box 66496, Houston, TX 77266-6469, 529-3211. GLSH also operates the Hate Crimes Hotline, 529-9615.

• **The Homeless Pet Placement League** is a nonprofit animal welfare organization that rescues & rehabilitates stray & abandoned cats & dogs. To inquire about volunteering, foster care, or adopting: 862-PETS.

• **Lesbian Health Initiative** (LHI) works to improve the health of lesbians and bisexual women in the Houston area. Volunteers needed to help with computer work, fundraising, direct healthcare services, organizing projects, phone trees, and publicity/advertising. For more info: 526-7828.

• **Milam House**, a residential center for people living with HIV/AIDS, is in need of sincere individuals to offer friendship and support. In the safe, comfortable setting of Milam House, volunteers and staff strive to address residents' physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. As a home for people who are moderately ill and no longer able to provide housing for themselves, Milam House provides a safety net of assistance when needed. Most of our volunteers prefer one-on-one work with the residents—like lending a helping hand, a listening ear, and a companionship to count on. However, some volunteers provide clerical and general office assistance as well as planning and execution of fundraising events. For more info, call 520-9248 or e-mail ahhvintr@neosoftware.com. You can also visit at <http://www.neosoftware.com/~ahhstaff/MilamHouse/>.

• **Montrose Clinic/Houston Clinical Research Network** is a community-based, nonprofit agency that provides low- or no-cost health, social, educational, and research services; specializes in treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS care. Needed: cash gifts for indigent-patient care and capital campaign; volunteer time from general and specialty physicians or lay persons interested in HIV counseling and office support. 215 Westheimer, 520-2000.

• **Montrose Counseling Center** needs office furniture and equipment and interested citizens to serve on boards of this mental-health facility, which has HIV, substance-abuse, and general counseling programs. 701 Richmond, 529-0037.

• **Omega House** is a hospice for AIDS patients. Needed: volunteers! Also: foam eggshell mattress pads (twin-size), adult diapers, chlorine bleach, laundry detergent; basic, new wall-mountable cordless phones; cigarette lighters; knives; wash cloths; plastic spatulas & serving utensils; musicians to play for residents; general office supplies. 602 Branard, 523-7110.

• **Q-Patrol** is dedicated to the prevention of hate crimes against gays and lesbians, patrols the bar areas in Montrose, and is always looking for volunteers. If you have at least one Friday or Saturday night per month, call 528-SAFE (7233).

• **Rape Crisis Program** Volunteers are needed in the rape crisis program of the Houston Area Women's Center. Volunteers answer hotline calls, counsel survivors in hospitals and at the center, and help with clerical support. The Women's Center offers extensive training for volunteers who work with survivors of sexual assault. For more info, call 528-6798, ext. 273.

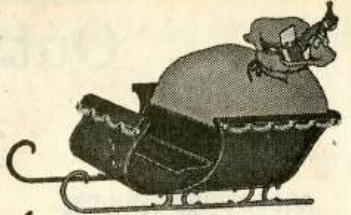
• **Second Chance Pets** is a nonprofit organization that helps stray, abandoned, & unwanted animals find permanent homes. We provide medical care & an adoption site for the animals. The animals live in foster homes during the week. We need foster homes (especially for cats), volunteers for adoption days, publicity & fundraising, and adoptive homes for our many wonderful animals. For info: 286-3535.

• **Steven's House** provides intermediate care in a homelike environment for people living with HIV/AIDS. Needed: linens, pillows, personal-hygiene products, paper products, cleaning products, laundry detergent, bleach, nonperishable food items & fresh produce; small & large TVs with remotes, a VCR, videos, office furniture & office supplies; volunteers for a variety of tasks & services. For more info: 522-5757.

• **StreetWise Houston** is a drop-in/educational and support center for homeless, street, & lesbian youth, ages 13-22, located @ 202 Tuam @ the corner of Helena. We provide HIV support groups, drug intervention, housing case management, & GED classes. We are seeking donations of hygiene products (deodorant, tampons, toothpaste, etc.), canned foods, furniture (beds, sofa, dining table), new socks & underwear, dishes, linens, & bus tokens. We are also seeking volunteers who would like to teach life skills and/or be mentors to our young clients during afternoon or evening operating hours. For more info: Michelle @ 524-5757.

Fax your Calendar announcements or changes to 713/522-3275. Deadline: Dec. 15.

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AIDS Mastery Workshop 623-6796
AIDS, Medicine & Miracles 800/875-8770
Anti-Homophobia Alliance (AHA!) 526-8822
AVES (Amigos AIDS Volunteers) 4126 SW Freeway 626-2837
Bering Community Service Foundation • 1440 Harold 529-6071
Black Tie Dinner 523-9611
Body Positive • 1475 W. Gray Ste.176-177 524-2374
Discrimination Free Zone Project
P.O. Box 66664, Houston, 77266 861-8238
FIST (Females in Search of Trouble) 772-5826
Garden Party 524-0409
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Gay Men's Chorus • P.O. Box 541004 521-SING
Greater Houston Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce
1109 Hyde Park, Box 178, Houston 77006 523-7576
Hate Crimes Hot-Line 529-9615
Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals 942-7002
Houston Clinical Research Network • 4211 Graustark 520-2034
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Houston Gay & Lesbian Political Caucus
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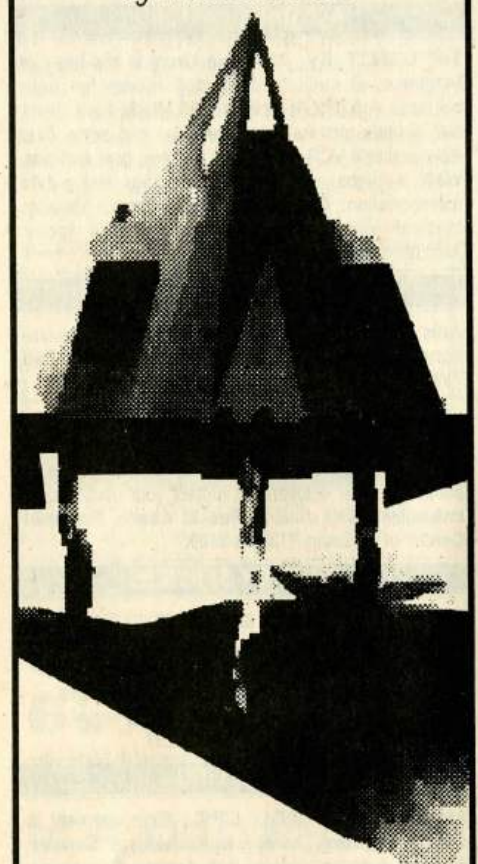
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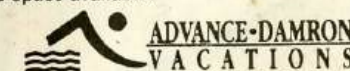
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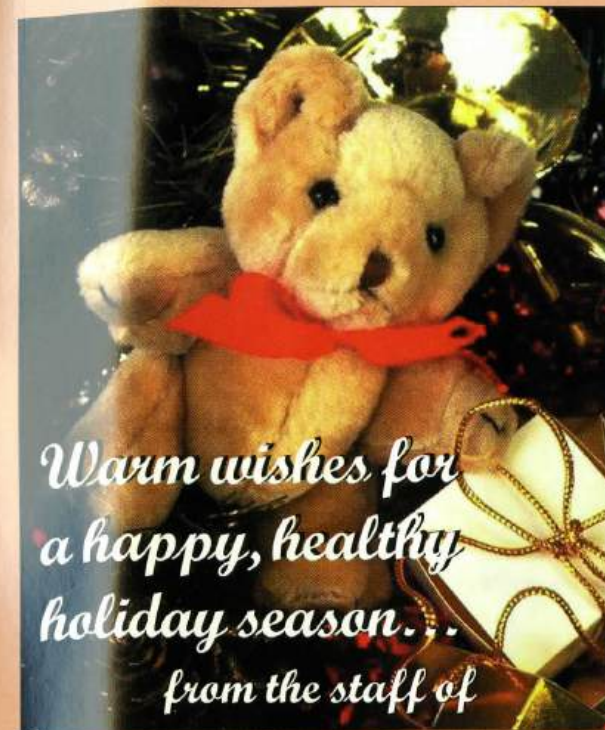
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Top 10 Reasons I Voted on November 5

Before the Nov. 5 election, *OutSmart* distributed fliers at local events which listed the Houston Gay & Lesbian Political Caucus endorsements. We asked readers to send us their "Top 10 Reasons for Voting." Brian Malarkey received \$100, as our Most Creative Entry. Runners-up were dazzled with *OutSmart* T-shirts. Here's Brian's response:

1. Because I don't want to see the White House turn into a nursing home.
2. To shut Rush up for four more years.
3. So the Democrats can get on with the job instead of doing the macarena.
4. To prevent an ex-professional sports figure from being elected second-in-command (I always hated football anyway).
5. So we won't have to see any of those scary Bob Dole masks next Halloween.
6. To keep the general public from having to take vivarin for presidential addresses.

7. "Bill and Al" sound cooler than "Bob and Dick."
8. Hillary's got better outfits than Liddy.
9. Because I'm having a hard enough time getting someone into my bed-room, much less out of it, Ralph Reed.
10. So we can see Barbra Streisand perform again at the Inaugural Ball!



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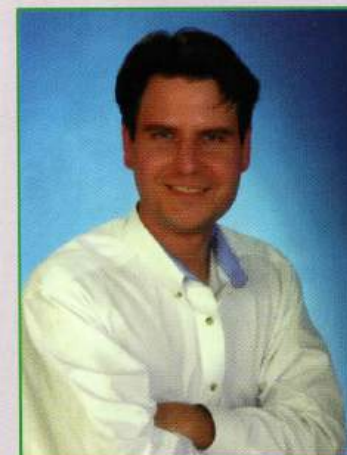
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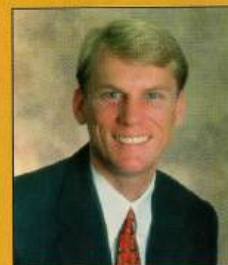
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