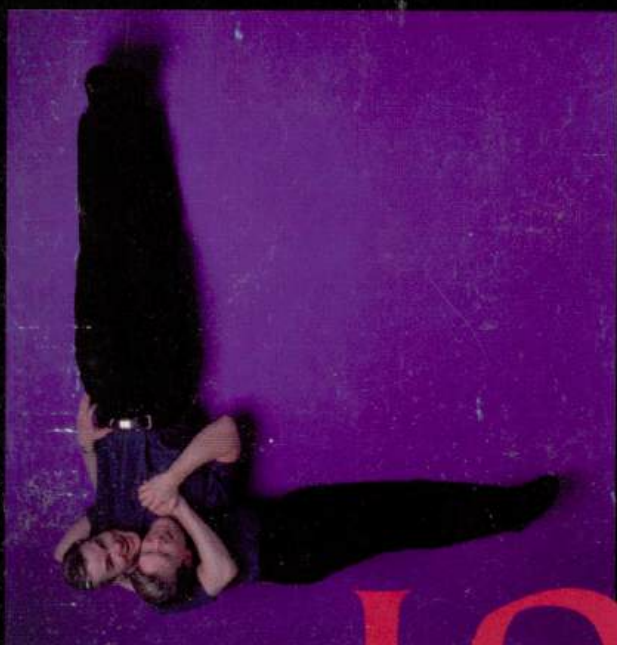


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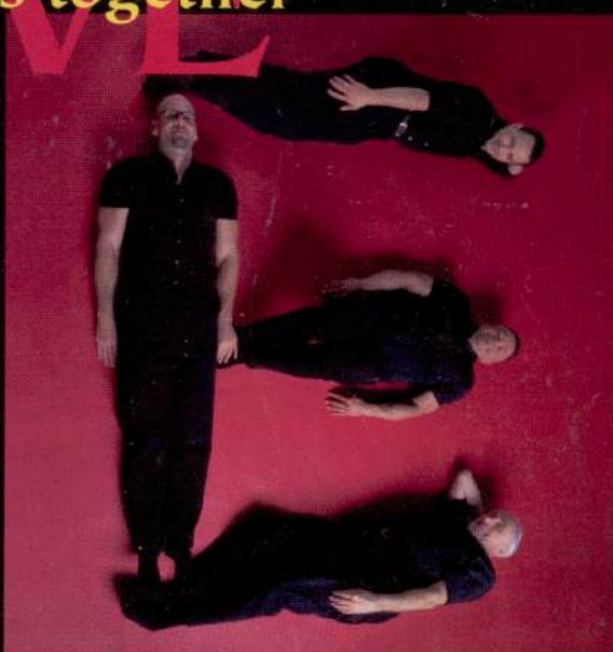
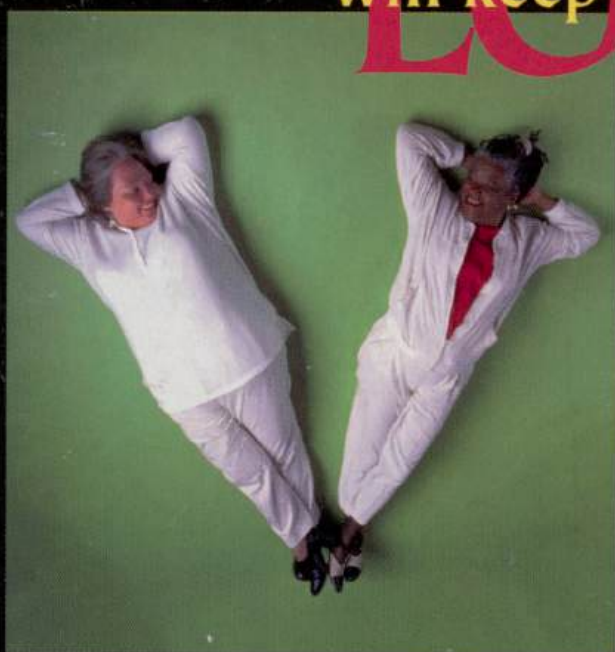
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Vol. 7 • No. 1 • February 2000

FEATURES

Sacred Sexuality

Body Electric Awakening: In a room high above SMU, serenaded by Donna Summer, I discovered a new way to be sexual.....**36**

by Alan Davidson

Relationships, Imagine!

The Imago Model explains why your lovers keep driving you crazy and why you should thank them for it.....**42**

by Patrick Vachon

Health&Spirit

Bare Attention. Stressed? Maybe your life just isn't ordinary enough. by Micki Fine.....**47**
From the Heart/Alan Cohen.....**52**

DEPARTMENTS

Letters	5
In&Out	6
Business News	14
Calendar	22
Theater	23
Queer Quotes	34
The Source	61
Classifieds	66
OutSmart Advertisers	68
SceneOut	72

COLUMNS

OuterNet/Anthony Bures	5
DineOut/Shelley Barnes	17
GrooveOut/Chris Sill	30
LeftOut/Daryl Moore	54
OutRight/Dale Carpenter	55
TravelOut/Sandra Wilkins	58
SignOut/Lilly Roddy	70

COVER PHOTO:

"L" - OUTSMART "WORKOUT" COLUMNIST JOHN-AARON (BOTTOM) AND HUSBAND ALEX STUTLER; "O" - FORMER OUTSMART EDITOR MELISSA VALENZUELA (LEFT) AND FOO (FRIEND OF OUTSMART) DEBORAH BROWN; "V" - PSYCHOLOGIST AND AUTHOR JOYCE GAYLES (RIGHT) AND HER GIRLFRIEND JAN GORE; "E" - CHRIS SILL, RICH'S DJ AND OUTSMART "GROOVEOUT" COLUMNIST (LEFT); PSYCHOLOGIST SHANE HENNESSEY (TOP); NELSON VERGEL, FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF BODY POSITIVE WELLNESS CENTER (MIDDLE); AND THE REV. RALPH LASHER, ASSISTANT PASTOR AT MCCR (BOTTOM). PHOTOS: WOODALLEN PHOTOGRAPHY (SEE PAGES 36 AND 42)

THIS PAGE: JAN GORE (L) AND JOYCE GAYLES PHOTO: WOODALLEN PHOTOGRAPHY

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SHELL IS ONE OF THE GOOD GUYS

As co-chairs of SEA Shell, Shell Oil Company's gay and lesbian employees network, we noted your reference to Chevron as the leader in the energy industry in supporting its gay and lesbian employees ["Oilpatch Blues," January OutSmart]. While we do not wish to dispute Chevron's commitment, we thought you should be aware that we in SEA Shell feel that our company is also a leader in that regard.

SEA Shell began as an informal group of employees meeting for lunch in the early 1990s. Now over 120 employees strong, official recognition and funding of our employee network began in 1997 with our efforts supported by an advisory board of senior managers. In 1996, Shell added sexual orientation to its nondiscrimination policy and, in January 1998, took the important step of adopting domestic partner benefits.

Shell has included gay and lesbian concerns in much of its diversity training for all employees, and the company has generously donated to both national and local gay and lesbian organizations for the last several years. Locally, Shell has donated to such organizations as the AIDS Foundation, the Lesbian Health Initiative, and Miss Camp America in Houston; the AIDS Task Force in New Orleans; and nationally to PFLAG, among others.

For the last two years, Shell has been a sponsor of Empower, the annual gay and lesbian business expo at the George R. Brown Convention Center. Additionally, Shell Chemical Company joined the Greater Houston Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce in 1999, and their donation funded GHGLCC's monthly newsletter last year. Our senior management sup-

Letters to the Editor

ported us by funding our participation in Houston's Pride Parade last June, and Shell sponsored a table at the national Human Rights Campaign dinner in Washington, D.C., this past fall.

As Houston's leading source of news for the gay and lesbian community, we wanted you to be aware of all the great efforts Houston-based Shell has made in its relationship with both its gay and lesbian employees, and with the local and national communities. For these reasons, we believe our company clearly deserves recognition as a leader in the field of diversity.

—Eileen Donaghy & John Murphy
via the Internet

OutSmart responds:

In recognizing Chevron's good track record on gay issues, we did not intend to slight Shell Oil. OutSmart applauds Shell's progressive leadership in responding to the needs and rights of their lesbian and gay employees. We also appreciate the effort of both companies in getting the word out about their good deeds, so that the gay community and our friends can better make decisions as consumers, and in consideration of potential employers.

KIDS ARE FOR STRAIGHTS?

I disagree strongly with Prentice Danford's letter in the January issue [of OutSmart] attacking Basic Brothers and advocating a prudish and homophobic policing of gay events so everything is fit for the kids of the prudes. Doesn't Mr. Danford realize that the production of children is an essential heterosexual affair? I love gay culture and its open eroticism and have no desire whatsoever to see prudish morals regarding the male body pushed back on us by closet prude adults hiding behind their kids. Yuk!

—Tim Campbell
Houston

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OuterNet
by Anthony Bures

WE'RE NOT IN KANSAS ANYMORE!

The brave new wide world of the gay web

Editor's Note: OutSmart is celebrating its birthday this month, having started six hectic and exciting years ago on February 15, 1994. With OutSmart's sixth anniversary, we see it entering the new millennium in a new medium. (Marshall McLuhan would be proud.) Although we've had a website in the past, we are now dedicating ourselves to making OutSmart Online as interesting, useful, and community-building a medium as we hope you find the "floppy" version of the magazine that you're holding. Take a look: we're at www.outsmartmagazine.com.

Because we think the web is becoming an important part of gay journalism, we've brought Internet marketing guru Dennise Ryder on staff; Anthony Bures and his company, Atomar Communications, are designing our website. We're also pleased to introduce "OuterNet," a monthly column Anthony will be writing for us on the wide world of the gay web.

We're excited about adding an Internet dimension to our magazine. Now, along with flipping pages, clicking links is going to be a part of the magazine. Of course, the world wide web is exciting for everyone, but we feel it has a special usefulness for communities like ours.

Quite different from the behemoths of television, radio, and print, the Internet is low on cost, and high on interactivity. This means a lot to the gay and lesbian community.

One, cheap is gay-friendly. Basically a computer and a connection to the Internet can turn someone into their own web publisher. As a result of this low cost, there has been an explosion of gay- and lesbian-related materials on the Internet. From want ads looking for roommates to news on gay and lesbian marriages, the information seems limitless and growing each day. The smaller voices can now be heard—and not only locally but around the world—making this a potentially more powerful medium for the gay and lesbian community than has ever existed in our history.

Two, interactive is very gay-friendly. In the past we could see a movie about our community or read an article but never could we build virtual communities and find others like ourselves across the world. This interactivity is even friendlier to a community such as the gay and lesbian world, because some of us are more comfortable being out and others more comfortable being anonymous.

The Internet lets you choose that comfort level. So now many individuals who are gay but would have never encountered gay material can now do this on the Internet and find out about books, dating, travel, and the list goes on without revealing their identities. For those comfortable being out, it's not only easy enough to browse the Internet, but a lot of individuals are posting webpages about themselves.

The dot coms now and in the future are going to have a great impact on our community. After all, they already have. Because the web's cheap, easy, and embraces audience interaction, it will provide many positive benefits to the gay community.

In&Out

News IN our community & OUT in the nation

WHITHER VERMONT, WHITHER THE COUNTRY?

State of the union: a survey of how lawmakers in various states are reacting to gay marriages, and other gay issues

With Vermont's groundbreaking endorsement of gay partnerships, other states around the country have been rethinking their policies on gay marriage and gay rights in general. The Dec. 20 decision in Vermont is the first by a state supreme court to say that unions between homosexuals should be afforded the same benefits and protections that married heterosexual couples enjoy. Some lawmakers are responding to Vermont by inching forward themselves, feeling like it's a little bit safer to come out in support of gay rights.

"Because states see one another moving toward embracing their gay citizens, the momentum for progress is starting to snowball quite delightfully," wrote Deb Price in the gay *Detroit News*. Hopefully. But the Vermont decision has driven other more conservative lawmakers to fight against gay rights tooth and nail.

Although gay rights activists in many states have been working for years to get laws passed supporting gay marriage, gay rights, and sexual orientation nondiscrimination policies, the national zeitgeist seems especially fine-tuned to these struggles right now. Here's where some states stand in either surging ahead or backslashing against the happenings in Vermont.

California

Some progress, and a big upcoming vote—That state of political extremes, California is in the throes of preparing for the March 7 vote on the notorious Proposition 22, the Limit on Marriages Act spearheaded by Republican state Sen. Pete Knight, which would bar the state from recognizing same-sex marriages performed in other states.

Meanwhile, a gain in gay rights: Across the state, "domestic partners" can register for and receive two benefits: hospital visitation rights (which could otherwise be restricted to family members) and health insurance coverage for the dependents of government employees covered by the state retirement system. California had legislated similar bills in 1994 and 1998, which were then vetoed by

former California Gov. Pete Wilson. The current legislation was proposed by San Francisco Assemblywoman Carole Migden and signed into law by California Gov. Gray Davis. While this legislation principally benefits gay couples, it is also being used by elderly couples who choose not to marry because of potential cuts to their Social Security income. Already 12 California cities and four counties had their own policies giving health benefits to domestic partners.

Although this gain is a good solid step, gay couples in California still lack numerous rights that married couples take for granted, such as Social Security benefits, inheritance provisions, tax breaks, the right to make medical decisions for each other, or health coverage after the death of the state employee.

"Today I have gained one benefit," said Sam Catalano, a state employee who hummed the wedding march as he and his partner paid \$10 to become registered couple No. 66 at the secretary of state's office in Sacramento, "and those married couples have 1,400," citing federal studies that estimate more than 1,000 legal benefits of marriage.

Florida

Small towns stand behind gay rights—Although a Christian coalition has tried to take protection for gays out of the Miami-Dade County's human rights ordinance, it looks like it's no go. The human rights ordinance extends basic protection against discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations and financing on the basis of race, gender, color, religion, ancestry, age, national origin, disability, pregnancy, marital status, or familial status. In 1998, the ordinance was amended to include sexual orientation.

At first, the coalition's effort to take "sexual orientation" back out of the human rights ordinance seemed to be gaining steam as various small cities throughout the country supported their efforts. But as the small-town lawmakers started to understand what the Christian coalition was proposing, they turned against them, such as when the Opa-

locka City Commission unanimously rescinded its support. Opa-locka commissioners said they did not understand that the resolution was aimed at overturning the county's human rights ordinance.

"I know homosexuality is not contagious. I slapped cuffs on enough of them to know that," West Kendall Councilman Hector Varela told the *Miami Herald*. A Vietnam War veteran and former Marine, he said part of his military duties was to ferret out gay service-members. "It's one of the things that I most regret doing."

Maine

Gay rights law soon?—For quite some time, Maine lawmakers and voters have been caught up in a debate over whether to enact a state gay rights law, to legally protect lesbians and gays in such areas as employment, housing, public accommodation, and credit. Maine Gov. Angus King and the Maine Legislature had approved a gay rights law in 1997, only to have it rejected by a "people's veto" special referendum in February 1998. Only losing by 51 to 49 percent in a very low voter turnout, it was thought the result was not representational.

Gov. King wants to put the issue before the voters again in November, when the larger turnout will give a truer picture of the wishes of the body politic. Some gay activists have lobbied to pass the bill without putting it to a vote, but King opposed such a move. Further momentum was given to the gay rights referendum in early January when the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland announced it would support an amended gay rights proposal, upsetting the antigay Christian coalition.

Maryland

Can't we wait?—The Maryland Legislature will be voting on a gay rights bill this term, even though a similar law did not pass last year. Maryland Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr. urged his fellow legislators not to act on the bill until after the U.S.

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Supreme Court takes up the issue this spring with their consideration of the Boy Scout case, in which they will rule on whether a non-government group can discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. But Maryland Gov. Parris N. Glendening does not think Maryland should lollygag about when it comes to such crucial issues. "I feel if something's right, it's right regardless of other considerations," he said, in an interview with the *Washington Post*. "We're going to fight very aggressively for that bill."

Massachusetts

Maybe someday—Although no laws or lawsuits are pending in Massachusetts, one of Vermont's neighbors, the *Boston Globe* reports that lawmakers are not adverse to considering a Vermont-type dictum down the line. In particular, Massachusetts Attorney General Thomas F. Reilly gave his considered endorsement to the Vermont ruling.

"I thought the Vermont decision was an important landmark decision, a positive step for fairness," said Reilly, who would likely be a key player in a legal challenge to Massachusetts' marriage laws. "It really comes down to my view of the law, which requires

basic fairness and equal protection for everyone, including gay and lesbian couples. Whatever you call it, people should be treated fairly."

Massachusetts Gov. Paul Cellucci is still a nay-sayer against gay marriages. "We do not want to weaken the institution of marriage," he said. Likewise Senate President Thomas F. Birmingham, although he said that he does support legislation extending health benefits to the same-sex partners of state employees.

On the good side, when the antigay Massachusetts Family Institute called on the state legislature to outlaw same-sex marriage, Gov. Cellucci said he did not think such legislation was needed.

New Hampshire

Keep away from our state—Although New Hampshire stretches side-by-side with Vermont, seemingly sharing terrain and geography, New Hampshire lawmakers are quick-pedaling, trying to distance themselves from their sister state. Republican state representative Gary Torressen has sponsored a bill that would both ban same-sex unions in Vermont and explic-

itly deny recognition of same-sex marriages performed elsewhere. A similar law was rejected three years ago. The Catholic Diocese of Manchester supports the ban.

Nevada

Just a law against gay marriage is not enough, we have to put it in the constitution—A Nevada coalition wants to put a vote on the November ballot that would write a ban on gay marriages into the state constitution. Called the Coalition for the Protection of Marriage, this group is not just a fringe gang either, but includes 10 state lawmakers, a mayor, former Gov. Bob List, and former U.S. Rep. Barbara Vucanovich, R-Nev. The petition would take existing state law, which defines marriage as being between a man and a woman, and put it in the constitution.

Ohio

Setbacks in Ohio—Ohio Gov. Bob Taft deleted the words "sexual orientation" from the state's employment nondiscrimination policy, supposedly because he did not want to single out gays from other non-specified groups. According to the Associated Press, Ohio's two previous governors, Democrat Richard Celeste and George Voinovich, a Republican now serving in the U.S. Senate, both included a specific reference to gays in their antidiscrimination orders. The order was first issued by Celeste in 1984, and Voinovich continued it during his eight years as governor.

Another disappointment: Dayton's city commissioners declined to change the city's discrimination law to specifically protect gays in employment and housing, after it was proposed by City Commissioner Mary Wiseman. It currently prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or religion. The commissioners did adopt an informal resolution affirming the city's opposition to all discrimination, including that against gays.

West Virginia

Proactive hate-mongering—West Virginia is just pining for antigay legislation. For the past three years, the houses of the West Virginia Legislature have passed various bills banning same-sex marriages, but they can't quite agree on the language, and the bills have each time died on the last day of the legislative session. Now West Virginia Gov. Cecil Underwood is asking the Legislature to put on all marriage license applications: "Marriage is designed to be a loving and lifelong union between a woman and a man."

—AWS

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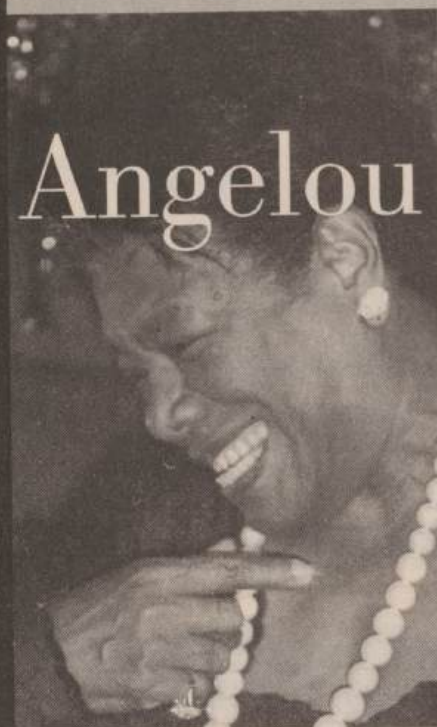
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FULL-STEAM GENE

Gene Harrington talks about a life agitating for equality for PWAs—and everybody



Gene Harrington has the demeanor of a classic activist—funny, focused, pragmatic, full of crazy stories of life in the trenches, yet curiously unconcerned with himself. The founder of the AIDS Equity League, Gene has been fighting the county and the hospital district for adequate AIDS care since before he himself was diagnosed HIV positive, back in 1986. It is Gene who has been keeping after the state to repeal its inane sodomy law, seeing it through an intricate series of appeals. Now 60 years old, Gene ran with the pack of crazy Queer Nation and ACT-UP activists, setting up a "concentration camp" in Galveston to protest cuts in AIDS funding, even though he was a generation older than most of his cohorts.

But Gene is not just a fixture in the gay rights hall of fame and infamy. In January,

Gene Harrington holds forth from his mother's favorite chair, which may look a bit like Christmas wrapping paper.

the faculty of the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University unanimously voted Gene Professor of the Year. Gene has been on the faculty at TSU for nearly 35 years. In April, he is also going to be given the lifetime achievement award by the Bar Association for Human Rights, Houston's gay and lesbian lawyers group. We took the excuse of all these honors to sit down with Gene and get him to tell *OutSmart* the life story of his accomplishments and exploits.

Having recently gotten out of the hospital, Gene was bemoaning the farcical loopholes and red tape thrown at him by the insurance companies, when he drew himself up short. "But you know, I'm really extremely lucky," he said, his wide mouth smiling in the middle of his expressive bony face. "I have insurance. I live in a city with facilities. Most people with AIDS would love to have problems like mine."

This is typical Gene. Without being a martyr or high-handed about it, he's spent his life noticing when others were having a hard time and/or were being screwed. It all started when he was a law student at St. John's University in New York in the early '60s, and he looked around at his fellow students.

"Not one black, two women, not one Hispanic, and quote unquote there's not even one gay person—I was too much in the closet to even think about being out there. Not one black in the entire law school—and this is not South Carolina, this is New York City.

"As an upper-middle class male in the United States with a good education, either you are just satisfied with the world," he continues, "—and there's every reason to be satisfied with the world. Or you see that foundation of injustice that got

you there. The obviousness of so many people to a society which allowed them the status that they had ... earlier I was very angry at this, now I'm just very frustrated."

Gene didn't grow up in the lap of privilege; his was a traditional Irish Catholic home, solidly middle American. His father was a fireman in New York, his mother a homemaker. Having gotten involved in protests over South Africa while in law school, Gene decided to take the life-changing step of joining the Peace Corps after he graduated. He went to Nigeria, where he worked with the first (and what proved to be the only) African Lawyer Peace Corps Project, helping train Africans as lawyers at the University of Nigeria. The African influence ran deep and strong, as you can tell by all the African statues in Gene's small, spare apartment.

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Russell C. Simon — Not Certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization

Back from Africa, Gene decided to take the position on the faculty at Texas Southern. He became involved with gay politics with the referendum in the mid-80s, when the city voted overwhelmingly to repeal the city's antidiscrimination statement about gays, and he's just stayed strong, becoming an active friend and campaigner for such progressive politicians as Ben Reyes, Eleanor Tinsley, and Sissy Farenthold.

Gene and fellow activists founded the AIDS Equity League in 1985, when he felt that AIDS was not getting an equitable share of the health money pie because at that time the significant majority of PWAs were gay men. He describes the league as an ACLU-type organization, with educated activists lobbying for legislation and policy, such as pressuring the hospital district to have gay/AIDS representation on their

policy-making board. But in addition to their savvy about the fine-print battles, they weren't afraid of direct action. When the hospital district tried to shut them out of an important meeting by holding it on a yacht. The activists threatened to rent their own boats and row out to the yacht. The meeting was cancelled.

Former Mayor Kathy Whitmire became furious at the AIDS activists' attention-getting tactics. It was during a televised City Council forum that Gene made what is probably his most-quoted (albeit unintentional) double entendre. Whitmire and Jon Lindsey had divvied up their two biggest hot-potato issues. Said Gene, in what would be replayed and quoted for years to come, "The mayor took drugs, and gave Jon Lindsey AIDS."

In 1992-93, Gene went on sabbatical, and was able to take up agitating full time. He

prowled the halls of the Texas Legislature in Austin, along with fellow AIDS activists on staff with the Texas Human Rights Foundation and the Lesbian and Gay Rights Lobby. "Almost all the minority representatives were people I had taught," he remembers. "And they probably really would not have had any interest if they hadn't heard about it from me."

In addition to gay and African-American issues, Gene's radar sounds off about attitudes toward women and lesbians.

"What it must be like to be a lesbian," he says, shaking his head. "You start off as a second-class citizen as a woman, and then you're a second-class citizen in the gay and lesbian community, no doubt about that.... What is amazing is how much the lesbian community is doubly ignored, and they have been so active in fighting for the equality in AIDS.... I don't know how many men would be so dedicated to fighting breast cancer...."

"Many of the men I worked with [in gay activist circles] would have been homophobic if they had been straight."

Gene's health stayed strong up until this past fall; although he'd been HIV positive for 14 years, it was the first time he'd

needed to go in the hospital. But it was quite serious, so much so that he'd had the Catholic last rites read twice. Sadly, although he'd spent his life barnstorming for AIDS care, when it was his time to be sick, much of the AIDS support infrastructure was no longer there. People have died. And the battle's been going on so long. "Ten years is a long time to keep up being threatened by the community at large," he reflects. "It's disheartening."

But Gene is doing much better now, and plans to return to teaching in the fall. With his illness, he had to give up his beloved house near the University of Houston, and his dog, Gaylord. ("We had fund-raisers for everyone at that house—Ralph Nadar, Craig Washington, Barbara Jordan. Lots of happy memories.") He has moved into a one-bedroom apartment in a complex for 55+ seniors, the former Holiday Inn on Memorial close to downtown. His tenth story balcony has an exciting view of downtown (as well as the devastation of Fourth Ward), and Gene loves the socio-economic mix of this intentional community of seniors.

His spare apartment is a roadmap of all that's most precious to him. His Nigerian

statues. A large neon wall piece he gave himself as a present that says "Me/Gene." His father's fireman's uniform predominates over the tiny bedroom, immaculately folded and framed. An African cloth covers his bed. In the corner an old-fashioned chair sits prettily. It was originally owned by his mother, Marion, who lived to be 99 years old, and died only last April. When she brought the chair home after having it re-upholstered, Gene says he remarked, "Mother, that fabric looks like Christmas wrapping paper." Ever since then, whenever anyone complimented the handsome chair, his mother would always sniff and add, "But, of course, *Gene* thinks it looks like wrapping paper." When she died, he said the only thing he wanted for certain was that chair.

Seeing Gene in such good spirits, and looking so healthy after being so sick, I asked if, being close to death, it had changed his outlook in any way.

"The impatience is still there, but the anger is tempered into understanding. There are rights and wrongs, but it doesn't have to be an issue of anger."

—Ann Walton Sieber

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Business News



Optometrists **Marc Sanders** and **Stewart Zuckerbrod** are pleased to announce the combining of their ophthalmology practices into **The Diagnosis Eye Center**, with two locations. The center offers comprehensive eye care services; eye glass prescriptions and fittings, contact lenses, and the diagnosis and treatment of eye diseases. Dr. Zuckerbrod and Dr. Sanders are experienced ophthalmic surgeons and specialize in cataract, oculoplastic, and LASIK surgeries. Both doctors also teach: Sanders at Baylor College of Medicine and Zuckerbrod at The University of Texas Medical School-Houston. Zuckerbrod and Sanders will practice at both locations: 6500 Fannin, Suite 1108, in the Texas Medical Center, 713/797-1500; and 5420 Dashwood, Suite 200, in the Bellaire Medical Plaza, 713/668-9118.



Stewart Zuckerbrod, MD



Marc Sanders, MD

Denise O'Doherty LPC, LMFT, LCDC, RN and Leisure Learning present **Managing and Overcoming Depression** (#5156). This class will define the emotional and physical factors of depression, determine one's potential vulnerability to depression, and identify the causes. In addition, O'Doherty will focus on making healthy choices, and building more effective coping skills as a way to increase one's sense of well being and become more balanced emotionally. The class is Sat., Feb. 26, 10 a.m.-noon and is \$20. To register call 713/529-4414. For more information about this class and others, contact O'Doherty at 713/524-9525.



Denise O'Doherty

Michele Mortensen, an agent for Farmers Insurance, has moved to a new office to better serve her clients. Mortensen specializes in home owners', renters', auto, and life insurance. Mortensen's new location is 5414 Katy Freeway, and she may be reached at 713/426-6655.



Ross Frapart

Ross Frapart, escrow officer at Texas American Title, has completed a record year in 1999 and begins 2000 with projections for another successful year. Involved in the real estate industry since 1978, Frapart handles residential and commercial properties, and prides himself on his hands-on approach to customer service. Texas American Title is located inside the loop at 3633 Allen Parkway, Suite 200. Texas American Title offers bilingual closings. For an appointment contact Frapart at 713/807-1181.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston is now accepting applications for its **2000 Summer In-**

ternship Program. The program offers undergraduate college students an opportunity to learn about museum careers and the different aspects of museum operations. The application deadline is Tuesday, Jan. 18. To learn more about the internship program, check the museum's website at www.mfah.org. Students can also contact the museum's education department at 713-639-7320, or pick up a poster in the lobby of the administration building located at 5100 Montrose Boulevard.

Dr. Bruce D. Krutsinger, therapeutic optometrist with Today's Vision, is pleased to announce the JeanPaul Gaultier 2000 optical frames and sunglass collection. Gaultier has combined designs that were popular in the past with current fashion; elegant gothic motifs, mechanical designs, and excellent craftsmanship create a powerful, fascinating, and avant-garde line. Visit Today's Vision at 1426 W. Gray, or call them at 713/640-2020.

Advantage Volkswagen has named **Kathy Scott** their number-one salesperson for 1999. This is the 12th year in a row she's received that honor, first with Barney Garver Motors and now with Advantage. Scott has been in the automotive business for 14 years. Scott sells Volkswagen and Land Rover, and has access to BMW, Jaguar, Volvo, Audi, and Porsche through Advantage's other Houston-area locations. Advantage Volkswagen is located at 7025 Old Katy Road. Call Scott for a test drive at 713/869-4855.



Kathy Scott

Cathy Chapman, Ph.D. LMSW-ACP, LPC, and **Jackie Klieger**, RN, BSN, will present "Self Healing for Women," a series of three workshops exploring healing through mind and spirit, Saturdays, Feb. 5, March 4, and April 1, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. "The Power of Our Energy," an introduction to energy fields and energy healing techniques; "Connecting With Spirit When God is a Cuss Word," an opportunity to learn to communicate with your angels and spiritual helpers; and "Self Protection," examining the power of thoughts and feelings and how to protect against negativity. For more information, call 713/660-0084.



Cathy Chapman & Jackie Klieger

Discovering Our Divinity is a one-woman art show by artist **Cynthia Jackson**. Join Jackson at the grand opening of her H-Elijah Gallery & Chapel on Fri., Feb. 18 from 7-9 p.m. Jackson, a former exploration geologist, incorpo-



Cynthia Jackson

rates environmental and spiritual themes in her work. Jackson's paintings depict environmental devastation, divine healing, and victory over oppression. The 45 paintings are a mixed medium of watercolor, marbelized paper, and sliced agates. H-Elijah Gallery & Chapel is located in the Heights at 1508 1/2 Rutland, 713/868-5684.

Gary Greene, Realtors-Heights has relocated to a spacious two-story office building at 1717 Yale Street. With a sales increase of 36 percent in 1999, and 21 real estate agents, Gary Greene, Realtors-Heights has become one of the largest gay-owned real estate offices in Houston. Owner **Sam Garrido** reports that "our new office will allow us to hire additional Realtors to insure that our excellent customer service continues as the Heights and surrounding neighborhoods continue to experience record growth." For help finding your dream home or selling your current property, call 713/880-1400.



Donna Garrett

Poet **Donna Garrett** presents "Bring a Candle, Bring a Friend," a poetry reading for the romantic at heart. The candlelight reading will be performed at Café Artiste on Sat., Feb. 12, 7 p.m. Café Artiste is located at 1601 W. Main at Mandell, 713/528-3704. Copies of Garrett's book, *The Spoken Touch*, are available at Café Artiste and the MCCR bookstore. Garrett may be reached at 713/942-2043.



Kim Zigler and Bob Houghton

Black Hawk Leather has opened a second location, at 3814 South Shepherd. The original store is located inside the Venture-N Bar at 2923 Main. Owners **Bob Houghton** and **Kim Zigler** say they started Black Hawk Leather to fill a need for leather clothing and boots. The South Shepherd store combines both retail and custom leather goods. Houghton and Zigler are hosting an open house Sunday, Feb. 20, 1-4 p.m. Food and refreshments will be catered by Jim Benton. Visit the store and register for prizes that will be awarded during the open house. Call 713/LEATHER for more info.

If your big news affects the community, we want to hear about it!

Send your news release by the 15th of the month to OutSmart Magazine, c/o Laurie Jones, 3406 Audubon Place, Houston, TX 77006. Fax news briefs to 713/522-3275 or e-mail to: letters@outsmartmagazine.com.

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A Taste of Houston

Tapas-style reviews
OutSmart Restaurant Guide

Baba Yega

2607 Grant St. (Missouri St.)
713/522-0042

Definitely funkier 10 years ago, before Dante's inferno. Colossal burgers and expanded vegetarian menu lets carnivores and herbivores eat in harmony. Rare patio dining makes for great people watching. \$

Barnaby's Café

604 Fairview (Hopkins)
713/522-0106

Too close for comfort, although you get down-home luby's fare in the heart of Montrose. A menu straight out of Americana, so come hungry and bring a doggie bag. Everyone's welcome. \$

benjy's

2424 Dunstan (b/w Kelvin and Morningside)
713/522-7602

Lose those distracting mirrors and you've got pure orgasmic Asian fusion in a single-page menu. Seared tuna wraps stuffed with goat cheese and fresh greens are indescribably delicious and served with thin, crispy veggie chips; inventive salads will make you second-guess yourself, so bring several companions and split everything. \$\$

Boulevard Bistrot

4319 Montrose (just past Richmond)
713/524-6922

Houston's culinary queen Monica Pope delves into culinary wanderlust every time she mixes a drink with her signature fruit-infused alcohol. Her eclectic New American menu includes a Mediterranean sampler plate and salad Nicoise that you'll dream about until your next visit. Come for Sunday brunch, where funk meets haute couture, and taste scones the size of Mars, fluffy frittatas, and a dreamy cherry chocolate bread pudding. \$\$

Cabo

2187 Portsmouth (@ Greenbriar) 713/527-8226
419 Travis (@ Prairie) 713/225-2060
It's loud, it's boisterous, it's almost always standing-room-only (unless you're there for a late lunch), and it's crawling with twentysomethings most weekend nights. But their killer margaritas, cilantro-infused fish tacos, whopping sandwiches with crispy plantain chips, and mouth-burning shrimp habanero tacos and quesadillas guarantee good eats along with its yuppie reputation.



COST GUIDE

The cost guide reflects the average cost of dinner for one person with one drink and tip. Deduct about 25 percent for average lunch prices.

\$=\$15 and below (inexpensive)
\$\$=\$16 to \$30 (moderate)
\$\$\$=\$31 to \$50 (expensive)
\$\$\$\$=\$51 or more (very expensive)

Cheesecake Factory

5015 Westheimer (in the Galleria)
713/840-0600

Get over the two-hour wait. With portions this big, you'll need the time to wander the Galleria and work up an appetite. The spiral bound menu boasts 22 pages of eclectic eats, but you may as well stop at the appetizers and save the rest for another trip. Make an entire meal out of the avocado eggrolls, brie and avocado melt, corn cakes, or Thai lettuce wraps, and top it off with their signature White Chocolate Raspberry Truffle cheesecake. Then head to the nearest heart center. \$\$

Chapultepec

813 Richmond Ave. (@ Montrose)
713/522-2365

A sentimental favorite, and the place where the bold and beautiful can nurse their hangovers 24 hours a day. Get a bite of Tex-Mex at its best—no lard, only the freshest meats and vegetables, and the nicest owners you'll ever meet. Francisco Valle and his wife Thelma come across the Mexican border with four quarters and created a Richmond haven that's stood in its original spot for more than 25 years. Olé. \$

NEW! Chianti

1515 South Post Oak Lane
713/840-0303

Sequestered in a little pocket of Tanglewood, this Italian sleeper exudes quaint—from the streamlined rustic Italian food to its sunken greenhouse of a dining room. Befitting its setting, the menu offers classic garden-variety Italian, except for

ROOM WITH A VOODOO

The new terrace dining room at the Warwick Hotel, Houston's venerable icon, may boast Houston's most bewitching view

Forgive me for sounding bourgeois, but the thought of dining at a hotel never crosses my mind. I realize Tim Keating put the Four Seasons Hotel on the culinary food map, as did Jim Mills with the Houstonian. But when you scan your mental checklist for a suitable lunchtime meeting place or a romantic night out, does a hotel restaurant make your top 25? I rest my case.

This is why—despite being cozy, convenient, and interesting—the Park Plaza Warwick Hotel did not initially strike me as an ideal setting for a meal. But, after a perfectly delightful lunch followed by an evening of jazz and scat singing, I can now testify that the Warwick's new Terrace on Main retreat is the answer to the museum district's paucity of sophisticated eats. For lunch, the Terrace offers

component of the Houston ethos. Nestled along the hotel's west wall, the Terrace on Main is part of the Warwick's multi-million dollar facelift (which cleverly coincides with the MFA's recent expansion by providing an upscale alternative to the museum's in-house Café Express). The serene room that used to house the Warwick's bar has been

view of the Mecom fountain, the sculpture on the museum's south lawn, and hundred-year-old live oaks lining Main Street—is a street-level contender.

We opted for the marinated grilled red and yellow tomato mozzarella sandwich with pesto on wonderfully chewy seven-grain bread. It includes tomatoes so juicy

Bob Hope once said that the Warwick's Presidential Suite had the prettiest view in the world, but the Terrace's terrace—with its view of the Mecom fountain, the sculpture on the museum's south lawn, and hundred-year-old live oaks lining Main Street—is a street-level contender.

divided into four spaces: a small but sophisticated dining room that overlooks the terrace (its namesake); a quadrant of cozy tables for the evening club crowd; a sleek bar touting brand-name liquor and several inventive martinis; and the graceful terrace itself.

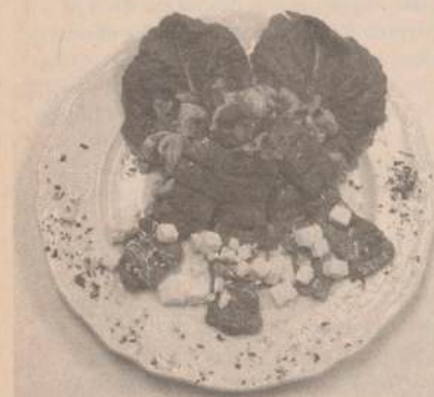
Talk about a room with a view. Bob Hope once said that the Warwick's Presidential Suite had the prettiest view in the world, but the Terrace's terrace—with its

they may as well have been picked a minute earlier, and a pile of tasty wafer-thin sweet potato chips.

Equally alluring was the marinated Greek-style flank steak topped with a mushroom, artichoke, tomato, and feta cheese salad and a spinach, raisin, and roasted garlic torte. While most cradle Texans appreciate a good steak, this one—following its Greek-style preparation—has a distinctly dry texture that made the accompanying artichoke salad a welcomed addition. The first bite was good, albeit uneventful. The second, however, was infused with feta. Suddenly I heard simultaneous low-grade moaning and realized it was coming from both my dining companion and me. One dish evoking two different moans makes an unequivocal winner.

Then again, were it not for our becoming a tad self-conscious about the moaning, the spinach, raisin, and roasted garlic torte (\$8) would have roused as big a compliment. For all purposes, this is quiche. But a quiche with flair, what with its layer of pine nuts and topping of crème brulee—like caramelized jack and Parmesan cheeses.

If you're in a seafood frame of mind, by all means try the herb-grilled tuna niçoise sandwich (\$9), a clever take on traditional



The feta and artichokes combined with this Greek-style flank steak may set you to moaning.

an elegant yet affordable selection; the rest of the day, choose from their pub menu, an eclectic mix of down-home and unconventional. To my surprise, the service and ambience was as innovative and inspiring as the art that hangs at the Museum of Fine Arts next door.

With its Germany-imported limestone floors and French paneling and tapestry, the Warwick has always been a stately



Well-bread sandwich: marinated red and yellow tomato and mozzarella with pesto on marvelous nutty seven-grain bread.

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Our waitress set before us a gorgeous, warm chocolate bread pudding, luxuriously rich yet not too sweet, cooled by a mound of cinnamon ice cream.

salad niçoise. Bite-sized chunks of moist tuna, fresh haricot verts, chopped egg, tomato, and salty black olives serenaded in a lightly whipped vinaigrette were enveloped in a soft whole-wheat pita, accented with a Monet-like haystack of crispy shoestring potatoes.

Less noteworthy is the smoked salmon on toasted brioche. Despite a tasty dollop of vodka caviar-spiked sour cream (undoubtedly the reason for its \$14 price tag) and spicy peppered peaches, it was basically just a glorified WASP version of bagels and lox.

The Terrace also offers their innovative takes on more conventional fare: the "Warwick" Cobb salad with shrimp and pancetta in lieu of the usual turkey and bacon. A roasted chicken salad, chunky and creamy—a bit too creamy, actually—but laced with an exotic Indian mix of garlic and mint. A B.L.T. on a cheddar cheese waffle with basil mayonnaise and jalapeño-infused white and sweet potato chips.

Since the Terrace's lounge features a pianist during the week and a jazz trio on weekends, I hurried back a night later to sample the music and the dinner menu. Whereas lunch served up original sandwiches, salads, and entrees baptized in cheery sunlight, dinner's standard pub menu wasn't nearly as evocative. There were a few highlights that deserve mention, namely the roasted chicken and sour cream jalapeños (\$8) with an ethereal breading, and the remarkably light, greaseless beef tenderloin and jalapeño jack cheese tamales (\$10). Not that I'm a jalapeño junkie, which I most definitely am not, but the Warwick seems to have a nice touch with those little green infernos.

What does not deserve mentioning—although I'm obliged to spare you the same disappointment—is the cornmeal-coated calamari (\$6), a dry and rubbery appetizer in desperate need of some marinara sauce and a lemon squeeze. Likewise, the overbearing fried crawfish that lacked any flavor save for the too-too-spicy remoulade served on the side. Almost as tiresome were the beef fajita quesadillas. While this Texas tradition is almost impossible to mess up, the Warwick's version was over-salted, with mealy guacamole (that tasted nothing like avocado) and a tacky cheese tasting suspiciously like fontina. The one saving grace was a freshly prepared pico de gallo.

But I was wooed back into the fold when our waitress set before us a gorgeous, warm chocolate bread pudding, luxuriously rich yet not too sweet, cooled by a mound of cinnamon ice cream. Equally dreamy was the napoleon, the signature dessert of the Terrace's new pastry chef, its buttery, flaky layers of pastry concealing a thick vanilla bean cream that yielded ever so gently to my fork.

All this is moot, however, upon hearing Paul English and his jazz trio. Booked indefinitely in the Terrace lounge, English does with a piano what the Terrace chef does with that roasted garlic and spinach torte. His music transfixes, as his melodious tunes grab and caress. Within minutes, a former singer who just happened to be in the lounge jumped up and sang two songs, scat style. The place went wild.

You don't have to be an out-of-towner to think about checking into this hotel: Whether to luxuriate in an al fresco ladies lunch on a balmy day, or to soak up the atmosphere of the jazz club, puffing a cigar from the lounge's well-stocked humidor, you might remember the old warhorse Warwick.

The Terrace on Main, in the Warwick Hotel, 5701 Main Street, 713/526-1991. Lunch: 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.; pub menu: 3-11 p.m. Music: Tuesday-Thursday, 5-9 p.m., Friday-Saturday, 7-11. Paul English plays every evening except Wednesday, when pianist Eoe Nettles performs.

for the extraordinary stuffed artichoke, Insalata Caprese, and a spinach- and ricotta-stuffed ravioli lounging in a butter-sage pool with a simplicity that's almost startling. It's available for private parties in arguably the most picturesque setting in Houston (picturesque save for the ultra-hip martini bar tacked on to its western hip). \$\$

Churrascos

2055 Westheimer (@ S. Shepherd), 713/527-8300;
9705 Westheimer (@ Gessner), 713/952-1988;

1320 W. Bay Area Blvd. (Friendswood), 281/461-4100
The best thing that's happened to carnivorous Dixie since barbecue. The operative word here is beef-mouth-watering, succulent prime beef tenderloin basted with their signature chimichurri sauce (made from olive oil, fresh garlic, parsley, and spices) and char-grilled to order. Great grilled vegetables, empanadas, and seafood, too, but the pièce de résistance is the creamy tres leches dessert, which other restaurants have failed to imitate successfully. \$\$\$

Dalat Vietnamese Bistro

3241 Southwest Fwy (Buffalo Spdwy & Edloe)
713/669-9375

A delightful little bistro with rare patio seating, right in Westpark's new restaurant row. Already known for its fresh chicken or pork vermicelli bowls, Vietnamese grilled fish hand wraps, and giant, perfectly textured calamari. With great food, no wait, and excellent service, go now before it rises to restaurant fame. \$

Dessert Gallery

3200 Kirby Drive (behind Café Express)
713/522-9999

A charming haven for dessert addicts, where Sugarbusters devotees and the calorie-challenged enter at their own risk. Convince your dentist to go public, buy up as many shares as you can afford, and inform the public of this after-dinner sweet fest. Put more clearly, their chocolate-dipped cookies make Mrs. Fields taste store-bought. \$

NEW! Eatzi's Market & Bakery

1702 Post Oak Blvd. (@ San Felipe)
713/629-6003

Its Alice in Wonderland myriad of choices (approximately 1,500) is a tad overzealous, but the presentation of this gourmand deli take-out is so stunning you'll be drooling within minutes. Everything baked is gorgeous and crusty, and the glass-enclosed salads, sides, and entrees span the globe. Take home an array of prepared dishes—asparagus, couscous, stuffed filet mignon wraps, a half-dozen or more chicken salads, several dozen pasta salads, just to give you a taste—and your guests will think you slaved for hours. Of course, all this comes with a price tag, so bring your Amex and prepare yourself for a food-filled obstacle course. \$

Golden Room

1209 Montrose (@ Dallas)
713/524-9614

True to its name, this gold-gilded Thai-Chinese will have you rubbing elbows with the entire room-literally. Some find it a bit too intimate for private conversation, but the chicken wraps, spicy curries, and flavorful soups are meant for sharing, so dig in. Just don't burn your tongue. \$\$

Hobbit Cafe

2243 Richmond (@ Portsmouth)
713/526-5460

It's open again and we're happy, because this locale actually provides parking. Enter Houston's beloved Tolkien sanctuary and revel in its prolific menu, featuring Fatty

Lumpkin and Bilbo the Magnificent (they're sandwiches, but unlike any you've ever experienced). While it tends to cater to vegetarian tastes, even the Birkenstock-deprived will appreciate the sprawling deck and heaping servings. And contrary to its herbivorous reputation, it offers meat beyond the token veggie burgers—such as real bacon cheeseburgers, tuna salad and jerk chicken. Both the "classic" and regular sandwiches are huge, so you may as well have them doggy bag half before they serve it. The owner actually waits tables, so you know your voice counts. \$

JAGS

5120 Woodway (@ Sage)
713/621.4765

Like most of us, you've probably only experienced Jackson Hicks cuisine at holiday parties or other high-scale galas—or you've only dreamed about it. Don't fret. For a mere jaunt to the Decorative Center, you too can eat the food of the gods (for a price, that is). It's worth it at least once, just to say you did. Count on Hicks-style tortilla soup to be exactly what a good tortilla soup should be. Quirky salads, sandwiches, and entrees make choosing an effort, but nothing disappoints, especially the service (how could it, with such attentive waiters?). \$\$

La Madeleine

Multiple locations.

These multi-locale haunts are America's idealization of what a French café should be. Just the warm wooded décor, bottomless coffee and single-serving quiches and friands would have guaranteed success. But its tangy Caesar dressing, buttery croissants, tomato-basil soup and superb breads have earned such a devout following they can now be found in most Houston grocery stores. \$

NEW! El Meson

2425 University (Rice Village)
713/522-9306

Somewhere between Pappasitos and a Florida Cuban dive, this Rice Village Cuban-Mexican is the darling of Medical Center diners. Regulars insist on the black bean soup, chunky guacamole (some say the best in the Southwest) and potent margaritas, and its low-key atmosphere make it a comfortable haven for families. \$

Niko Niko's

2520 Montrose
713/528-1308

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Step into a little bit of nouveau Continental Italian and plan on settling in until someone kicks you out. After you indulge in fresh panini sandwiches-stuffed with everything from pork tenderloin, to grilled tuna with wasabi mayo, to mozzarella, roasted tomato, and avocado—you'll want to linger over a steaming cappuccino, nibble on something flaky from their in-store bakery, and hang out until dinner time to sample the equally appealing entrees.

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Intimate weekend hangout with great patio dining. You'll spot every car down Montrose. Broad menu serving nouveau American dishes. Accessible and friendly. If you're not hungry, try the bar. \$\$

Star Pizza
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Thai Spice
5117 Kelvin (behind & above Antone's)
713/777-4888
Starve yourself for a day, then gorge on

their expansive lunch buffet. Even for buffet skeptics, the four variations on egg rolls and spicy Pad Thai will make a believer out of you. If you're still in doubt, sample the beef curry and satays. You may have a wait, but the place is teeming with locals and natives vouching for its authenticity, so you know it'll be worth it. \$\$

This Is It
207 W. Gray (@ Bagby)
713/659-1608
No other place dishes up soul food like this hearty Fourth Ward spot. Just one foot in the door, and you'll smell pork chops and collard greens like mama still makes. The cornbread is the sweetest, moistest that Houston has to offer. For the uninitiated, display just a hint of down home naiveté to the gals behind the steam table and they'll give you the skinny on each dish.

Toopees Café
1830 W. Alabama
713/522-7662
This gay coffee-house hangout is also a full-fledged neighborhood café catering to all people hungry and hip. Stop in for a morning latte or late-evening bonding session, or spend a leisurely lunch with a good book and a great sandwich. Devotees sum it up in one word: scones. \$

NEW! Two Rows Restaurant & Brewery
2400 University (in the Village Arcade, second floor)
713/529-2739
Any brewery is bound to get a bad rap, but this one deserves kudos for its interesting and varied menu (it even offers health-conscious selections, so phooey on the brew pub non-believer). Refreshingly, there's barely a fried potato in the house. Instead, you'll find balsamic-marinated veggies, tasty pizzas, bountiful salads, and beer-infused muffins accompanied by yummy honey-spiked butter. Non-beer drinkers should at least try the homemade root beer or, better yet, in a float. \$

Urbana
3407 Montrose (@ Hawthorne)
713/521-1086
About as atmospheric as a hospital MRI suite-noisy, echoing, and a décor that screams "minimalist sterile." So why the fuss? The classy menu offers everything Texan and beyond, with barbecue-grilled shrimp, Comal-seared tuna, richly marinated steaks, light pastas, ingenious salads, and interesting deviations on popular '90s sides like mashed potatoes and portobello mushrooms. With food this good you won't care about the stark ambience. \$\$

Still hungry? The fork doesn't stop here! For complete "tapas" listings of OutSmart's favorite restaurants and dining reviews from past issues, visit our new website at www.outsmartmagazine.com.



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Calendar of Events

FEBRUARY

Deadline for OutSmart's March issue is 5 p.m., Monday, February 14.

2 & 16 (Wed.)

HIV Testing. The Montrose Clinic is offering free confidential HIV testing and counseling, 6-9 pm @ the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, 803 Hawthorne. The center: 713/524-3818. The clinic: 713/830-3000.

4 (Fri.)

Matthew Shipp. DiverseWorks and KTRU present one of the masters of jazz piano, Matthew Shipp, who will be performing a duo with bassist William Parker. Called "the most significant pianist in avant garde jazz since Cecil Taylor" by *The New York Times*, Shipp will collaborate with Parker in one of the most extraordinary pairings in jazz. The concert will feature music that creates a dense layer of sound spanning jazz's history & rumbling toward its future. 8 pm @ Hamman Hall, Rice University. Tickets \$15 (\$10 students, \$8 members). New 24-hr. reservation line: 713/335-3445.

4 (Fri.)

Visions and Prophecies is an exhibition of new works by Marsha L. Landers and Elizabeth McBride. The opening is tonight from 7-9 pm; the Artist Talk is at 7:30 pm @ Houston Potters Guild Shop and Gallery, 2433 Rice Blvd. For more info: 713/528-POTS (7687).

5 & 6 (Sat. & Sun.)

Hollywood Collectors & Celebrities Show. Besides posters, photos, & other film & TV memorabilia, this national show boasts scheduled attendance by many celebrities who sign autographs (for a small fee). A few of the celebrities include Stella Stevens, Debra Paget, Dale Robertson, Deborah Walley, Michael Callan, Margaret O'Brien, Gary Busey, Don Stroud, and Ronnie Schell. 10 am-5 pm (both days) @ the Sheraton Brookhollow Hotel, 3000 North Loop West. Admission is \$10 each day. For more information, visit www.hollywoodcollectorsshow.com.

5 & 12 (Sat.)

Black Heritage Month. Houston Public Library offers a variety of events during February. *On the 5th* (Black Heritage Day), Central Library (500 McKinney, 713/236-1313) features jazz music by local Houston legend drummer Bubba Thomas at 11 am. At 2 pm, Central Library will host a performance by Ensemble Theatre. All ages are welcome to these free family events. Ongoing throughout February, Central Library will participate in the African-American Citywide Exhibition sponsored by the Museum of Fine Arts. Paintings, sculptures, & artwork by African-American

artists will be displayed on all three floors of the library. *On the 12th*, from 11 am-3 pm, Johnson Branch Library (3517, Reed Rd., 713/733-1983) features the music of the Anderson String Quartet, as well as providing booths, refreshments, & fun for children of all ages. Individual branches & regions will also observe the month with special events & exhibits. More info: 713/236-1313 or visit www.hpllib.tx.us.

7 (Mon.)

Mary and Rhoda. Mary Tyler Moore and Valerie Harper reunited! The two-



some return to the tube, this time in a TV movie. A series had been planned, but since that didn't pan out, you can catch up on what they've been up to, this time in New York City, where "Mare" is the widow of a congressman and Rhoda's a divorcee. *Mary and Rhoda* airs on ABC at 8 pm.

INFO NEEDED FOR YOUR EVENT LISTING: a few lines of info about your event; date/time; cost; location/address; organization name; AND two phone numbers—one for OutSmart to reach you for questions and one for OutSmart readers to get more info on your event. **Mail info to:** OutSmart Magazine, 3406 Audubon Place, Houston 77006. **Fax info to:** 713/522-3275. **E-mail info to:** letters@outsmartmagazine.com. **NO LISTINGS CAN BE ACCEPTED AFTER THE DEADLINE DATE—MONDAY, FEB. 14.**

9 (Wed.)

Keynote Chamber Players. A free concert with Debussy, Mendelssohn, and Villa-Lobos @ First Unitarian Church, 5200 Fannin. (Donations accepted.) For more info: 713/942-7358 or visit www.kcpservices.com.

10 (Thu.)

STUTZ Under Glass. Artist STUTZ has chosen her favorite glass-covered pieces from her collection of work over the past three years for this exhibition. The reception is this evening from 7-9 pm @ The Davenport, 2115 Richmond. For more info: 713/522-9825 or visit <http://home.earthlink.net/~artstutz>.

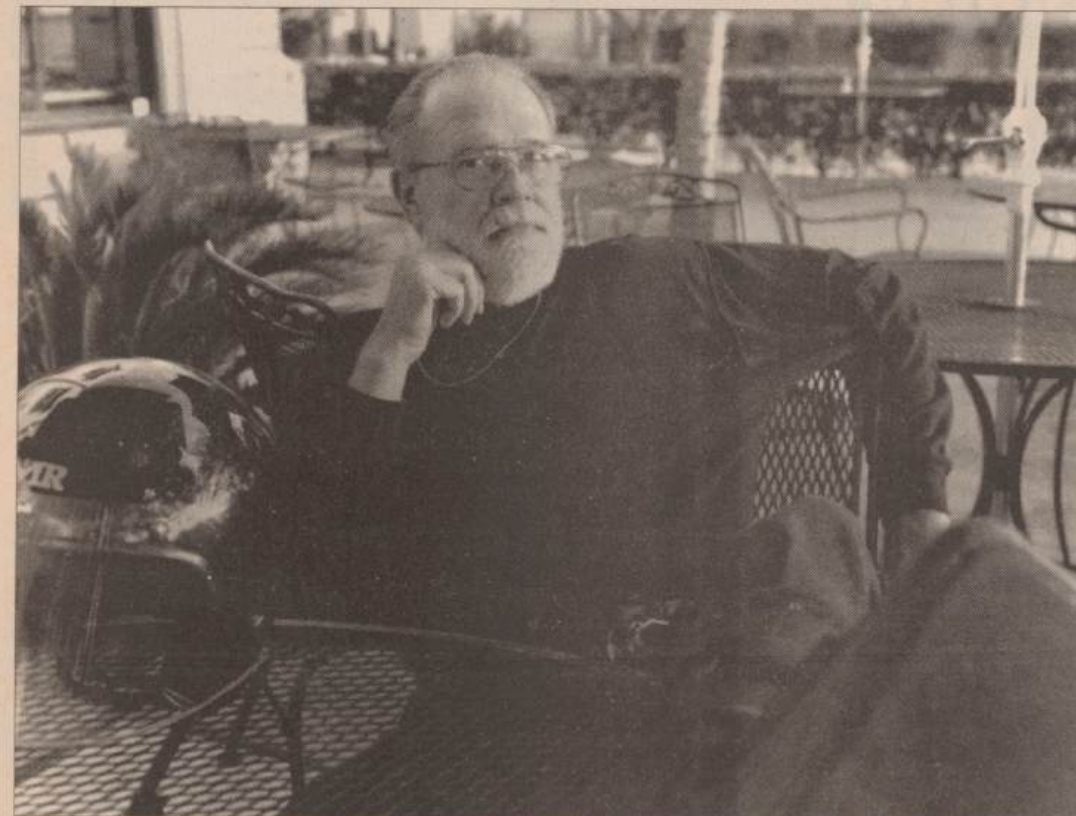


RAY HILL IN LOVE

Falling in love again: Montrose's grizzled gadfly recounts the loves of his life ... and of all our lives

by Ann Walton Sieber

Photographs by Debra Rueb



"I have a theory of relationships which I got from my mother, Frankie: All men are sorry, and five years with any of them is more than they deserve, present company not excluded."

If Ray Hill were not a real man, it would be impossible to create him as a work of fiction for fear of sounding preposterous. "Ray Hill is a many-faceted gem," as he'll tell you, only half-ironically, and it's true.

His grizzled generous self knows everything there is to know about the Montrose gay community and politics, about prison and criminal justice issues, and about the euphemistically termed "sex industry." Quoting activist theory and Supreme Court judgments one moment, recounting a salacious encounter while cruising the Ship Channel the next, Ray is one of those fascinating self-created icons, an ebullient

appealing ham, always happy to fill you in on the latest cause (the current latest cause being the Exxon-Mobil protest, for which Ray is one of the organizers), his bluntness both exasperating and endearing.

Now Ray is further perpetuating the Ray Hill myth with his latest monologue, *Ray Hill and Love*, to be performed one night only, on February 14, Valentine's Day, at Stages. This is the third installment in a series ("It's really just a cheap easy way to do a memoir"), the first two being *Ray Hill: The Prison Years*, and *Ray Hill & the Sex Police*. Ray presented his first monologue at Actor's Workshop and The Little Room Downstairs in 20 performances,

and the second piece upstairs at Diba's One's a Meal on West Gray for 11 performances. The Stages production is a step into the "big time," part of Stages' artistic director Rob Bundy's opening up of his swank facility to smaller theater groups. Produced by Diana Weeks, the show will benefit her newly formed nonprofit Art Action, whose goal is to get more art in the news and into the mainstream consciousness.

Ray Hill and Love is "the story of six wonderful men in my life," Ray says. "I love being gay, and unlike Dale Carpenter, I don't want to be assimilated. Being gay and lesbian gives us the chance to be very creative in constructing our lives. And by

being creative, I don't just mean in arranging furniture or arranging flowers in vases."

Just like everything else in Ray's life, the inventory of his lovers makes for an interesting tale. From his first great love, Kenneth Whitehead, much better known as Tiffany Jones, the renowned "Texas Tornado" drag queen in the '70s, who used to come out into the audience dressed as a nun on roller skates; to Dale "Fluffy" Sweat, a demure country boy from Lufkin who restored Ray's sense of himself after Ray got out of the penitentiary; to the Reverend Kent Naasz, a Lutheran minister ("I was a callused old atheist ex-teenage evangelist, and Kent could cut through all that"). As Ray spins the tale of his lovers, it's not just about six men, but also about the times and events that transpired around those loves.

Those who know Ray will want to see his show because you know what an irascible storytelling phenomenon he is, an amazing assortment of insider information and devilish quips. "Not a cliché the whole evening," Edward Albee said of Ray's *Sex Police* monologue. And if you don't know Ray, you should go, not just because he's so interesting, but because he's a one-man guided tour of the Montrose, the real Montrose, and the Houston gay community over the past 40 or so years.

For those unfamiliar with the Ray Hill legend, he grew up in Houston, and came out in Galena Park High School in 1958, which should give you some idea of his gutsiness right there. Always active in gay politics, he was sent to prison

MARDI GRAS IN HOUSTON

Masquerade ball benefits Body Positive

The team that created the Big Bang parties for the past two years joins forces with Rich's T-Dance to present the "Mardi Gras Madness Masquerade Ball" (MGMM). With more than 800 expected revelers, the party will turn into Houston's version of New Orleans' Mardi Gras. The entire community is invited to "have a ball" with the music of Rich's T-dance DJ, Michael Tank, well known for spinning in the party circuit. Costumes are encouraged, and a contest will be held at 10 p.m.

Masks and beads will be available at the door, and discounted drink specials will be offered throughout

the night. • All door proceeds from the MGMM go toward supporting the Body Positive Wellness Center, the first facility of its kind in the country. "The Wellness Center is about teaching people living with HIV how to take care of themselves through nutrition, exercise and other mind-body programs," said Pete Sharpe, Body Positive's president. "We rely primarily on the community's support. Several cities are looking to Houston to lead them in creating wellness centers around the country. Many of our friends are surviving this illness, but their quality of life has not improved with the new drugs. We are trying to change that," added Sharpe. • For more information or to be a sponsor or volunteer, please call the BPWC at 713-524-2374.

MARDI GRAS MADNESS MASQUERADE BALL

Where: Rich's
When: Sun., Feb. 20 • 4 p.m.-midnight
Cost: \$10
Info: 713/524-2374

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11 (Fri.)
Children of Uganda. In 1972, Sister Rose Muyinza founded the Daughters of Charity Orphanage in the capital city of Kampala, Uganda. This orphanage has become the wellspring of Ugandan culture and is the source of the Children of Uganda's Tour of Light 2000. Ranging in age from 7 to 15, the 18-member Children of Uganda have become the goodwill ambassadors to the world for the 1.5 million orphans of their country. With brief explanatory introductions to the songs, dances, and instruments throughout the performance, the Children of Uganda perform songs in Luganda, Swahili, & English, as well as such tribal dances throughout Uganda. The authentic instrumentation includes a full complement of four drums, an African bow harp, a tube fiddle, a pan pipe, a thumb piano, and an African xylophone. The colorful array of authentic costumes include ekikoyi (colorful long skirt or wrap for special occasions/celebrations), kanzu (white long gown worn by the men of the Baganda tribe on special occasions), and ebitambaala (African head pieces). Presented by the Society of the Performing Arts, 7 pm @ Wortham Center's Cullen Theater. Tickets/info: 713/227-4SPA (4772).



ALEXIS HEFLEY

12 (Sat.)
Men's Clubwear Fashion Show features the designs of native Houstonian Cesar Galindo, Raymond Dragon, and Tom of Finland. 7-11 pm @ Rich's. DJ Steve Travolta of New York City will spin tunes for the show. Free well drinks for the show. Tickets are \$25 and available in advance at Basic Brothers. Proceeds benefit Unhinged Productions.

13 & 14 (Sun. & Mon.)
Women Are Like That. It's four weddings and no funeral in Orchestra X's presentation of Mozart's comic masterpiece, *Così fan tutte* (*Women Are Like That*). Artistic director and conductor John Neal Axelrod says, "This opera has been a subject of controversy since its origin in 1790. In fact, it is as critical of men as the chauvinist tones that are directed toward women. Perhaps it should be renamed *Così fan tutti* (*All Are Like That*). The 20th century began to explore the importance of understanding gender differences. As the new millennium dawns, we're going to simply throw it all out the window." This Valentine's "opera with a difference" begins at 7 pm @ the historic Crystal Ballroom of the Rice Hotel, 909 Texas Ave. For ticket info: 713/225-6729.

15 (Tue.)
Teri Garr. Over the course of her 25-year career, Garr starred in Hollywood hits *Young Frankenstein*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, and *Mr. Mom*. In 1983, she was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her performance in *Tootsie*. In this "Intimate Portrait," Garr, along with friends & colleagues, discusses her new perspective on life following the 1993 adoption of her daughter Molly. Interviews include *Mr. Mom* costar Martin Mull, actresses Connie Sellecca & Kathryn Harrold, and director Sydney Pollack. "Intimate Portrait: Teri Garr" is narrated by Carrie Fisher and directed by Lee Grant. 6 pm on Lifetime Television.

15 (Tue.) & 21 (Mon.)
Project Heart: A Place to Pursue Your Dreams. The most important part of getting what you want is enjoying your journey. This is a free intro-



Ray with his cast and his Honda: "Activism to me is like riding a bicycle. If you stop pedaling, you fall off."

from 1970 to 1975 as a result of his "night job," in which he was part of a gay burglary ring. ("We stole antiques, oils, and jewels—the money was good, and we specialized in things that queers know about. The only thing wrong is the retirement system ... I took full retirement.") After he got out of the pen, he became general manager of KPFT Pacifica. Only problem was that "neither perverts nor convicted felons could be on the air waves—and

I was both"; Ray successfully challenged this FCC rule, becoming both the first openly gay person and the first ex-con to manage a broadcast facility. While managing the station, Ray started "The Prison Show." Still running every Friday night, 9-11 p.m., after 20 years, his show and its unusual format has become recognized throughout the country. After an hour of Ray and company discussing criminal justice issues, he opens up the phones, and families of

inmates call in; for those inmates who have been shipped to facilities at a great distance from their families, "The Prison Show" is oftentimes their only way to communicate.

On January 27, Ray was awarded the First Amendment award by the Houston Trial Lawyers' Foundation, an honor given by the civil lawyers association to members of the media who best exemplify the exercise of the first amendment. ("Funny, I'll be up in that building getting a fancy award one night, and the next day at the foot of the same building staging a protest," Ray said, referring to the January 28 Equality Rally against Exxon-Mobil.) Approaching 60, Ray's been having diabetes-related problems with his foot lately. Although he wears a cast and may have to have it amputated, the day we met to talk, he roared up to Crossroads Market on his motorcycle. Still roaring away after all these years, Ray says part of the motivation for his monologues is to let the up-

and-coming gay generation know about the continued exuberant possibilities of life.

"When I was young and pretty," Ray says, "back then, I didn't think I'd make it to the new millennium. But today life is so rich—I didn't have a hint. I paint word pictures of the life I've lived and I'm living, so they [those currently young and pretty] won't fear living long enough and being lucky enough to become a senior. ...Although I suspect only old farts will come."

Does the foot get him down? "I was already mentally qualified for the Special Olympics. I decided to get on with it. Life is like a golf game—you play the ball where it lies. If it lands in the rough, whack at it until you hit it."

Ray Hill and Love will be presented on Tuesday, Feb. 14, 8 p.m. at Stages. For tickets, call 713/523-6969. \$20/\$15 seniors and students.

FORBIDDEN LOVE: OUR FAVORITE KIND

Rekindling the fire in the belly of Romeo and Juliet, as seen through the eyes and lips and hearts of four Catholic boys at Stages by Ann Walton Sieber

Young love. Forbidden love. Fist-through-the wall. Pining. Heartbreak-for-no-reason. Faint-dead-away-from-the-altogether-too-muchness-of-it. Love, love, love. Great god almighty, spare us all. But ... if for some crazy misguided Valentine's Day reason, you're wanting to voluntarily drink of the romantic drug, what better place to imbibe than at that fountainhead of amour, that love story from which were fashioned all other love stories, *Romeo and Juliet*?

And has Stages got a *Romeo and Juliet* for you. Adapted by New York playwright Joe Cialarco, the premise of

Shakespeare's *R&J* is that four adolescent Catholic schoolboys have stolen a copy of *Romeo and Juliet*, after it has been banned by their school as too full of lust. The teenagers cut classes, convene in a basement, and start acting out the script, with giddy, almost hysterical mania. But the more they get into it, the more the love story takes them over, especially the boy playing Juliet and the boy playing Romeo. And then there's that Kiss. They surprise each other and they surprise themselves with the depth of their feelings. And then there's that Kiss.

An off-Broadway hit, *Shakespeare's R&J* is being



Shakespeare's *R&J*: Catholic schoolboys in love with Shakespeare ... and each other! (L-r): James Lee Burke, Drake Simpson, Dustin Ross, and John Raymond Barker.

given its Houston premiere in an intense, kinetic production directed by Stages' artistic director Rob Bundy. Bundy picked the play because it is

about the forbidden, and this energetic charismatic theater impresario loves to take on whatever's controversial, enlivening, and likely to get an

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TapeOut

by Alan Davidson

MORE THAN JUST HORMONES

Just released on video, *Trick* takes us on a gay witty love adventure

One of the more memorable events of Summer '99 was the release of director Jim Fall's romantic comedy, *Trick*. This little movie has turned out to be the highest grossing independent gay film ever. And for good reason: the writing is clever; the humor is sophisticated and funny; the musical numbers are great; the cast is perfect (and very easy on the eye). Now, *Trick* is set for video release on Feb. 4. All in all, worthy of every gay film buff's collection.

Trick tells the story of one day in the life of Gabriel (Christian Campbell), a young gay man who writes songs and musicals about romantic euphoria, but whose life is rather monastic. His best friend is Kathrine (Tori Spelling) a "budding" singer/actress. She and Gabriel perform "Enter You," one of his show stoppers to great comic effect at a writers workshop. There we meet Perry (a hilarious Steve Hayes). Perry critiques the song and wonders if "Enter You" really captures the thrill of a first kiss with a potential lover. That's what Gabriel will find out.

Mark (JP Pitoc) is the go-go boy gay archetype with the killer body and handsome good looks. Gabriel, insecure about his own sex appeal, is surprised when Mark picks him up on the subway.

Trick sends its heroes on a colorful tour of Manhattan gay life. At the West Village piano bar, Eighty Eight's, they meet

up with Perry who is feeling "chanteusy" and belting out a mock salsa number filled with double entendre. Next it's off to a Tribeca dance club where the music is louder and shirts are optional. Here we meet the the impervious drag queen, Ms. Coco Peru. (By the way, look for an appearance by Ms. Peru later this year, brought to Houston by Unhinged Productions.) In addition to her fierce version of *I Am Woman*, she delivers a slanderous monologue in the bathroom that nearly steals the show.

As the evening unfolds it's obvious that this *whatever* that's happening has gone beyond hormones. The West Village has never looked better and New York more hopeful than the closing number: Gabriel singing his own song, "Enter You," and meaning it.

Jim Fall has been trying to make a film for the past 10 years. He kept busy by writing and directing plays like *Blood Orgy of the Carnival Queens* for the Vortex Theater. He says it kept him working with actors and telling visual stories. He has since moved to Los Angeles to pursue his directing career. When asked if he has caught any flack for the "gay for pay" aspect of the film—both Christian Campbell and JP Pitoc are straight—Jim says not at all. "They were the best guys for the parts. They jumped wholeheartedly into the roles and I'm proud of them." Me too ... that kiss at the end is pretty convincing.



audience all riled up and hot and bothered.

The world of *R&J* is a world full of danger, writes Calarco, *R&J*'s creator. What could be more dangerous than that first forbidden kiss of literature's most famous lovers? The first forbidden kiss of two school-boys. Put those boys in a school where Catholicism reigns, patriarchy rules, and where simply reading Shakespeare is forbidden, and you have a world pulsating with repressed hysteria.

So, is this a gay *Romeo and Juliet*?

Not exactly. "Sexuality is a HUGE issue with this, a huge issue," says Bundy. "[But] when the characters are actually taken over, when the boys are taken over by the characters, it's more person to person. It becomes about human connection through the aspect of sex than it does about sexual orientation....

"There is an energy that I think we forget," Bundy continues animatedly, "because I think most of us keep our energy up here [points to his head]. But there's an energy just below the belly button that's hot and profound, and they [the actors] found it. It was just wonderful watching their bodies sort of expand and their faces flush, and they like floated out of this building. It was really exhilarating to watch ... it was about that fire in the belly."

When Romeo approaches Juliet on her balcony, he swears that he loves her, and his name is inconsequential, even though

it is the name of her family's mortal enemies. For the boys discovering desire in Shakespeare's *R&J*, just as names cease to matter, so too do genders: So compelling is that love-fire, it really stops mattering if they are boys, or boys playing a boy and a girl. What matters is the passionate discovery of their first kiss.

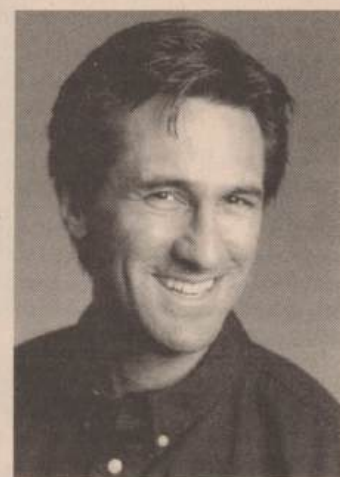
"[With] *OutSmart*," Bundy says, "the question is probably, Is this a coming-out moment? ... And I don't think so. I don't want the audience to be so clear about that. I wouldn't mind if what it really said to the straight world is that this is an investigation into our own homosexuality, which we all have aspects of. ... Even as a gay man, what I don't want to do is make the easy choice, which is to say, 'Yes, all these guys are going to become great husbands to each other.' They may become great husbands,

perhaps even better husbands to women because of this event. ... As Falstaff says in *Henry IV*, 'Judge ye, my masters.' So I am letting the audience decide and bring their own perception to it."

So, in a way, it's like a coming-out play for the audience?

"Exactly. I like that. It's not a coming-out play for the characters, it's a coming-out play for the audience."

Shakespeare's *R&J* continues its run through Feb. 13 at Stages, 3201 Allen Parkway, 522-8243 (713/52-STAGE). Performances are Wed., Thu., 7:30 p.m.; Fri., Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 3 p.m. Tickets are \$26-\$37.



Rob Bundy, Stages' gay artistic director and director of Shakespeare's *R&J*: "There's an energy just below the belly button that's hot and profound."

ductory session (7-8 pm) to learn how to realize your greatest dreams while having fun doing it. Call 713/664-4365 to sign up for either free session.

18 (Fri.)
Timeless Spirituality. Da Camera of Houston presents *Timeless Spirituality: Arvo Pärt's Canon of Repentance*. The Grammy Award-nominated Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir performs Estonian composer Arvo Pärt's celebrated work for unaccompanied chamber choir. The Houston performance is one of only two U.S. performances of this towering, uplifting work. 8 pm at Wortham Center's Cullen Theater, 500 Texas. Tickets are \$22-\$33 (half-price for students & seniors with valid ID) and are available by calling Da Camera Music Center (1427 Branard) at 713/524-5050 or www.culturefinder.com.

19 (Sat.)
The Lesbian Health Initiative of Houston (LHI) holds its Millennium Health Fair, where free mammograms, free manual breast exams, and breast care education will be offered. For a minimal fee per each test, participants may have Pap smear, HIV, & STD screenings. LHI is conducting this fair in cooperation with the Montrose Clinic and the Montrose Counseling Center Lesbian Health Outreach Project. The fair takes place from 8:30 am-4:30 pm @ the Hollyfield Foundation Center, 2700 Albany. (Vendor space is available for a nominal fee.) To schedule a mammogram, call Barbara Walker at 713/830-3075. More info: LHI voice mail at 713/603-0023.

20 (Sun.)
Day of Spiritual Practice includes yoga, sitting & walking meditations, visualizations, chanting, & dharma talks. Led by Alan Davidson. 10 am-6 pm @ Lake Livingston (75 miles north of Houston). Cost for retreat is \$80; vegetarian lunch is included. Call Alan @ 713/942-0923 for more info.

22 (Tue.)
My Second Childhood (Sure Didn't Last Long) is an exhibition of artwork by STUTZ that begins with very primitive crayola drawings with white backgrounds, continues with pastels and inks, and ends with a canvas that is almost all charcoal. Opening is from 8-10 pm @ Landmark's River Oaks Theatre, 2009 W. Gray. The show runs through March 20. Info: 713/522-9825 or visit <http://home.earthlink.net/~artstutz>.

22 (Tue.)
Music Since 1967. Da Camera of Houston presents *In My Time: Music Since 1967*. Texas-born, Houston-based composer Christopher Theofanidis hosts an evening of music composed in the 1990s and features two of his newest compositions. The concert also features music by Texan composer Mark Wingate, British composer Thomas Adè, and Chinese composer Tan Dun. 7:30 pm at The Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. Tickets are \$25 (half-price for students & seniors with valid ID) and are available by calling Da Camera Music Center (1427 Branard) at 713/524-5050 or www.culturefinder.com.

24-26 (Thu.-Sat.)
F---ing A. Obie Award-winning playwright Suzan-Lori Parks teams with Infernal Bridgroom Productions to direct this world premiere. Set in an indeterminate future, *F---ing A* presents a world in which the rich and the poor speak entirely different languages and sexual deviants are branded with the letter "A." With two Obies (*Venus and Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom*) and a Spike Lee script (*Girl 6*) under her belt, Parks is one of the most in-demand playwrights in theater today. 8 pm @ DiverseWorks, 1117 East Frwy (off N. Main at Naylor). Tickets \$15 (\$10 students, \$12 members). New 24-hr. reservation line: 713/335-3445.

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25-27 (Fri-Sun.)
The 14th Annual Texas Home & Garden Show is the largest home & garden show in Texas and covers eight acres of the George R. Brown Convention Center! Stroll through the Lawn & Garden Show, the Home Show, and the Vacation, Leisure & Outdoor Show—without leaving the building. Discover thousands of products, services, and new trends & ideas for your home, garden, & lifestyle. Find the materials & experts needed to get home improvement projects started. You can even book a dream getaway at the Vacation, Leisure & Outdoor Show. Three events for the price of one! Adults \$7, children under 14 free. Tickets may be purchased at the door. \$1 off coupons available through local exhibitors, corporations, retailers, and by visiting www.texashomeandgarden.com. Friday 2-9 pm, Saturday 10 am-9 pm, Sunday 11 am-6 pm @ George R. Brown Convention Center, Halls A, B, C (level 1), 1001 Avenida de las Americas. More info: 713/529-1616.

26 & 27 (Sat. & Sun.)
The Museum of Love Exceeding: Catastrophe and Crescendo. Programmed by Michael Bell @ Aurora Picture Show, 800 Aurora St. Info: 713/868-2101 or www.aurorapictureshow.org.

27 (Sun.)
Sandra Bernhard & Janeane Garofalo play lesbian over-the-top actresses in "D-Girl," this evening's episode of *The Sopranos*. Even though the two women's roles are considered cameos, *The Sopranos* is a critical success, so don't miss it. If you don't have HBO, get a friend to tape it. Check local listings for time.

PLANNING AHEAD

March 16

Dining Out for Life is a unique fundraising event involving local restaurants which benefits the Body Positive Houston Wellness Center. Restaurants donate a portion of the day's proceeds to the wellness center and people join the fight by patronizing participating restaurants. Last year was the first year for the event, which raised over \$8,000 for the center, a facility dedicated to helping those living with HIV and AIDS live more productive lives through proper nutrition, exercise, and health care. For more info on the event, call the center at 713/524-2374.

PERFORMING ARTS

♦ **The African Company Presents Richard III.** Go back in time to New York City in the early 1800s when the

country's first black theatrical group—the African Company of New York—was staging English classic plays and high society satires enjoyed by black & white audiences alike. When an uptown impresario, fearing competition, resorts to manipulative tactics to stop the company's production of *Richard III* and shut down the theater all together, the African Company survives to launch a progressive new chapter in American theater. Through Feb. 27 @ The Ensemble Theatre, 3535 Main Street. Info/reservations: 713/520-0055.

♦ **Ain't Misbehavin'** is the bright, sassy "Fats" Waller musical revue. Along with Louis Armstrong, Waller was one of the first authentic black superstars. Recreating the atmosphere of a sultry, smoky, 1930s Harlem nightclub, this play fills the air with great music. The wailing, stompin' five-piece band and the three females & two males singin' & dancin' bring to life Waller's famous songs. The Great Caruso Dinner Theater, 10001 Westheimer near Gessner. Dinner & show: \$29.95 (Wed., Thurs., & Sun.); \$34.95 (Fri. & Sat.). For reservations: 713/780-4900.

♦ **The Comedy of Errors.** Shakespeare's most outrageous comedy begins when Antipholus of Syracuse and his sidekick Dromio arrive in Ephesus. Unknown to them, their long-lost twin brothers (also named Antipholus of Syracuse) are residents of the town. When the visitors encounter complete strangers declaring friendship, creditors demanding payment, and women claiming marriage, the stage is set for a wild romp of mistaken identities & comic confusion. Feb. 4-March 5 @ the Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave. Tickets to preview performances are \$23 (Feb. 4-8); tickets to performances on or after Feb. 9 range from \$37-\$42. Tickets available at the Alley box office or by calling 713/228-8421.

♦ **The Debutante Ball** is Beth Henley's dark comedy revolving around Teddy Parker's "coming-out," that particularly Southern-gothic event known as a Debutante Ball. Jen Parker is beside herself as her daughter is about to enter into the polite society of Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Jen has been excluded from society since she was charged with murdering her husband with a cast-iron skillet. If she is ever to be re-accepted, the night must go perfectly. As the play unfolds, however, secrets emerge which threaten all that Jen has regained since her acquittal. *Warning: contains strong language, sexual situations, & cigarette smoking.* Plays weekends through Feb. 26 @ Actors Theatre of Houston, 2506 South Blvd. Tickets \$14 (students/seniors \$10). Reservations recommended: 713/529-6606.

♦ **Defying Gravity** follows the stories of seven characters in the days surrounding the 1986 explosion of the

OutAtTheMovies

SHE'S THE GREATEST

Gay-friendly Bette Midler stars with openly gay Nathan Lane in a screenplay by openly gay Paul Rudnick!



Bette Midler and Nathan Lane play with dolls.

From the very beginning, best-selling novelist Jacqueline Susann (Bette Midler) just wanted her place in the spotlight. With no agent and no one calling for auditions, she scraped by with residuals from the occasional radio jingle, television commercial, and game show appearance. Still, with every failure—and there were plenty—she remained undeterred in her quest for fame. A friend once told her that "talent isn't everything," and for no person was this more true. Manager and publicist Irving Mansfield (Nathan Lane) knew he was the one who could make Jackie's dreams come true. He also knew that he was in love with the flamboyant actress. With Jackie's career going nowhere, and fast, Mansfield hit upon an idea. A crazy idea, but an idea which just might make Jacqueline Susann a household name. She would write a book. Never mind the fact that she had never written before. She would write about what she knew: the crazy, steamy lives of drug-addicted, sex-craved movie stars. The result was *Valley of the Dolls*, which, according to Mansfield, was "like *Gone With the Wind*, only filthy." The rest is history. *Isn't She Great*, now playing citywide, also stars Stockard Channing as her best friend, John Cleese as her publisher, and David Hyde Pierce as her editor.

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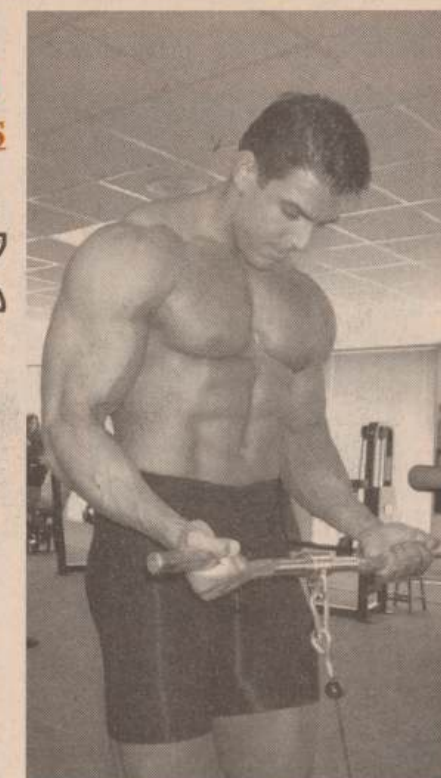


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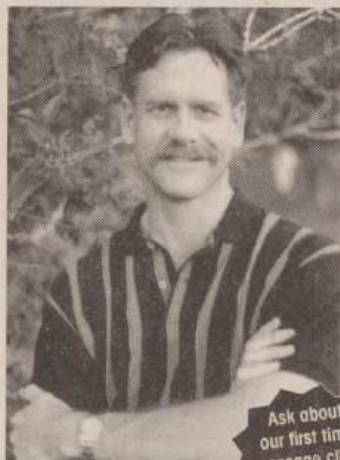
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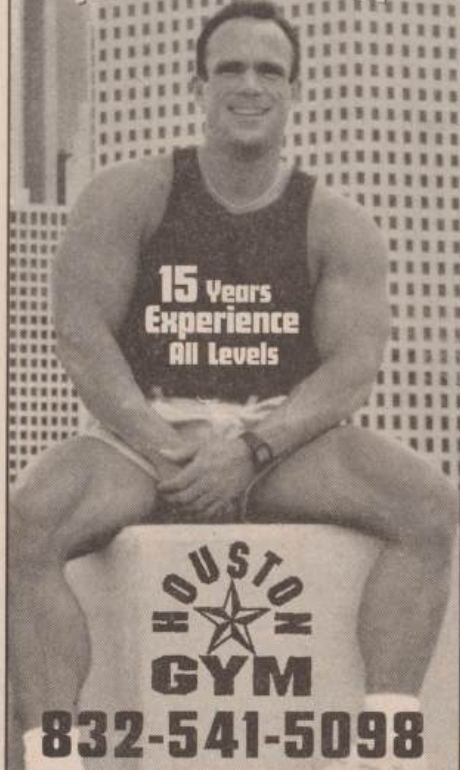
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GrooveOut

by Chris Sill

WORLD VIBE WEB

The top gay music sites:
OutSmart's picks of where to
www.getout.com and www.getdown.org

Navigating the world wide web can be a rewarding but time-consuming experience. Sometimes it feels like you've been sucked into a black hole where there is no concept of time. Before you know it, two, three, even four hours have passed and you're still surfing away! GrooveOut recently put its own "search engine" to work on the subject of music. The results were as colorful as a rainbow flag: from queer radio to queer stores to queer record labels, plus a whole lot more! By no means is this list complete ... it's simply offered as a guide to music-related websites. So log on and leave the navigating to us. • First stop: Internet Radio. There are a host of listening sites out there; here are our top picks. Try www.gaywired.com (click on Internet radio) for a dose of queer radio. Programs include two talk shows, and one music show. Tune into Amazon Radio at www.wpkn.org/wpkn/amazon for women's music broadcast from Bridgeport, Connecticut. Check site for schedule. Another queer site is www.gaycyn.com, central New York's Internet radio for gays and lesbians. • If you're looking for more variety and flexibility, try some of these larger sites. Most are free and broadcast 24-7. The largest may be www.spinner.com. This mega-site boasts 120 listening channels such as "all girls," "movie tunes," "dance," "urban divas," and "shagadelic," to name a few. • For some spicy Latin vibes or Broadway show tunes, go to www.radio.sonicnet.com. There's always a groove on at www.grooveradio.com—it's strictly dance and electronica. Want your own radio show? Check out www.live365.com and begin your broadcasting career here. • Now that you've heard the music, where can you buy it? Here are some gay and gay-friendly sites that provide an alternative to the obvious choices. Once again www.gaywired.com/gaymusic



offers a good selection of music by gay and lesbian artists in different genres. The same is true at www.gaymart.com. For dancing queens the selection is much broader. The gay-owned

Chris Sill spins tunes at Rich's.

www.octaveonhigh.com specializes in '80s high energy, disco, and house. Also gay-owned is www.perfectbeat.com. This online store has a large, well-organized inventory, and caters to the club-savvy buyer. Also check out locally gay-owned www.recordrack.com for dance and alternative sounds. The most impressive site I found was www.satelliterecords.com. Its extensive inventory of dance music by category (house, techno, and

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trance), the availability of sound clips (almost all titles), and the ease of getting through the site make it a winner. • GrooveOut's search did not end there. Here we have some other interesting and entertaining sites to explore: queer record label Tripnet online at www.tripnet.com; vote for your favorite gay and lesbian artists at www.outvoice.com; visit the House of Diabolique to hear gossip and house music reviews at www.walrus.com~suave; remix your favorite song with software available at www.cakewalk.com. • Know any cool music sites? Send them to me in care of OutSmart or to csill@infohwy.com. • Visit OutSmart's totally revamped website at www.outsmartmagazine.com.

Romance on the Dance Floor (5 love songs now playing)

- "I Believe in Love" - Paula Cole (Warner Brothers)
- "Above the Clouds" - Amber (Tommyboy)
- "Can't Help It" - Funky Green Dogs (Airplane)
- "Planet Love" - Taylor Dayne (Jellybean)
- "He Loves Me 2" - CeCe Peniston (Silk Entertainment)

Challenger spacecraft. Through a series of vignettes with the teacher/astronaut and her daughter; an elderly couple; a NASA flight technician & his girlfriend; and the Impressionist painter Claude Monet, playwright Jane Anderson weaves a powerful story about risk & recovery. Tickets \$15-\$20. Through Feb. 13 @ Main Street Theater, 2540 Times Blvd., 713/524-6706.

♦ **Dial M for Murder**—a thriller by Frederick Knott, the author of *Wait Until Dark*—has been called "a holiday for the whodunit fans" by *The New York Herald Tribune*. The perfect murder is arranged, the plot twists & turns and culminates with a scene of almost unbearable suspense as a guilty husband is trapped by his wealthy wife. Through Feb. 12, 8 pm @ The Company Onstage, 536 Westbury Square. Tickets are \$10 (seniors/students \$8). More info/reservations: 713/726-1219.

♦ **Die! Mommy! Die!** From Charles Busch, the author of off-Broadway's biggest hits—*Vampire Lesbians of Sodom*, *Psycho Beach Party*, *Red Scare on Sunset*, and *The Lady in Question*—*Die! Mommy! Die!* is the first production of the hit show that ran four sold-out months in Los Angeles this past summer. It's the story of aging diva singer Angela Andrews Sussman, who plots the demise of her husband to run off to New York City with her gigolo boyfriend, and that's just the beginning of her problems. It's a parody of 1960s gothic films like *Hush...Hush*. *Sweet Charlotte* crossed with the Greek tragedy *Electra*. Through Feb. 13 @ Theater LaB Houston, 1706 Alamo. Tickets (\$20-\$22) available by calling the box office at 713/868-7516.

♦ **Eye of the Gull**. Playwright Jane Chambers died in 1983 leaving behind a legacy of lesbian works including *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove* and *A Late Snow*, which received its highly successful 30th anniversary production at The Little Room last season. Chambers wrote *Eye of the Gull* in 1971 as a tribute to the power & simplicity of love as she observed it in a relationship between two of her friends who were lovers and the developmentally disabled sister who came to live with them. The frustration & responsibility of caring for this "child" along with the rigors of running Gull House and keeping a long-term relationship alive are woven into the stories of the women who visit this east coast lesbian guest house. Together they create a unique tapestry of relationships. Tickets \$12-\$15 (preview \$10). Feb. 11-Mar. 4 (Fridays, Saturdays, and Mondays at 8 pm) @ The Little Room Downstairs Theater Studio, 2328 Bissonnet (between Greenbriar & Kirby), 713/523-0791.

♦ **Hay Fever**. The audience is invited to spend a weekend in the country with the self-absorbed Bliss family in this play by Noël Coward. On this particular holi-

day each family member has invited an unsuspecting romantic prospect without informing the others, and when the rain traps the family and their guests indoors, the situation cannot remain unchaotic. Feb. 25-March 25 @ the Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave. Tickets to preview performances are \$19-\$35 (Feb. 25-29); tickets to performances on or after March 1 range from \$32-\$49. Tickets available at the Alley box office or by calling 713/228-8421.

♦ **Houston Grand Opera**. Returning to the Houston stage after an absence of nearly two decades, Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love* is positively infused with memorable melodies. The lovesick peasant Nemorino desperately attempts to win the hand of Adina, a wealthy young woman. Having heard the story of Tristan & Isolde, Nemorino spends his last bit of gold on a magical "love elixir" being offered by the entrepreneurial "quack" Dr. Dulcamara. Through Feb. 12. • HGO also presents *Tristan and Isolde*, the greatest love story set to music. Isolde is the Irish princess put in the charge of a Cornish sea captain, Tristan, who is to transport Isolde to her betrothed, King Marke of Cornwall. While on the voyage, they fall in love, a union so strong & forbidden that it can only be consummated in death. Through Feb. 11. • Both @ Wortham Center's Brown Theater, Texas Ave. at Smith. Tickets (\$22-\$182) available by phone at 713/227-ARTS, in person at the Wortham Ticket Center, or on the web at www.houstongrandopera.com.

♦ **The Seat Between**. "Did you ever notice when two straight guys go to the movies, they leave a seat between them? Is that so nobody will get the wrong idea? Or do guys just need a lot of space?" So goes the world premiere of the performance piece *The Seat Between* by Little Room artistic director Richard Laub. Part musical, part stand-up comedy, part cabaret, *Seat* explores the empty seat that sometimes exists between parents & their children, lovers & their lovers, and friends & their friends. Tickets \$12-\$15. Through Feb. 12 (Fridays, Saturdays, & Mondays at 8 pm) @ The Little Room Downstairs Theater, 2326 Bissonnet (between Greenbriar & Kirby), 713/523-0791.

♦ **Shakespeare's R&J**. Shakespeare's passionate tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* is discovered by four students at an oppressive parochial school for boys. When they perform the forbidden text for their own escape, the timeless tale of dangerous young love heralds a sexual & spiritual awakening. R&J recently received off-Broadway's prestigious Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Special Achievement. Through Feb. 13 @ Stages Repertory Theatre, 3201 Allen Parkway. Tickets (\$26-\$37) can be purchased at the box office or by calling 713/52-STAGE.

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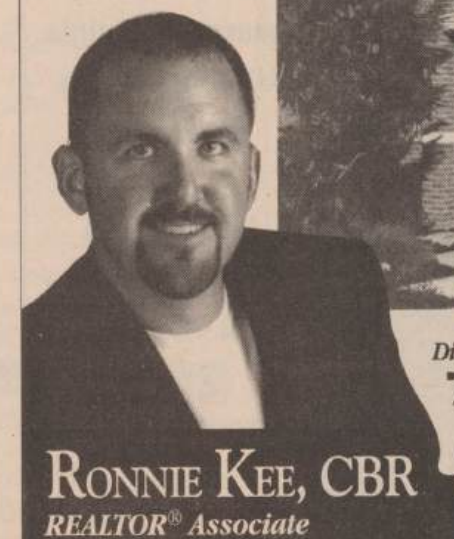
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♦ **Threepenny Opera.** With Kurt Weill's music & Bertolt Brecht's book & lyrics, John Gay's 18th-century *The Beggar's Opera* is turned into a brilliant 20th-century musical commentary on moral values & rank corruption in Victorian London. In its earlier, hugely successful incarnations, the character of Mack the Knife became a legendary theater figure. Feb. 25 & 26 and March 3-5 @ University of Houston School of Theatre (take the Cullen exit off I-45; go south on Cullen to entrance #16; free parking in lot 16B). Tickets (\$5-\$11) are available by calling 713/743-2929.

♦ **Vampire Lesbians of Sodom and Sleeping Beauty or Coma** (presented by dos chicas productions) are two one-acts by the king of camp, Charles Busch. *Vampire* begins in ancient Sodom with the ritualistic sacrifice of a virgin to the embodiment of pure evil, the Succubus. Thus begins the feud that will span centuries as the two continually cross paths in unlikely places, finally realizing their true love for one another amidst the glitz of 1980's Las Vegas. *Sleeping Beauty* probes the sordid fashion world of 1960's mod London. Follow the struggles of Fauna, a hot young designer, her hip photographer roommate Ian, and Enid, the kooky office temp they elevate to supermodel status as they both rise to stardom while thwarting the evil Sebastian Loré. Fridays

& Saturdays at 8:30pm, Feb. 11-Mar. 2 @ Commerce Street Artist Warehouse, 2315 Commerce Street. Tickets \$10; seniors/students \$6. (Pay-what-you-want performances: Mon., Feb. 21 & Thurs., Mar. 2 at 8:30 pm.) Reservations/info: 713/927-4623. A portion of the proceeds from all performances will be donated to Steven's House, an intermediate care residence for people with HIV and AIDS.

♦ **Walking the Dead.** Veronica was just a sweet little girl in a pretty dress until she grew up to become a lesbian called Ronnie. Then Ronnie became a man named Homer, forever altering the course of her/his life as well as the lives of her lover, mother, & gay boyfriends. Unhinged Productions presents this Houston premier of Veronica/Ronnie/Homer's story—*Walking the Dead* by Keith Curran. Filled with scathing but hilarious dark comedy, the play promises to challenge the way we think about gender identity and what it means to be lesbian or gay. Unhinged Productions is a nonprofit 501(c)3 theatrical production company dedicated to producing & promoting plays addressing lesbian & gay themes. The company also works with emerging gay authors to develop their works. *Walking the Dead* plays Fridays & Saturdays at 8 pm from Feb. 11-Mar. 5 @ The Atomic Café, 1320 Nance. Tickets/info: 713/398-7577.

THEATER Young People

♦ **Anansi the Spider.** Working to enhance school curriculum for Houston-area elementary schools, InterActive Theater Company presents *Anansi the Spider*, which blends African, Caribbean, & American folklore in celebration of African-American History Month. This original production features the popular Ashanti folklore trickster Anansi in an adventure all his own. Anansi wants to own all the stories for himself. But Sky tells him that he must earn the stories—by accomplishing three daunting feats. Firstly, Anansi must capture the fierce Mmoboro (the Hornets). Then he must outwit the dreaded and terrible Onini (the Python). And if that weren't difficult enough, Anansi must finally outdance the perilous Osebo (the King Leopard). Will Anansi outsmart these animals and win his stories, or will he prove too smart for his own good? Tuesdays-Fridays at 9 & 11 am and Saturdays at 11 am, through Mar. 4 @ Lambert Hall, 1703 Heights Blvd. at W. 17th. Tickets \$5 per child/adult. Reservations/info: 713/862-7112. (Reservations are required for weekday performances.)

♦ **The Magic Ring-Dang-Do.** This magical children's play combines the nostalgia of a classic fairy tale with some of the optimism of the new year. With the theme of standing by your friends, the young audience is challenged with the antics of a would-be magician, a lonely ogre, a farmer, and the girl of his dreams. Take a lighthearted romp through the land of imagination where good things happen to good people. Complete with music & dance, this children's show takes a fond modern look at classic fairy tales with great fun for kids & adults too. A wonderful lesson for the new century. Through Feb. 12 @ The Company Onstage, 536 Westbury Square. Saturdays at 11 am & 1:30 pm. Tickets are \$5. Reservations strongly recommended. Info/reservations: 713/726-1219.

♦ **Sundiata, The Lion King.** In honor of February's African-American History Month, EarlyStages Children's Theatre brings back this acclaimed production. The courageous Sundiata learns the value of loyalty & self-worth on his way to becoming king. This magical children's play is based on the true story of Sundiata Keita, the prodigal son of King Nare Maghan Kon Fatta, who returned from exile to unite the state of Kangaba in western Africa in the early 13th century. This heartwarming African folk tale comes to life with vivid imagination. Through March 4 @ Stages Repertory Theatre, 3201 Allen Parkway. Tickets are \$8 and can be purchased at the box office or by calling 713/52-STAGE. All seats are reserved.

RADIO

♦ **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) Mondays, 8-9 pm. Features, news, music, interviews, reviews, and commentary. KPFT 90.1 FM, 713/526-4000.

ART/PHOTOGRAPHY

♦ **Art Classes for People With HIV: 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. More info: 713/523-9530.

The Museum of Fine Arts Houston is offering free art classes for those with HIV/AIDS. Patrick Palmer begins his 9th year offering art instruction. Abstract painting, linoleum-cut greeting cards, & ceramics are some of the media offerings for the fall semester. Class is limited to 16. Everything is free, even lunch! The classes meet at the Glassell School of Art every Friday, 1-4 pm, 5101 Montrose Blvd., room 202. For more info: 713/639-7500 or 713/526-1118.

♦ **Entres Fronteras: Photographs by Diana Molina** is a collection of photographs portraying Hispanic and indigenous cultures of Mexico, focusing on the Sierra Tarahumara in Chihuahua, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Oaxaca, the Yucatan Peninsula, and several Charros in Texas. Images depict borders crossed, not only by division of territory, but also by the influence of ideologies, customs, commercialism, styles, economics, and views of life. Presenting a cultural and sociological representation of various aspects of Mexican life, the exhibit reveals images of traditional festivals, ceremony, and daily lifestyle along with the environment in which the people exist. Through Mar. 12, 2000 @ the Houston Museum of Natural Science in the John P. McGovern Hall of the Americas Temporary Gallery on the 3rd floor, in Hermann Park across from Miller Outdoor Theater. Admission is \$4 adults, \$3 children 3-11 (free to members). More info: 713/639-4629. For info in Spanish: 713/639-4603.

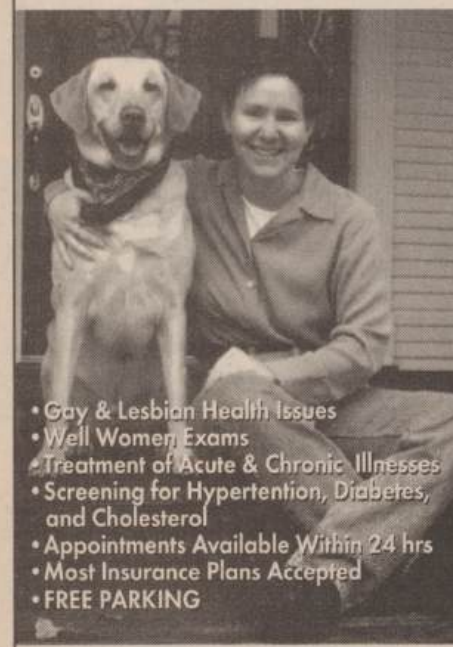
♦ **The Human Race.** During "The Human Race" held on Oct. 10, some of the people actively participated in creating this photo exhibit. More than 200 disposable cameras were distributed to chronicle the event. These photos con-

sist of the multi-cultural activities along the route, the participants of The Human Race, the various cultures represented, the educational signage, and the post-race celebration of our city's diversity. The purpose of The Human Race was to unite citizens from all ethnic & religious backgrounds in the spirit of friendship & cooperation in a 5K walk/run through a spectrum of Houston's diverse downtown and mid-town neighborhoods. The race provided funds for AIDS Foundation Houston, among many others. Through Feb. 28 @ Holocaust Museum Houston, 5401 Caroline, 713/942-8000. *Holocaust Museum Houston's mission is to promote the awareness of the dangers of prejudice, hatred, & violence against the backdrop of the Holocaust and to teach mutual respect & understanding among all people.*

♦ **Introjection: Tony Oursler, 1976-1999** is the first U.S. survey of this artist's pioneering work in video, which includes blinking eyes, chatting dummies, and talking lights. The exhibition will feature 85 works of art, including a comprehensive selection of Oursler's video sculptures, single-channel videos, paintings, drawings, and performance props, as well as a CD-ROM work which incorporates up-to-the-minute animation technology. Through Feb. 13 @ the Contemporary Arts Museum, 5216 Montrose, 713/284-8250.

♦ **Inventing Mirth** is an exhibition featuring the work of Houston gay artist J. Antonio Farfan. It includes paintings, drawings, collage, & theory on the perpetual pursuit of happiness. Farfan received his fine arts degree from the University of Houston and has done independent study in Paris, France. He has previously exhibited his work at Houston's Luna 527 Gallery. Through March 1 @ Mo Mong Restaurant, 1201 Westheimer, 713/524-5664.

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♦ **Paintings and Works on Paper.** The work of Perry House, a Houston-based artist, is described as seductive & grotesque, abstract & referential. *Paintings and Works on Paper* focuses on works produced within the last five years, including his *Explosion* series. Whether using acrylic or house paint, cardboard or construction paper, House's discretely mixed modes purposely grate on the visual nerves. All of the works are intensely psychological, fabricating a precisely rendered chaos of eccentric form & high key color. Through Feb. 19 @ DiverseWorks, 1117 East Freeway, 713/223-8346.

♦ **Portraits of African Americans.** Looking through one of Houstonian Todd Severson's portrait collections is like returning to your hometown after having been away for years. These faces should be familiar, but they lie concealed in a flurry of half-remembrances. Severson's myriad images of African-American artists, film icons of the West, U.S. first ladies, and women on death row raise questions about our American evaluation and validation of diversity, mythology, politics, & justice. These paintings are a record of American pop culture on a personal, a national, & an international level. Through Feb. 26 @ Lawndale Art Center, 4912 Main Street, 713/528-5858.

♦ **Print Auction.** More than 120 works by nationally and internationally known photographers will be auctioned. Leonard Nimoy (*Star Trek*) and Graham Nash (Crosby, Stills & Nash) are among those who have committed to date. This 2000 Print Auction takes place on Wednesday, Feb. 9, @ Gremillion & Co. Fine Art Inc., 2501 Sunset Blvd. A preview will be held from 6-7 pm; the auction takes place from 7-9 pm. The fund-raising event benefits Houston Center for Photography's (HCP) educational & outreach pro-

grams. An exhibition of these works runs through Feb. 7 in HCP's newly renovated galleries at 1441 W. Alabama. Info: 713/529-4755.

♦ **Richie Vegas: A Psycho Memoir** is a selection of drawings from Austin artist Richard Alexander's copious series that explores the psychological intricacies of schizophrenia. This exhibit will continue through three separate rotations of the artist's distinctive works in hopes of making available as many images as possible from the narrative collection that Alexander hopes one day to publish in book form. This exhibition affords the Houston public a rare and private look at the most mysterious & unpredictable manifestations of human psychology in the conscious creations of visual art. Through April 15 @ Lawndale Art Center's new Micro Gallery, 4912 Main Street, 713/528-5858.

♦ **Vernon Fisher's File 00.** For over 30 years, Texas artist Vernon Fisher has based his work on an interrelationship between image & text. Fisher's personal "File 00" contains the photos, reference materials, & written stories that have appeared & reappeared in his art. Additionally, these make up the viewer's collective memory of his oeuvre. Some of the images & reference materials are appropriated while others were photographed or created by Fisher. The artist's repeated use of these objects has "aged" them into art & artifacts. Through March 5 @ the Museum of Fine Arts, 1001 Bissonnet, 713/639-7300.

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Courtney Love (singer/actor)

(Reel.com via Entertainment Weekly, 1/14/2000)

"I had two marriages. The transvestite—does everyone know about the transvestite? He's around. He calls himself 'the Eddie Fisher of Rock.' I was drunk in Las Vegas, I married a transvestite, got an annulment."

Anthony Briatico (aspiring actor)

(Interview, 2/2000)

On his day job as a waiter: "People are always asking me really personal questions as if I were on the menu: 'Are you a model?' 'Where are you from?' 'Are you gay or straight?' I'm like, 'Wait a second. I'm just here to tell about the way the steak is prepared!' ..."

Most Zen Encounter: "I met photographer David LaChapelle at his book party. He told me that art is more important than boyfriends because art will always be there and it will never cheat on you."

Darren Hayes (Savage Garden front man)

(Entertainment Weekly, 1/14/2000, Beth Johnson)

"As the band's public face, the boyishly handsome Hayes even appreciates the marketing value of the is-he-or-isn't-he? speculation he stirs up. 'If you're straight, if you're gay—hey, if you're a horse—and I appeal to you, great,' he grins. 'I don't feel particularly compelled at this point to set the record straight.' So to speak."

Colin Farrell (aspiring actor)

(Interview, 2/2000, Edward Helmore)

Edward Helmore: [W]ho is your Valentine?

Colin Farrell: Who would I want my Valentine to be?

Anybody you want.

Marlon Brando. Me and Marlon Brando over a nice candlelit dinner and a nice bottle of wine.



Queer Duo fe s

Compiled by Blase DiStefano

Joan Collins

(Interview, 2/2000, Michael Musto)

"In my career, I've gone from babe to bitch to bag."

Divine (top right) in 1985's *Lust in the Dust*: Did criminals like him?

Joan Collins (above) in *A Midwinter's Tale* (1990s): Does she know her BBBs?

Selma Blair (left) in last year's *Cruel Intentions*: Has she ever French-kissed another woman?

James Woods (right) in 1998's *John Carpenter's Vampires*: Has he ever done it with another man?

Selma Blair (actor)

(Details, 1/2000, Brantley Bordin)

Brantley Bordin: [What can you say] about French-kissing Sarah Michelle Gellar in *Cruel Intentions*?

Selma Blair: My mom called after that escapade and said, "Honestly, Selma—did you have to use so much tongue?" And I can't say that in my real life I'm comfortable with that much tongue, but the instructions were [Does a dominatrix Gellar] "Now put your tongue in my mouth and massage my tongue with your tongue!" So I was just following orders, goddamnit! [Laughs]



John Waters on Divine

(Interview, 2/2000, Lypsinka)

John Waters: ...We were all kind of an angry bunch of lunatic kids, and I turned [Divine] into an anti-hippie goddess. I wrote speeches for him where he would threaten to kill hippie girlfriends and their pets and guzzle white sugar on their doorsteps—you know, everything that was hippily incorrect in San Francisco—but they liked it! They had a sense of humor about it. And it wasn't just gay people that liked him: Bikers liked him, criminals liked him, all people that were angry liked him. And he liked using this humor and this terrorist kind of persona. We always wanted him to be "Jayne Mansfield goes insane," because Divine and I worshiped at her altar.

Lypsinka: I would say you succeeded in your ambition.

There was never a glamour girl who was fat, so we accentuated the fatness with cutouts for just the gut, things that you would just never see. Where it really got subversive was in *Hairspray*, when he convincingly played a fat redneck mother in East Baltimore, and it's never revealed that he's a man.

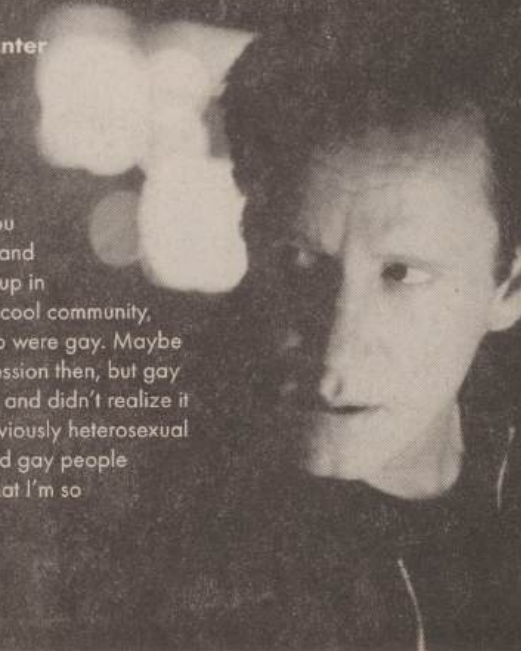
James Woods

(The Advocate, 2/2000, Stephen Rebello)

James Woods: ...The mistake a lot of guys make is thinking that women think about men the way gay men think about men. The truth is, gay men think about men the way straight men think about women....

Stephen Rebello: Have you ever had an encounter with another man?

Only once did a guy come on to me. He was a friend of mine, a famous gay playwright, and he was a little drunk. I said, "Are you nuts?" He said, "I'm sorry" and I was like, "Please." I grew up in the theater, which is a very cool community, so I had a lot of friends who were gay. Maybe there was more social repression then, but gay people—maybe I was naive and didn't realize it—didn't come on to very obviously heterosexual people like me. I always find gay people very respectful of the fact that I'm so obviously heterosexual.





lift my head up to look around the room and think, "This is decidedly weird." I'm in an old hotel ballroom, in downtown Dallas, with 21 other men, giving and receiving Taoist Erotic genital massage. Then an intense wave of sensation undulates from my groin, obliterates my ability to think of such mundane things, and I relax once again into the massage. The ministrations of my masseur, the intense breathing techniques, and the music combine to create a sustained level of pleasure I never imagined possible. The music fades. The leader calls for the masseurs to move to the next table. New hands caress my body and the first strains of Donna Summer's *I Feel Love* pound through the speakers. I smile, remembering the fun of dancing to this song in the '70s. With a flash I gain a moment of insight. Ms. Summer is not just singing about the thrill of being gay as I had imagined, or "hot sex," which was most of my priority during those times. Suddenly that '70s classic is saying so much more to me; it includes the love I feel now, on this table, vibrating with pleasure. It reminds me that conscious sex includes a love that dissolves shame and fear and instills courage and pleasure. In the immortal words of the beloved teacher from *Kung Fu*, "Ah, So! Grasshopper." This is what sacred sex can be.

Western religions teach us that our bodies are the source of sin. They teach us that celibacy is the only path to God and that sex outside of marriage is a one-way ticket to hell. (Well, what if all the fornicators who have ever lived are in hell? Maybe there's a wing just for gays and lesbians. It could be a fun place to spend a couple of millennia....) Fortunately Eastern religions hold a broader concept about sex and spirituality. They teach that sex, when used properly, can be one of the most dynamic paths to God. Why wait for hell, live now!

The mystical traditions recognize that sexual energy can be a potent source of spiritual energy. The kabbalists have their sex magic. The erotic rituals of a sect of Chinese Taoism cultivate transformative energies which are used for great benefits for self and community healing. The East Indians and Tibetans have Tantra. Tantra, which gave us the *Kama Sutra*, is the art and science of cultivating sexual energy and directing it to spiritual transformation.

Deepak Chopra says, "Tantra is the closest you can get to magic or alchemy or transmutation. Tantric rituals are basically spiritual disciplines that allow you to trap and transform power. When properly understood, Tantra is one of the most dynamic and consistent paths to enlightenment. Of course, sexuality is a component of it. Tantra ac-



knowledges that sexual energy is the most powerful energy in the universe because it is the creative energy in the universe."

I believe exploring the concepts and practices of erotic rituals are important for Westerners. We have a deep sexual wounding from our Judeo-Christian heritage. Our sexual natures were first denied when Adam and Eve "saw their nakedness" and were evicted from the Garden of Eden. Original sin is the philosophical and psychological wedge that denies us the pleasures and experiences of our physical bodies. Healing erotic rituals allow us to experience our bodies as sacred, to experience sexual energy as the cosmic creative gift that it is.



I am standing in a circle of men. This is my first Body Electric seminar. I am anxious about what this weekend will hold. I know soon we'll all be naked and that at some point I'll be giving a complete stranger a genital massage. Not that that's never happened before. Just not in broad daylight, in a room full of other men overlooking SMU. (That's a cosmic joke in itself which gives me great amusement). I had heard of the Body Electric School before. It's based in California and

**I sing the body electric:
In a room high above
SMU, serenaded
by Donna Summer,
I discovered a whole
different way
to be sexual ...
and to be myself**

— by Alan Davidson —

Photographs by WoodAllen Photography

offers sex-positive experiences for men who love men and women who love women—as well as for some especially brave straight people. They offer a variety of weekend seminars and longer retreats which facilitate sexual healing, intimacy, and exploring a variety of erotic pleasures.

With my own fears and insecurities about my body and sexual performance, I discounted the Body Electric School. Years passed while I explored other spiritual practices and slowly matured emotionally. I practiced Tai Chi, chanted the OM, discovered yoga and insight meditation. I went from being bartender at Rich's to becoming a massage therapist and teacher. As a massage therapist I am fascinated by the subtle physical energies that animate the grosser tissues of the body. I explored reflexology, polarity therapy, and deep-tissue somatic massage, which all have a spiritual component. However, my dream of a committed, intimate, sexually potent, life-changing relationship still eluded me. I had studied Tantra, but not practiced it. I was feeling inadequate about my sexual skills. My friend David called to share his own extraordinary experience with Body Electric. He assured me I'd love it. The emotional and psychological payoff (not to mention sexual payoff) of the class was well

worth the risks he'd taken. I remember David as one of the more sexually modest members of our old group. If he could do it, I knew I could too. Insecurities be damned.

As the workshop unfolds I realize something quickly. This weekend is more about intimacy than sex. I have spent years moving through spiritual communities learning about intimacy. Much to my regret I rarely found much emotional depth with other gay men. The Body Electric work emphasizes connection over technique. And there are great techniques. John, our seminar leader, explains the penis is the part of a man's body which "gets the most amount of massage with the least amount of imagination." There are opportunities to reveal ourselves and to share, to look deeply into the eyes of other men ... or not. The thing I notice is the respect that each man is given. No matter where a man's at physically, emotionally, sexually, mentally, or spiritually, he is honored. There is a constant celebration of the male body and we are encouraged to embrace our erotic selves. For all my insecurities over the shape of my body or the size of my genitals, I have never felt more welcome in a group of gay men. That is a gift I will take to my grave.

A primary key in Tantra is the ability to be present with your partner; to focus with eye contact, to match the rhythms of the breath, or meditate together. Tantra also teaches the importance of mastering the orgasm. Women have four levels of orgasm: the clitoral orgasm, the vaginal orgasm, multiple orgasms, and the *amrita*, or divine nectar. Men are taught to master ejaculation. Rather than lose their sexual energy out through the penis, the orgasm is directed up the spine through the energy centers of the body (called chakras in Tantra). Thus men become capable of multiple or "full body orgasms." As a friend recently observed, "If both partners are capable of multiple orgasms, how do you know when to stop?" What a dilemma.

Tantric rituals are most effective in committed long-term relationships. The defenses and barriers of our personality are healed in the safety, intensity, and intimacy of our primary relationships. My friend Sean Michael used to say, "Intimacy means Into-Me-See." Keith Hennessy, a San Francisco-based performance artist and spiritual teacher, defines intimacy as, "The ability to be naked with another person and relax. Naked in all its connotations." I explain intimacy as an undefended encounter between two or more individuals. Each of these describes the expression of a self without the armor of defenses, the vulnerability of just being with another person.

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Trust is necessary to create a level of intimacy. I was having coffee at Starbucks with my friend Joe the other day. He jokingly asked me for my definition of trust. I didn't readily have one. After some soul searching and contemplation, I came up with this: If I trust you, it means I've put my confidence in you, relying on your character, your strength, your truth. I believe trust is earned and sustained over time. There are levels of trust, as with

**My friend
Sean Michael
used to say,
"Intimacy means
Into-Me-See."**

trusting someone with my respect, my home, my dog, my money, my life, my heart. I also come back to something Keith Hennessy said about trusting in relationships. "Once I determine that the other person is not a psychopath or going to overtly abuse me, the emphasis of trust changes from them back to me. It's not an issue of whether I can trust them, but can I trust myself enough to take care of me in the relationship."

Once trust and intimacy are established, commitment is needed for that maximum healing. Especially with the intensity that tantric relationships generate. Commitment is needed to create the container that allows for all the personality defenses, or character armor, to present themselves (and they do!). Character armor is the defenses we habitually use to protect ourselves from being hurt. For example, when I feel vulnerable I may try to cling or grasp onto my partner for reassurance. In the brilliant way that the world works, I generally choose partners who feel smothered by that clinging and they retreat. Which usually creates a spiral of more grasping and retreating. A solid commitment and good dialogue skills can diffuse that spiral and allow real healing to begin. Dissolving those defenses does create more safety and vulnerability, which is the true measure

of spiritual strength. Mastering erotic energy has two primary results. In the art of lovemaking it creates ecstatic satisfaction. It also generates intense energy for healing on all levels of body, mind, and spirit.

As a teacher and a professional body-worker, I think it wise to add: Spiritual and body-centered transformation is a personal journey. The practices that involve a teacher, therapist, or facilitator are not to be used for

cultivating sexual energy. Healthy, consensual sex is defined as sex between two individuals who share an equal balance of power. This excludes professional relationship

ships such as doctor/patient (or psychotherapist/patient), lawyer/client, or teachers/student. Sex between a professional and his or her client is abusive. Erotic rituals invoke powerful energetic experiences. Utilized unconsciously they can hurt relationships and spiritual evolution.

It is the final afternoon of the weekend workshop. For the past two hours I have received erotic massage from six masseurs. I have breathed, thrashed, shuddered, moaned, and sighed. After 40 years I have experienced myself in a totally different and unique way. I am also delirious from the session. The music fades and John leads us in a minute of deep rhythmic breathing, then three deep breaths followed by a sound. We are instructed to begin the Big Draw which directs the accumulated erotic energy throughout the body. I tighten all my muscles, including my breath, and hold them as long as I can. I finally collapse onto the table. I am wrapped in the sheet from the table which gives me the sense of being shrouded. A stream of total relaxation spreads from my belly,

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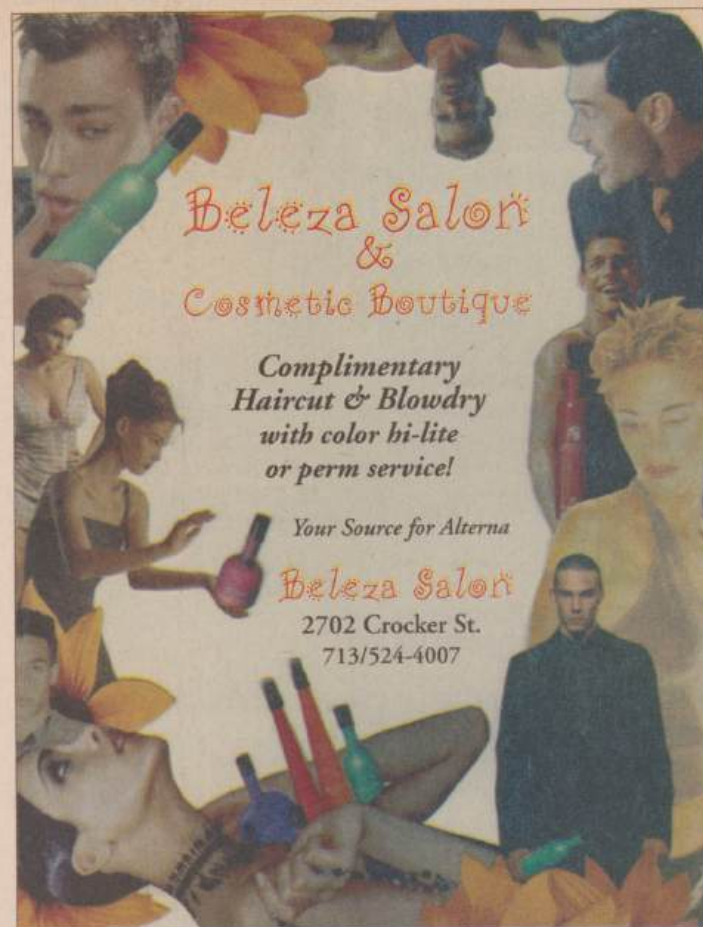
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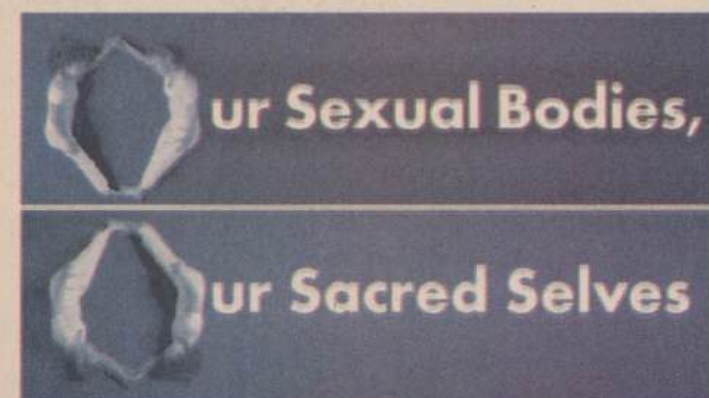
through my legs and arms, and to my mind. I continue to breathe as the first strains of *The Mission* soundtrack begin. It is a most beautiful piece of music and one of my favorites. The next thing I realize is that my consciousness is floating above the massage table. I'm looking down on my body. I'm having an out-of-body experience. I am peculiarly comfortable with this event. I feel perfectly right with the world and my place in it. I am once again reminded that consciousness, sex, intimacy, and connectedness make something else possible: a way of being human that transcends the limitations I often place on myself. For a rare moment I feel free! Ah, So! Grasshopper. So this is sacred sex.

Started 15 years ago by gay sexual pioneer Joseph Kramer, *Body Electric* is based in Oakland. For more information and a complete calendar of workshops, their contact information is: 510/653-1594; e-mail: bodyelec@aol.com; website: www.bodyelectric.org.

Currently, the *Body Electric* community in Dallas is more

active than in Houston, although *Body Electric* workshops have been offered in Houston on and off in the last 10 years. Currently, all Texas workshops are for men (they are eagerly looking for a Texas women's coordinator; women's workshops are being offered in L.A., N.Y.C., Vancouver, Oakland, Seattle, among other cities).

A level-one workshop for men, "Celebrating the Body Erotic," will be offered in Dallas, March 11-12. The level one is a prerequisite for a variety of advanced workshops. "Power, Surrender, and Intimacy," an advanced workshop which explores a conscious approach to the techniques and dynamics of S&M, will be offered March 31-April 2. For more information or to register, contact the Oakland office, or call the Dallas *Body Electric* coordinator Todd Smith at 214/942-3062. There will be an introductory workshop in Houston for men living with HIV, "Celebrating and Reclaiming," Oct. 7-8. The Houston coordinator is Gabriel Clark, at 713/426-5196. Cost for most workshops is \$295.



ur Sexual Bodies,

ur Sacred Selves

**A "pleasure activist" describes
how women can reclaim their bodies
through sacred erotic work**

by K. Ruby



Imagine what it would be like to live in your body without shame. To be able to speak about every part and function without guilt, embarrassment, or fear. To express pleasure and desire clearly. To feel relaxed, awake, and beautiful

in every moment. Although sacred erotic work has a great potential for spiritual depth and soaring, in my five years of teaching, one of the greatest impacts I have seen is how it enables people to fully inhabit and celebrate the wonder of their bodies.

continued on page 67

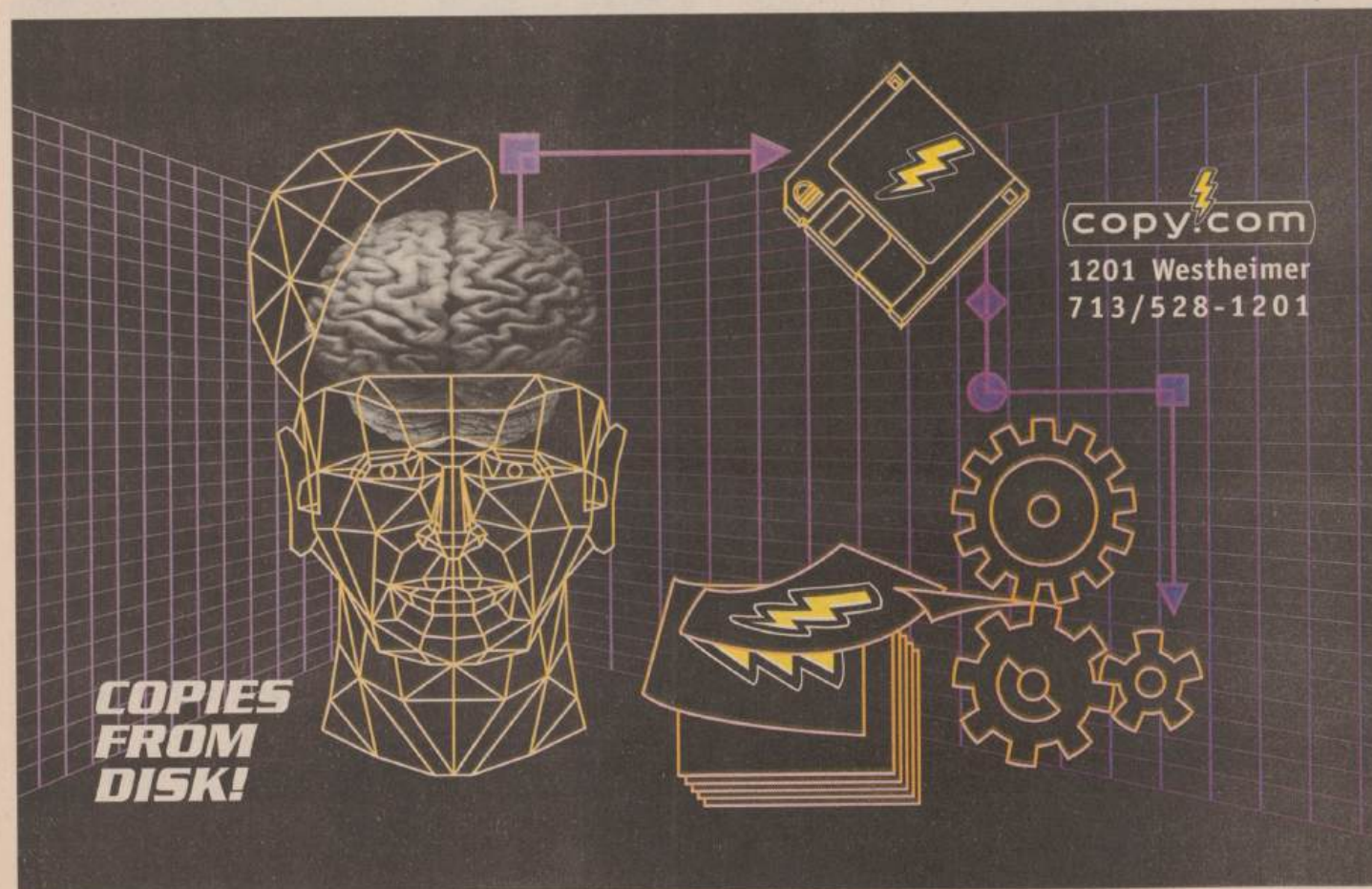
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here is not one word that creates tremor in people more than the word "relationships." Sometimes we desire them, sometimes we detest them. We obsess about not having one, followed by a

strategy to get out of one. Extreme and difficult in the most normal of times, Valentine's Day focuses a spotlight on these pinings and passions, making them even more unbearable and acute.

Historically, men and women have joined together for tribal, cultural, political, or economic purposes. However, as religious, political, and economic shifts began to occur during the 15th century, so did the purposes for connection in committed relationships. Romantic love began to be the reason for partnership. Gay relationships follow along this same course, with perhaps even more of an emphasis on that starry ideal of Romantic Love. As a culture, we've become addicted to the love drug. But believe it or not, romantic love is actually just a hollow preview of the possibilities of an intimate, conscious relationship.

The model that I have been trained and operate from both personally and professionally is known as Imago Relationship Therapy. Initially developed by Harville Hendrix, author of many books in the area of relation-

ships including *Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples* and *Keeping the Love You Find: A Guide For Singles*, Imago presents an understandable and practical approach to maximizing the potential in all human relationships.

"We are born in relationship, we are wounded in relationship," says Hendrix. "And we must heal in relationship." No matter how splendid a childhood we had, everyone acquires psychic wounds that keep us from being happy, fulfilled, and loving adults. However, Imago theory teaches us how we can use our adult relationships to heal these childhood scars. Of course, Imago did not in-

As with all drugs, the effects of the drug of Cupid's Arrow eventually wear off and we are faced with the realities of the relationship.

vent the way to have a healthy relationship: It just describes the process and developed some techniques to help people in the places we often get stuck.

According to Imago theory, when we are attracted to a potential love partner, we're actually picking the perfect person to help us work through our wounds from childhood. Whether gay or straight, female or male, we tend to be drawn to someone who is a reasonable facsimile of the person or people who wounded us in childhood. The combined traits, both negative and positive, of our male and female caretakers from childhood form what is called our *Imago*. These Caretaker

Traits become our "love script" as we begin a search for a partner.

Once we have found our Imago match, the relationship journey continues in fairly predictable stages. First is the "Romantic Love Stage," which is generally fairly short, lasting three to six months. This stage might be significantly shorter or a little longer depending on factors such as geographic distance, previous relationship history, or level of childhood wounding. An interesting note is that as people cycle through relationships, the romantic love stage seems to become shorter. This stage is followed by the "Power Struggle" phase, which can and often does

last for a long time, generally ending in emotional and or physical separation. The third stage is the state of a "Conscious Relationship." It is in this stage that we can maximize

the potential of the relationship that our unconscious has methodically sought out.

THE 3 STAGES OF RELATIONSHIP

Romantic Love:

An altered state of consciousness

Most of us know too well about the Romantic Love Stage, the much-sought-after state of "falling in love" period. This stage is characterized by a state of euphoria, excitement, and ecstasy. With the injection of "Cupid's Arrow," we often slip into a state of unconsciousness, staying up late, wanting to play more and work less, spending money we



imagine

The Imago Model explains why your lovers keep driving you crazy—and why you should thank them for it

by Patrick Vachon, LMSW-ACP

Photographs by WoodAllen Photography

don't have, or calling our newfound "love" many times a day. Connection is the prime objective and all other agendas seem insignificant. We will often neglect our physical body, spend less time with family or friends, and have little or no interest in our jobs or careers.

This Romantic Stage of relationships is in fact an altered state of consciousness. Blinded by love, we enter a state of denial, which is necessary for the process to continue. We deny the negative traits of our new partner while magnifying the positives. Our friends might say things like, "Don't you think she drinks a bit too much?" "Isn't he a bit controlling?" or "He sure is mean to you." You are all the while making excuses: "He's had a hard week" or "She's just having a rough day." We are quite literally drugged by a surge of endorphins and adrenaline. The prime directive of this phase is in fact to get two people who are incompatible (more later) to be blinded long enough to make an intimate connection. Once the connection and some form of commitment is established, the couple has the potential to do some incredible healing and growth. There is only one problem. Most of us are unaware of the underlying relationship agenda to heal our wounds and become scared when the shift occurs.

As with all drugs, the effects of the drug of Cupid's Arrow eventually wear off and we are faced with the realities of the relationship that we have created. It sometimes feels like someone has entered in the middle of the night and stolen the person that we first fell in love with. We often begin to feel that we

have "married our parents." If you have ever been in a relationship where you have thought or said things like, "You treat me just like a child," "You act just like my mother," or "You sound just like my father," then you have successfully accomplished the initial stage of relationships. Congratulations!

The good news: Romantic Love is supposed to happen. The bad news: Romantic Love is supposed to end. Little or no healing or growth is likely to occur within a relationship when the couple is in Romantic Love. After all, how much growth can occur when someone is intoxicated? The drug itself inherently limits our capacities to grow. That is not to say that we don't experience it as fun. In fact, our culture glorifies it; as a society we have become "addicted to love." Many people

jump from one romantic love relationship to the next; disillusioned when the romance ends, they begin a new search for a new romantic high.

The Power Struggle: Sleeping with the enemy

Once the drug has significantly worn off for one or both partners, the second stage of relationships begins. Say hello to the "Power Struggle."

During the Romantic Love phase we generally see our partners from a positive perspective. We tend to be blinded to the negatives, or at least discount them enough to remain connected. When the Power Struggle begins there is a tendency to negate the positives and see mainly the negatives. In fact the very traits of our partner that caused us to fall for them in the first place will likely begin to drive us crazy in the Power Struggle Phase. The man I originally admired for his "calmness, stability, and groundedness" during the Romantic Love phase, I might suddenly be wondering what I saw in this boring dork. If you were attracted to that lively, outgoing woman you met at the Rainbow Club, you may be feeling embarrassed by how loud and pushy she suddenly seems.

Elation and excitement have flip-flopped to frustration and often despair. The experience of people in the Power Struggle stage is often reported as like walking in a mine field—or *being* a mine field. Our triggers and buttons are being pushed every which way. Issues that we overlooked in the Romantic Love stage become frighteningly apparent.



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Chelsea,
The sounds of my soul
resonate through your
energy; that again I feel
through the warmth of
your touch; steadily.

Patty

Codey,
I love you like all the stars
in the sky. I am so proud
that you're in my life this
Valentine's Day, and
many more to come.

Love, John

Cindi & Christine,
The love I have
for you both will echo
in my heart until
its final beat.

Sandi "Pants"

Les,
Roses are red.
Violets are blue.
Words can't express
how much I love you!

Love, Marc

Rosewoman,
I love you
big like the
UNIVERSE!

Love,
Gerard

These land mines feel very real. What couples don't yet realize is that the mines were planted many years ago and are a result of those unmet needs and childhood wounds. The potential in intimate love relationships is to locate these land mines and disarm them. To locate them, however, it is generally necessary to trip over them first. If unaddressed, the Power Struggle becomes a continual bombardment of exploding mines, often resulting in some missing arms and legs—or at least some further wounding of all those hurt parts of our psyche.

If the Power Struggle continues unchecked, there are fairly predictable outcomes. Many couples adapt by living a *parallel* relationship. On the surface these relationships may appear non-conflictual and fairly peaceful. They are sometimes the couples that are in long-term relationships but rarely connect. In reality, the couple has adapted with an "I do my thing, you do yours" attitude, an unspoken agreement of "don't stir the pot." They may live in the same house and sleep in the same bed, but true connection rarely occurs. The communication is generally limited to the essentials of day-to-day living. Problems are not addressed, conflict is avoided.

A second outcome is what we call the *hot* relationship, with an endless cycle of explosive fighting and reconciling. These relationships have the potential of being very intense, both in the conflict of separation and the passion of reconciliation. Unconsciously, one or both partners may be picking fights so that the reconnecting energy might occur. Although this results in at least momentary closeness (and sometimes great sex), the intimacy proves a transitory illusion as the cycle continues once again.

A final way to adapt to the Power Struggle is to end the relationship. Many couples go through years of ongoing, low-level conflict, pain, and distance, which they never address on a conscious level. This ongoing

negative energy creates a variety of defensive postures which further separation. Usually, one partner reaches a threshold and terminates the relationship.

We may have unconsciously picked our partners to recreate the hurtful patterns and damage of our original caretaker, so that we may heal these old bruises. But, being unconscious, when the pain and land mines start in, the most common response is ... defense! Different people defend themselves either by fight, flight, freezing, or submission (roll over and play dead). Although these forms of defense are attempts to gain safety within the relationship, they don't address the origin of the pain, and generally just produce distance.

There are certainly times of real danger when distance is necessary to secure one's safety. But most of our defensive reactions are out of proportion to the real threat. In general these defense postures were learned many years ago in our childhood when they were actually effective. Unfortunately these same postures now limit and sabotage our adult relationships. We create what we defend against; defensiveness always creates more defensiveness unless the other party has the consciousness to stop the attack. If we see our partner as the enemy we will likely treat them that way, and be treated that way in return. This cycle must cease if the relationship is to move in a healing healthy direction.

The Conscious Relationship: Break up or breakthrough?

Unfortunately most couples break up just before the breakthrough. Like a good workout at the gym, the most growth occurs at the final repetitions of the exercise. This is also the point that most people want to quit, exhausted. There is, however, another option: Take the relationship to the next level, the stage of Conscious Relationship. What a tremendous innate potential is possible when two people come together with mutual dignity,

continued on page 53

Mandy N,
Happy Valentines,
sweetheart. You make your
Dad the proudest man in
the world. I wouldn't
change a thing if I could.

Love, Daddy

Linda,
Your smile and your
love is my beacon
in this turbulent
sea of life.

Forever, Sandi

Dickie,
Even if the sun refused to
shine, even if romance ran
out of rhyme, you would still
have my heart until the end
of time. You're all I need,
my love, my Valentine.

Love, Dizz

Dear lover Ivan,
Thanks for your enthusiastic
support and ideas in my
new escapade. I'm excited
about all our adventures
together still to come.

Thanks, Wally

Mark,
Glad I ran into you
at Walgreens.
Welcome back
to Houston.
Happy Valentines!

Love, M

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An Open Letter to HIV Negative Gay Men in Houston from

Do you have a fever, muscle aches, malaise - the "crud" that's going around the office? Before you assume it's the flu or other common ailment, ask yourself: "Have I recently engaged in sexual behav-



ior, such as unprotected receptive anal intercourse, that might have exposed me to HIV?" Recent infection with HIV, known as primary HIV infection, is the second leading cause of fever in gay men. Are you sure it's the flu?

Recognizing the signs of a recent HIV infection can make an enormous difference if you receive prompt medical attention. New research at Harvard University and other academic centers indicates that persons treated soon after infection may preserve the ability of their immune systems to control the virus. Persons who treat later may lose this advantage.

We bring this information to your attention because recent evidence suggests that gay male Houstonians, especially young gay men of color, are once again becoming HIV-infected at an alarming rate. In 1999, according to the City of Houston's HIV/AIDS surveillance program, another 389 gay males in Harris County tested positive for the first time. Of these, 24% were African-American or Hispanic men 20 to 29 years old. These figures are consistent with a study reporting that young minority gay men in Houston have the highest rate of seroconversion of any gay male community in the United States.

Primary HIV infection is a medical emergency. The symptoms of primary infection are "flu-like." They occur 2 to 4 weeks after exposure to the virus and include the following:

- fever
- swollen lymph nodes
- sore throat
- rash
- muscle aches
- malaise
- diarrhea
- nausea & vomiting
- headache
- ulcerations in the mouth or on the genitals

These symptoms can last for 4 weeks or longer and vary in severity from person to person.

Treatment for primary infection will not cure HIV. But it may give your immune system a chance to control the virus - a chance that could be lost forever if treatment is delayed.

If you would like more information about the recognition and treatment of primary HIV infection, or if you need a referral to a physician specializing in HIV, please call The Center for AIDS at 281-HIV-INFO.

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Health&Spirit

Information for
Spirituality, Holistic
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February 2000

BARE ATTENTION

STRESSED? Maybe your life just isn't ordinary enough: Noticing the amazing and simple here and now with mindfulness meditation.

by Micki Fine, M. Ed., L.P.C.

Stress Reduction Tips

- Make ordinary, repetitive occasions such as the telephone ring or a trip to the restroom a reminder to notice your breath and activity of your mind for a few moments.
- Make computer down time a time to turn inward and ask yourself, "Am I awake now?" Or a traffic jam. Or an unexpected wait in line. Any time your well-oiled life is unexpectedly clogged up, instead of impatiently cursing, take this as a gift of calm, an unexpected moment of stillness.
- When you're in a hurry, ask yourself, "Do I really need to hurry?"
- Experiment with being compassionate and nonjudgmental with yourself when you are reminded of your limitations.

Jack Kornfield, author of *A Path With Heart* and founder of Spirit Rock Meditation Center, said, "At the end of life, our questions are very simple: Did I live fully? Did I love well?" Many of those with terminal illnesses have experienced this, and have much to teach. But perhaps these questions should be asked well before the end of life too. They can be a wake-up call for everyone. Mindfulness is the path by which you can heed the call to live fully and be well.

What is Mindfulness?

People generally walk around on automatic pilot. More often than not, we are not really where we are. When we are eating, many of us are reading, working, or worrying about the past or future instead of tasting each bite of our food. Mindfulness is a way to break free from being on autopilot and to wake up to the experience of what's really going on around us while it's actu-

ally happening. A working definition of mindfulness is *paying attention, in the present moment, without judgment.*

Many people wonder why being more aware of the moment is important and how it can help them. Imagine coming home from work after a busy day with lots of chores ahead of you. Waiting for you is your partner or loved one who wants to tell you some wonderful news. If you are preoccupied with your "urgent" business, you may go through the motions of listening, perhaps even rushing off before they are through. You may miss the happy look on your partner's face, or the inflection in his or her voice that touches your heart. If you can truly focus on the conversation and not let your mind drift to planning and fretting, you can find more pleasure in the moment, open your heart to the joy of what's *actually happening* in your life, right here, right now.

"The First rule is to keep an untroubled spirit. The second is to look things in the face and know them for what they are."

Marcus Aurelius

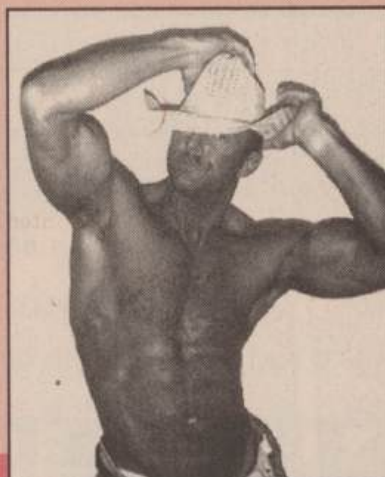


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Our everyday life is full of "ordinary" things that we take for granted, simple marvelous events, like smelling the delicate spray from an orange skin you're peeling over breakfast, or the jokester co-worker who pops into your office, or just the delight of brushing your hair, touching your partner's shoulder, sinking into your pillow. To illustrate, imagine that you have a toothache. It is painful. When it goes away, you glory in the absence of pain. "Oh! How marvelous," you think with relief, "to not have that pain clouding my mind. The world seems so bright and new." However, after awhile you take the "non-toothache" for granted. But the world is still just as delightful, it's just that we've lost our eyes to see.

But we don't need to lose this capacity for appreciation and marvel. If we focus on our "ordinary" experiences, bring our attention to the orange and the pillow, it can help us appreciate that our lives are full of abundance, perhaps right in the midst of difficulty.

But what about those difficult times? We seem to have a natural aversion to pain: Just as we draw away from the hot stove, we cringe in the face of emotional difficulty and stressful times. Make it go away! Or, second best, ignore it. Go have a smoke, a drink, eat half the refrigerator ... or stay very busy. These are very temporary diversions that do not resolve the difficulty and often make the situation worse.

The mindfulness approach says: Just watch. Watch the mind, the emotions, watch the pain arise. That painful emotion is just a feeling, it's actually *not* a hot stove, it's *not* going to kill you. In watching your emotions, try and let go of all those judgments: "Oh, this is horrible, I don't want to feel this." Or, "Now *this* is fun, let's do some more." Mindfulness can help us nurture a calm awareness within a stressful situation and gain insight into how to handle the stress more resourcefully.

The medical establishment is beginning to embrace the techniques of mindfulness and meditation. Jon Kabat-Zinn (author of *Wherever You Are, There You Are* and *Full Catastrophe Living*) founded a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction center at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center Research to teach and research the medical applications of mindfulness meditation. Research at the UMass center and elsewhere has found mindfulness meditation to offer a variety of solid medical benefits, both physical and psychological: boosting the immune system; reduction of chronic pain; reduction of anxiety, panic, and depression; increased self-aware-



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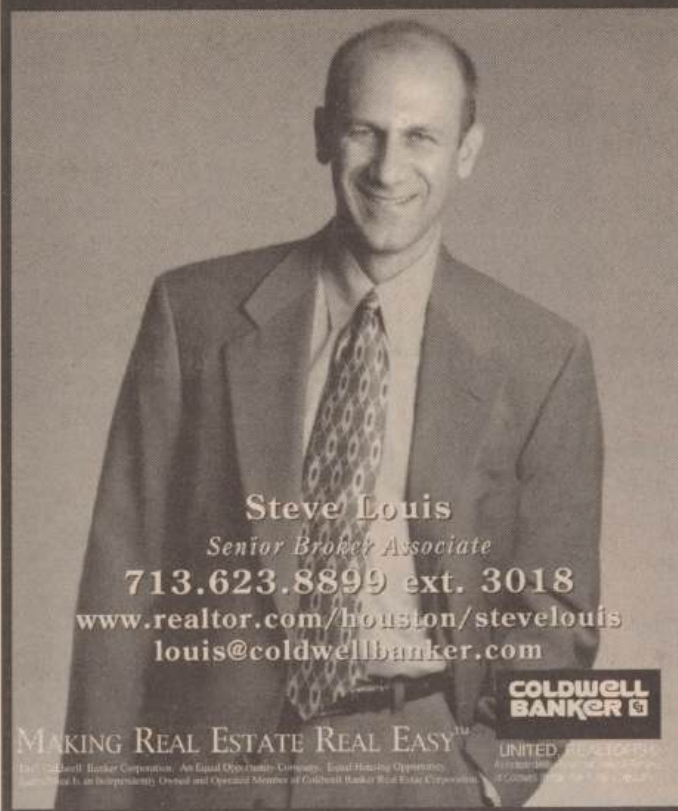
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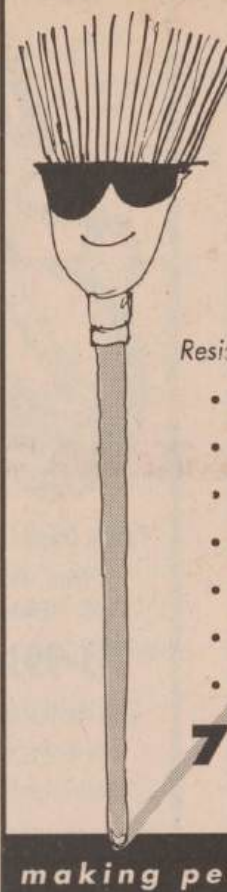
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We experience deep relaxation and self-acceptance, and develop the skill of carefully paying attention. It is a process of growing from reacting automatically, unconsciously, to a calm awareness of pro-active choice, change, and responsibility. Commitment to a daily mindfulness practice fosters physical healing and relaxation, and dramatic changes in beliefs, attitudes, habits, and behaviors.

The art of paying attention developed through meditation helps us focus on the present moment throughout our day. As in

meditation, we use the breath as a point of focus when cultivating awareness in daily life. For example, if you notice that you are not present to your experience, you can become mindful by focusing on your breath and then broadening that focus to other aspects of your experience. We use the breath because it is always with us; it connects us to our bodies and is the link between the body, the mind, and vast internal resources.

*"Be patient
toward all that
is unresolved in your
heart and try to love
the question themselves."*

Rainer Maria Rilke

While learning mindfulness meditation, I encourage people to be very gentle and patient with themselves and not to try too hard to relax (which is what most people think meditation is about). Trying too hard will only add pressure. Mindfulness meditation is actually a nonstriving process in which we make time for "being" and "non-doing." This is difficult to grasp because our culture places so much value on doing more, having more, and getting ahead. So patience and nonjudgmental acceptance of oneself is important.

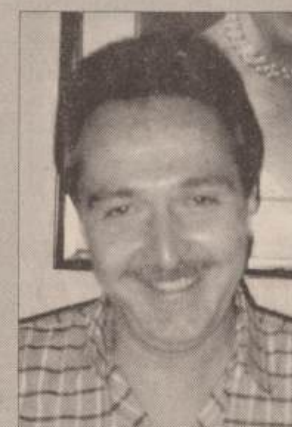
Mindfulness meditation practice can help you experience life to its fullest, deal with the stress that exacerbates your symptoms, and know that you find stillness and peace everywhere.

Micki Fine is a psychotherapist in Houston with a counseling practice grounded in a mindfulness approach.

IN MEMORY OF

James Stuart Anderson, LMSW-ACP

"Jim," to his large family of friends and colleagues, passed away on January 1, 2000. Jim was a dedicated social worker, therapist, educator, activist, AA sponsor, and caring human being who brought joy and laughter to all whose lives he touched. Jim was an integral part of many HIV organizations and programs through the years, including AIDS Foundation Houston, New Counseling Center, Montrose Clinic, the Gay and Lesbian Health Conference, and was a long-time supporter of the Lambda Center and its vital role



in the lesbian and gay community. Jim is survived by his former partner and cherished friend, Doug Moon, of Houston; by his best friend Raul Carvajal, of Houston; housemates Jake and Sylester; Aunt Desyl Spivey of Moline, Ill.; father Maurice Anderson of Illinois; brother Larry Anderson of Fredericksburg; and a large extended family throughout Houston and Texas. The family has requested that memorial contributions in Jim's name be made to the Lambda Center, 1201 W. Clay, Houston 77027.

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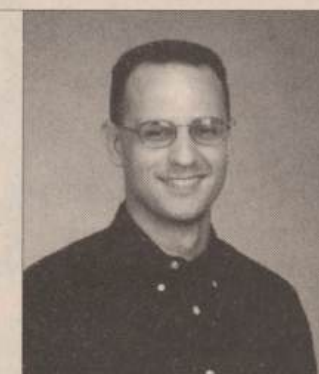
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From the Heart

by Alan Cohen



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Say goodbye to that love roller coaster,
hello to a 24-hour non-stop love-in.

At a seminar I presented in Greece, a woman named Georgia reported that she had been married to a man who was emotionally absent. After long and frustrating attempts to infuse life into her ailing marriage, Georgia felt she needed to leave. "I told my husband I wanted a divorce, but he refused to give it to me," she recounted. "So I decided that even if he didn't love me, I would love me. I decided that I would give myself the love and kindness I had been seeking from him. So every day I wrote myself a long love letter telling myself how beautiful, wonderful, and desirable I am."

"Then one day my husband found one of these letters. Since it was unsigned, he assumed it was from another man. He came to me waving the letter in his hand and told me, 'I can't compete with this—you can have your divorce!'"

Everyone and everything that shows up in our life is a reflection of something that is happening inside of us. All events and experiences in our field of awareness represent the "out-picturing" of a feeling, belief, or attitude we are holding. Thus we can use every event as a barometer of where we are on our path. "We think in secret and it comes to pass; environment is but a looking glass."

This universal Law of Attraction means that we "hire" everyone in our play to act out the script we have written. This is why we experience repetitious patterns in relationship, work, or health; different actors are showing up to play the same role. Eventually we recognize that it cannot be an accident that the same type of people keep doing the same things; it is *we* who have drawn them according to the signals we are radioing to central casting.

The good news about the Law of Attraction is that the moment we change our mind, heart, or attitude, the outer world must reflect it, often *immediately*. In Georgia's case,

she was holding an unconscious attitude that she was unlovable and did not deserve a husband who was present and attentive. As soon she grew beyond that limiting belief, released her husband from the onus of her emptiness, and gave herself the love she sought, he had no choice but to match it or leave. I have every reason to expect that Georgia's next relationship was a vast improvement.

We can save ourselves all kinds of pain and escape the struggle of endless manipulation by determining what we would like to receive from other people, and then giving to ourselves. This all-important shift can be difficult in a world where we are daily bom-

If we decide that another person is the source of our love, we set ourselves up for a roller-coaster ride of heady ecstasy followed by painful frustration.

barded with the notion that we are empty and needy, and everything we want and need is out there. Out there is a romantic partner; a hit record; a new car; a more prestigious job; a better house. The funny thing about getting things from out there is that if you did not know you were whole before you got the thing, you will not become whole when you get it; in fact you will feel even more empty and confused. As Buddha asked, "If you do not get it from yourself, where will you go for it?"

Cool Runnings is a delightful story of a group of young Jamaican men who decide they will enter the bobsled competition in the winter Olympics, based on real events. The team faces and overcomes tremendous odds to make it to the competition. The night before the big race, one of the team members

confides to the coach that he will feel like a failure if he returns home without a medal. The coach has some good advice for this fellow: "If you do not know that you are good enough without the medal, you will not be good enough with the medal."

February is the month of lovers. All of us truly want to be in love, for love is our natural state—literally who we are. The question is not, "Should we love?" but "Where will we find the love we desire?" If we decide that another person is the source of our love, we set ourselves up for a roller-coaster ride of heady ecstasy followed by painful frustration. Sometimes our partner will do things that make us feel loved, and sometimes he or she will do things that make us feel unloved. But as long as anything she or he does can make us feel one way or another, we have set ourselves up for a fall; we have given our power away in a most unkind (to ourselves) way, and we become little more than a yo-yo on the string of life.

There is another way to love, far more magnificent, real, and rewarding. This way finds the source of our love, power, and life *within* us. This way teaches that

our purpose is not to import love, but to *express* it. Instead of being a love seeker, we become a love finder. We do not wait for love—we *generate* it. Then we get to bask in the warmth of our own beauty any time we choose, potentially *all* the time.

D.H. Lawrence elucidated this principle most eloquently:

Those who go searching for love only find their own lovelessness. But the loveless never find love; only the loving find love, and they never have to search for it.

Happy Valentine's month, fellow lovers.

Alan Cohen lives in Maui, Hawaii, and is the author of 14 popular inspirational books including the award-winning *A Deep Breath of Life*. Visit Alan's website at www.alancohen.com, or call 800/568-3079.

Relationships, Imagine!

continued from page 45

respect, and commitment to healing and growth.

To create a Conscious Relationship, Imago teaches a process of dialogue and stretching. Lovers must first and foremost establish safety. Easier said than done. To help keep partners from squaring off into their accustomed defensive positions, the Imago method teaches a technique called an "intentional dialogue," which is really just solid compassionate listening. When discussing a conflict or trauma, each partner expresses what they feel, and then tries to repeat back what the other says, validating the other's reality, although not necessarily agreeing with them. As the partners discuss each other's feelings, each should remember that their partner is just reacting from patterns they learned as children that kept them safe and alive. As we better understand and empathize with our partner, we find that self-knowledge follows. The two partners start to see how each contributes to the collective drama: the drama that is their relationship, the psychic drama of each person's journey to awareness and well-being.

But even with open, safe dialogue, change is still almost stubbornly difficult. There is generally a myth in relationships that partners don't change or meet each other's needs because they don't want to. Although this is sometimes the case, it is the rare exception. Instead, in Imago therapy we've seen that one person's greatest need within the relationship is always met with the other person's greatest defense. Usually we've specifically picked someone who has trouble meeting our needs because of their own childhood wounds. And, it is in these situations that the true potential of a relationship exists, as we "stretch" beyond our learned defensive patterns.

In moving from talking to doing, the Imago method next teaches partners a process for "stretching." Through the inten-

tional dialogue, you ask your partner for several "behavior changes," ways you'd like to see him or her change within the relationship to meet your needs—knowing that it's going to be difficult because of their past wounding. Choosing one of your requests, your partner then slowly stretches through their resistance against giving it. Like the gym analogy, muscle growth must occur slowly. If someone tries to lift too much too fast, the body will resist and collapse. Likewise, if emotional change is attempted too fast, the emotional body will resist. And slowly and methodically, the one having the need begins to get it met, while the partner who has the resistance begins to grow through their defensive posture.

Amazingly, as couples experience this win/win exuberance of healing and growth, they stop seeing conflict as a burden, and shift to the viewpoint that "conflict is growth trying to happen." Our genius selves picked those partners with which we'll find conflict, and now our compassionate and wise selves can use that conflict to heal the places where we're stuck and hurt and not living a full and loving life.

The safety and dropping of defenses only builds. Contrary to much of our childhood learning, defenselessness in a "conscious relationship" contributes to more vulnerability and honesty, which leads to increased safety. "In my defenselessness my safety lies." Once safety is established, joy and connectedness follow. Instead of a blind romance doomed to speedy failure, or a violent and numb destructive marriage, we can create an intimacy that is physically, emotionally, sexually, spiritually, playfully, and intellectually alive, and use our brilliant relationship to reframe our lives and our journey to self-actualization.

Patrick J. Vachon is in private practice as a clinical social worker in Houston; his counseling and his workshops focus on relationship work using the IMAGO Model. He can be reached at vachonpj@aol.com.

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LeftOut

by Daryl Moore

PUNT!

When the Vermont Supreme Court
passed the ball to the Lege, did
same-sex marriages get slam-dunked?

Vermont has a constitutional obligation to extend same-sex couples the same benefits, protection, and security that Vermont law provides opposite-sex couples." So said the Vermont Supreme Court in Baker vs. State when it held that the constitutional rights of three same-sex couples were violated when they applied for but were denied marriage licenses.

When I first heard the news from Vermont, I was thrilled. But after I read the opinion, I wasn't sure how I felt.

The Baker decision sounds like a victory for same-sex couples. And perhaps it will eventually prove to be one. For now, however, three same-sex couples who have lived together in committed relationships for periods ranging from four to 25 years, and two of which have raised children, will have to wait a little longer.

Why? Because although the Vermont Supreme Court may have started out its opinion with a bang by declaring that same-sex couples are entitled to the same benefits as opposite-sex couples, it ended with a whimper by sending the issue to the Vermont Legislature.

Specifically, after holding that Vermont is constitutionally required to extend same-sex couples the same benefits and protections that flow from marriage, the Vermont Supreme Court decided that "whether this ultimately takes the form of inclusion within the marriage laws themselves or a parallel 'domes-

tic partnership' system or some equivalent statutory alternative, rests with the Legislature."

I don't like decisions that split the baby. Nobody won here. The court found a constitutional violation, so why did they put the plaintiffs on hold? After setting aside every groundless assertion set forth by the state in its argument against same-sex marriage, and after concluding that the plaintiffs' constitutional rights had been violated, why did the court refuse to grant the plaintiffs any relief?

It did so because it worried that "a sudden change in the marriage laws or the statutory benefits traditionally incident to marriage may have disruptive and unforeseen consequences.... Uncertainty and confusion could result."

Disruptive to whom? Uncertainty and confusion about what? The court doesn't bother to explain.

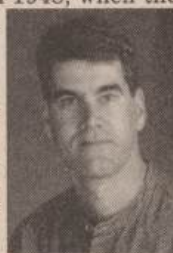
The court's bravery in recognizing and striking down discrimination against same-sex couples is commendable. Its refusal to afford same-sex couples an immediate remedy is not.

In a blistering dissent, Justice Denise Johnson pointed out the problem with the majority's decision. She wrote: "I respectfully dissent from the [majority's] novel and truncated remedy, which in my view abdicates this Court's constitutional duty to redress violations of constitutional rights."

Judge Johnson recalled a similar case in 1948, when the California Supreme Court

continued on p. 56

Writing from the liberal end of the spectrum, Houston attorney Daryl Moore has a general practice and is board certified in civil appellate law. He can be reached at DarylMoore@outsmartmagazine.com.



OutRight

by Dale Carpenter

GAYS IN THE MILITARY SHOWERS

What will it mean to have an openly
gay man among all those glistening
athletic heterosexual male bodies?

It all comes down to the showers, doesn't it? Sure, some experts defend the military's antigay policy with abstruse concepts like "unit cohesion." But those are just words. Behind the words is sexual anxiety about homosexuals. A retired Marine commandant who helped design President Clinton's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy recently said on national television that he would be uncomfortable sharing "body heat" with a gay soldier on a cold battlefield.

It's tempting to laugh at the paranoia behind that kind of talk. But there is a serious question of sexual privacy here, one that has to be addressed if openly gay soldiers are to serve their country.

The argument has to start with a recognition of what the U.S. military is and what it is not. It is the most powerful and efficient killing machine in the world. That's a good thing for the liberties of more than 250 million people.

The U.S. military is not an extension of civil society in smart uniforms and shiny medals. Rights that civilians take for granted are routinely denied to military personnel. They are told when to wake up, when to go to sleep, where to live, what to do, what to say and what not to say ... and they are stripped of privacy. These, too, are all good things for the rest of us. Whatever we do in any area of military policy must preserve the effec-

tiveness of our fighting force.

Defenders of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" argue that mixing gays and straights in the military's atmosphere of forced intimacy will threaten that effectiveness. In a recent *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, sociology professor Charles Moskos offers an analogy to male-female relations. "Nowhere in our society are the sexes forced to undress in front of each other," he observes. So we segregate men from women in the military. "If we respect women's need for privacy from men, then we ought to respect those of heterosexuals with regard to homosexuals," Moskos argues.

Opponents of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" tend to dismiss this sexual privacy argument, and the male-female analogy in particular. One snickering response is that heterosexual men will now get the same unwanted sexual objectification they've given women for centuries. Unfortunately, that answer only reinforces the concerns it laughs at.

Another bad response goes to the other extreme, suggesting that gay soldiers will be asexual models of propriety. Let us in, it is suggested, and we won't make sexual advances or suggestions; we won't even look at our comrades in the showers.

Please.

Back in the real world where

continued on p. 56



Writing from the conservative end of the spectrum, attorney Dale Carpenter is the winner of three Vice Versa awards for excellence in gay writing. A long-time Houston resident, Dale began his column for OutSmart in 1994; he is now living in San Francisco, and his column is syndicated across the country. He can be reached care of this publication or at OutRight@aol.com. For more OutRight, visit www.Planetout.com.

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER

Rev. Jimmy Creech

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LeftOut

continued from p. 54

struck down a law that barred interracial couples from getting marriage licenses. In that case, the state court did declare the interracial couples winners, and then told them to wait for a remedy. It held that the law was unconstitutional and found that the couples were entitled to apply for and receive marriage licenses. It did not send them to legislative purgatory to sit on their hands while a bunch of lawmakers contemplated some "separate but equal" scheme.

Accordingly, Johnson argued that same-sex couples are entitled to immediate relief, just like the interracial couples in 1948 were. She reasoned that "groups that have historically been the target of discrimination cannot be expected to wait patiently for the protection of their human dignity and equal rights while governments move toward reform one step at a time."

And, she chided the majority's decision to punt, concluding that it "leaves the plaintiffs without redress and sends the matter to an uncertain fate in the Legislature."

I agree with Judge Johnson. The prevailing plaintiffs in Vermont walked away with nothing more than a declaration that they are right. But they still cannot marry. Their relationships still enjoy no legal recognition. And the court's directive that the Vermont Legislature take some act to remedy the wrong rings hollow.

We've been here before. An Hawaii court has already held that same-sex couples should be allowed to marry. And, an Hawaii electorate has already erased that holding by passing a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriages.

By refusing to give the plaintiffs in Baker immediate relief, the Vermont Supreme Court—intentionally or not—invited the Vermont electorate to do the same thing the Hawaii electorate did.

So, while we patiently wait for the Vermont Legislature to move toward reform, we will wonder whether the court's opinion in Baker is a win, a loss, or a draw.

OutRight

continued from p. 55

real people feel real sexual attraction while living and working in close quarters, what will it mean to have an openly gay man among all those glistening, athletic heterosexual male bodies?

We must first recognize that the issue is not, "Shall we let gays serve?" Gays have always served in the military and always will.

The issue is, "Shall we let gays who serve be honest about being gay?"

We can segregate men from women, or exclude women, but either way we'll know who is who. The military can't effectively segregate gays, can't effectively exclude gays, and can't always know who is who. That makes the whole question different from rules governing men and women.

Under present policy, the straight soldier doesn't know who might be leering at him in the shower. So he has to wonder about everybody—hardly a reassuring prospect. Under a policy of openness, he'll have a better idea who might find some of his 2,000 body parts especially appealing. Thus, he can take whatever modest precautions are available to minimize his exposure.

Although openly gay soldiers will not be sexless, my hunch is they'll be hypersensitive to the perception that they're constantly on the make (a perception straight men don't always mind when it comes to women). So, unlike straight men drooling after women, openly gay military personnel will likely be especially careful not to let their eyes wander or their hands linger in places they're not welcome.

The male-female analogy also misses the gay-straight dynamic in important ways. In the male-female context, the anticipated sexual aggressors (heterosexual males) are in the majority. Their aggression is often approved and even encouraged by their peers. Under those circumstances, the need for formalized separation from the objects of their desire is understandable.

In the gay-straight context, on the contrary, the anticipated sexual aggressors (known gays) are a tiny minority of the whole. Their aggression is disapproved by their peers, and therefore far less likely to occur or be as intimidating when it does.

Because straight men and women are the overwhelming majority in the military, the expected problems associated with mixing them in close quarters would be frequent and widespread. Mixing straights with a tiny number of openly gay personnel, on the other hand, would occasion comparatively few incidents. To say it would impair the military's effectiveness is silly.

Too, the military separates men and women because it rightly assumes that at least some of the attraction between them will be mutual. We separate straight men and women because they can't keep their hands off each other.

Yet straight men, some of whom recoil even at homosexual body heat, would be the first to say they'll be strictly hands-off with gay men. I say let's take them at their word.

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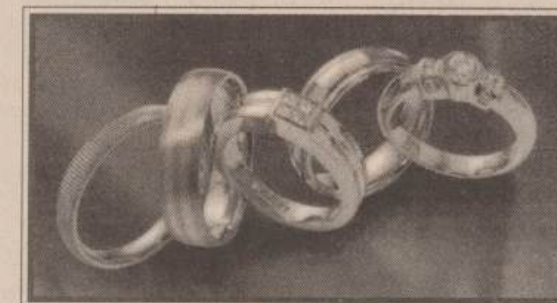
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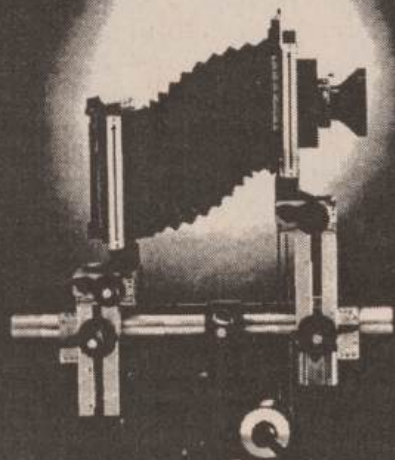
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TravelOut by Tom Yarbrough

CZECK, PLEASE

For good reason, Prague is the latest darling among gay and lesbian travelers

Barely 10 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November of 1989, the Czech Republic represents one of the greatest success stories resulting from the democratic influences of the post-Communist era ... and its capital city, Prague, has become Europe's newest darling among lesbian and gay travelers.

Toss out (recycle, please) those outdated maps from the 1980s because there no longer exists a place called "Czechoslovakia." That name ended with the fall of Communism 10 years ago. This lovely country is accurately called the Czech Republic. Refer to it otherwise in Prague at risk of offending a newfound friend. The Czech people are extremely proud of their language, heritage, culture, and history. Make the effort to learn from, respect, and appreciate its distinct and unique aspects and bear in mind that this culture, along with most other cultures that exist on this planet, pre-date our own by several centuries.

As one of only a few major European cities spared from Allied bombing during the war, Prague (the Czech name is *Praha*) stands today as a shining architectural monument, seemingly defiant to its history of soviet occupation, corruption, and oppression.

I recently visited Prague during a three-city European holiday with Danny, my partner of 13 years, and his mother, Joan, a social liberal who is an extremely hip and well-traveled woman much younger than her years. Our interests tend toward popular/familiar attractions and

what aspects of "our" particular culture that a city may offer. And shopping.

Gays and straights seemed to mix well in downtown nightspots, but there were also bars, clubs, and saunas that catered exclusively to gays. While there were no establishments dedicated exclusively to lesbians, a few bars featured attractions for lesbians on specified nights of the week. As for bars and clubs, more variety and selection existed than I would have guessed. (The Pet Shop Boys were even scheduled to appear in Prague during their current very-select world tour).

From a culinary perspective, Prague offered a surprising array of gastronomic delights that practically left us weak-kneed; a sumptuous four-course feast can be had for about \$15 each, complete with wine, coffee, and dessert. One of our faves was La Provence, a popular French restaurant located in a basement near Old Town Square. Above it, in contrast to the quaint little bistro, was a lively and gay-friendly nightspot called Banana Café. Another cherished experience occurred in an elegant dining room called U Maliru, located in the Mala Strana.

As someone who compulsively collects articles most find meaningless, Prague was a shopping Mecca for me. From the city's eclectic shops, I secured some prized additions to my collections of old shaving brushes, silver hip flasks, ink wells, religious icons, finials of all types, cobalt glass, and antique leather-bound books. Throughout the city, most items were very reasonably priced and little, if any,

price haggling occurred. When we did encounter the occasional bargaining merchant, it was inevitably in one of the open markets. Most local residents, especially merchants, spoke English rather well, often fluently.

Due to its historical significance, stark beauty, and interesting culture, we set aside a full afternoon for a visit to the Jewish Quarter and Jewish Ghetto of Prague, known locally as Josefov. Many of these ancient buildings now contain contemporary designer boutiques and design houses like Nina Ricci, Hermes, Louis Vuitton, Calvin Klein, Gucci, and Prada, among those of other well-known fashion icons.

Ultimately, we made our way to the Jewish Ghetto, although it was not what I would have called a ghetto. Here, amidst posh shops and luxurious surroundings, the city's five synagogues have served as both house of worship and grim monument. They've been used by the small

but consistent Jewish population that has existed here since the early Middle Ages. But they owe their existence to a more sobering explanation: The synagogues were deliberately preserved by the Nazis during their occupation in the 1940s with the intention of creating a collective museum to the culture of a people who they were in the process of annihilating.

Visitors to Josefov should not miss the Pinkas Synagogue in particular. Its original sanctuary was adapted to create a memorial to the victims of Nazi persecution and in so doing, list the names and biographic dates of the 77,297 Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, and other non-Aryan races from Bohemia and Moravia who were exterminated. Of the five, the Old New Synagogue is the only functioning sanctuary, offering weekly services to Prague's minute Jewish population.

Nearby, the Old Jewish Cemetery (Stary' zidovsky' hrbítov)

left us breathless. A walk around the perimeter of this small plot of land reveals an inconceivable number of headstones crowded against one another, the oldest dating back to 1439. We read that while almost 12,000 headstones stand in the tiny cemetery, they represent only a fraction of the actual number of individuals buried here. The last marker is dated May 29, 1787, when use of the cemetery was stopped due to space limitations.

The Old Jewish Cemetery pre-dates the Holocaust and therefore has no connection to it, but evidence of the Nazi occupation does exist in the decline of the Jewish population of Prague. Many of its 150,000+ Jewish residents fled during the 1940s, but those without the means to leave or to be hidden were sent to concentration camps like the one established in the village of Terezin, about 25 meters northwest of Prague.

We visited the camp on a half-day excursion that was in-

deed a sobering and important experience. Sandra Wilkins recommended a reasonably priced private guide who picked us up at our hotel in Prague just after lunch. Karel Ryša'n owns and operates Rainbow Travel, a tour company that caters to gay and lesbian travelers (<http://www.rainbowtravel.cz>). Karel provided expert guidance and care while sharing his impressive knowledge of Terezin and the area's dubious place in history.

I can't think of a destination more worthwhile than the Czech Republic. The experience left each of us enriched in so many ways, individually and collectively. Take a little time to research your itinerary and you'll undoubtedly enjoy one of the more memorable vacation experiences of your lifetime.

Houstonian Tom Yarbrough is a global traveler (and shopper), who also happens to sell SilverSea Cruises.

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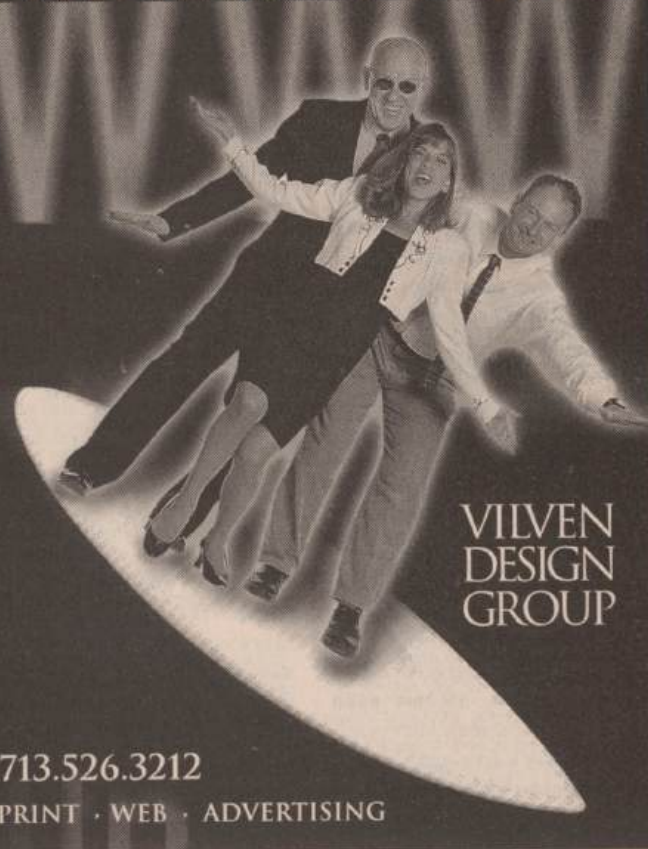
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- ❖ Floral Shoppe
- ❖ FTD Worldwide Floral Delivery
- ❖ Pharmacy
- ❖ Deli/Pastry Shoppe
- ❖ Self Service Seafood
- ❖ Sara Lee Sandwich Shoppe
- ❖ Rotisserie Chicken
- ❖ Flame Grilling



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The Source

Community

- **Adoption.** Family to Family Adoption Services is an adoption networking agency in partnership with several nonprofit adoption agencies who are dedicated to finding loving homes for thousands of orphans. They sponsor a free workshop for prospective adoptive parents seeking more info about adopting children from China, Russia, Ukraine, India, Romania, & Guatemala. Single men & women and couples from 25-57 years old are eligible. Info and/or next workshop date: 713/219-1472 or Fam2fam@aol.com.
- **After Hours (Radio)** Saturdays, midnight-3 am. Featuring the QM2 (Queer Music Zone) with Jimmy Carper. KPFT 90.1 FM, 713/526-4000.
- **The Amazon Xociety** is an intergenerational feminist organization dedicated to the elevation of women in society by addressing practical issues through the promotion of a strong mind, mentoring, & personal/economic development events. Participate in a real-life collective for women working together, make new friends, & cultivate an empowerment lifestyle! Info: Bernadine @ 713/731-0251 or e-mail: strongflower@yahoo.com.
- **The Art League of Houston** offers free art classes to all HIV-positive individuals. Complimentary lunch provided. Classes are ongoing every Thursday, 1-4 pm @ the Art League, 1953 Montrose. More info: 713/523-9530.
- **The Bar Association for Human Rights (BAHR)** is a Houston-area organization for those interested in legal issues affecting gay, lesbian, bisexual, & transgendered people and those living with HIV. Legal professionals, law students, & others interested in these issues are welcome. For more information, please call John Adcock at 713/951-3700 or JADCOCK@bahr.com.
- **BiNet** is a support/social/educational group open to all women & men exploring their sexuality or identifying as bisexual. Confidentiality is maintained within the group, & the use of assumed names is respected. BiNet is an active part of the queer community & is accepting of diverse lifestyles. Meets every Wednesday, 7:30-9 pm @ TooPees, 1830 W. Alabama. For more information: 713/467-4380.
- **Black Lesbian And Gay Coalition (BLAGC)**, an organization dedicated to providing visible leadership in the African-American GLBT community, meets every Monday at 7 pm @ the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, 803 Hawthorne, 713/524-3818.
- **The Center for AIDS: Hope and Remembrance Project** provides the most current HIV/AIDS treatment information to health-care professionals, HIV-positive individuals and their caregivers, while advocating Houston as a clinical trial site, bringing innovative HIV/AIDS research to local clinics. It holds monthly Treatment Mixers for HIV-positive people to discuss openly their successes and failures concerning treatment. More info: stop by the center, 1407 Hawthorne, 9-6, M-F, or call 281/HIV-INFO.
- **Colt 45's** is an all-volunteer charity. Despite our name, you don't have to have an overwhelming love of western attire, lore, or guns to be considered for membership. All you need is a big heart & a willingness to help others when they need it the most. As a 501(c)(3) charity, and to serve the Houston HIV/AIDS community by the best means possible, Colt 45's created the AIDS Troubadour, the Stone Soup Fund, & the Till Thacker III Memorial City Charity Fund. Anyone interested in becoming a member, leave a message at 713/526-6077 or join us the 2nd Monday of each month at the BRB.
- **Dignity Houston** is dedicated to the welfare of gay/lesbian Catholics & their friends. Meets Saturdays at 7:30 pm, 1307 Yale, Suite H, 713/880-2872.
- **Executive & Professional Association of Houston (EPAH)** is established to provide a nonpolitical forum for discussion of business and community affairs, to encourage and foster social and business relationships among the membership, and to support such educational and/or charitable causes as may be approved by the membership. More info: 281/587-6066.
- **EXXON Gay & Lesbian Employees (EGLE)** meets monthly

at the Montrose Library to discuss workplace issues, empowerment, social events, etc. For more information, call 713/522-6212.

• **The Feminist Online Network (FEMNET)** is a free e-mail list with announcements, info, & resources of interest to feminists & lesbians in the Houston/Galveston area. Postings include health info, political activism, resources, a calendar of events and more. To subscribe, go to <http://www.oneist.com/subscribe/FEMNET>.

• **FIRM** (Foundation for Interfaith Research & Ministry) is a nonprofit organization working with local congregations to sponsor Care Teams. Volunteers are trained to meet many of the social, physical, and emotional needs of people touched by HIV/AIDS, Alzheimer's, and dementia-related disorders; frail seniors; and other life-threatening conditions. Care Team volunteers view themselves as friends and extended family who can offer nonjudgmental, caring, and supportive services. All services are provided free of charge. For more info, contact the Care Team coordinator at 713/682-5995, or e-mail: firm-hou@neosoft.com.

- **The Homeless Pet Placement League.** A nonprofit animal welfare organization that rescues & rehabilitates stray & abandoned cats & dogs. Volunteering, foster care, or adopting: 862-PETS.
- **Houston Gay & Lesbian Political Caucus.** 1st Wednesday of each month, 7:30 pm, Lovett Inn, 501 Lovett Blvd. For more info: 713/521-1000.
- **Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center.** located in the heart of Montrose, maintains drop-in hours of 6-9 pm, M-F, noon-9 pm Wednesday, and noon-4 pm Saturday. The center offers extensive information on community organizations & activities and has rental space available for meetings & events. Programming includes Lesbian Movie Night, Montrose Writer's Project, separate men's & women's coming-out groups, and Wednesday Brown-Bag Lunch. Six organizations office at the center. Volunteers & donations welcome. 803 Hawthorne at Stanford, 713/524-3818. www.neosoft.com/~hlgcc.
- **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 713/524-0218. Or e-mail address is HousTxBand@aol.com.

Say goodbye to The Source!

This is the last month that *OutSmart* will run The Source in our magazine. But do not despair, because *OutSmart* is planning on issuing The Source as its own separate publication, which will be put out twice a year starting this summer. We'll be including community calenders, mini-features, and advertising. This way, everyone can keep the community resource handy all the time.

In the meantime, hang on to these pages. Or, you can access all the organizations and activities in The Source at our website, *OutSmart* Online, at www.outsmartmagazine.com. And look for The Source community resource starting this summer.

Say hello to The Source!

- **GAY-INFO** can tell you the closest gay business or service to where you are or where you're traveling anywhere in the United States or Canada. Over 25,000 listings of gay bars, restaurants, hotels, bookstores, shops, and events. More info: 888/429-4630.
- **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, 713/529-9615.
- **Greater Houston Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (GHGLCC)** fosters & promotes the economic development & vitality of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, & supportive heterosexual businesses & professional organizations in the greater Houston area. First Monday each month. Info: 713/523-7576.
- **The Hollyfield Conference Center** provides meeting & conference facilities to the general public & offers the facilities to gay and lesbian community-based organizations at a reduced rate. 2700 Albany, Ste. 100, @ Tuam. More info or to schedule an event: Brent Amisger at P.O. Box 66722, Houston, TX 77266 or e-mail at HollyFldn@AOL.COM or phone 713/523-6900.

- commentary, KPFT 90.1 FM, 713/526-KPFT (5738).
- **Log Cabin Republicans.** 4th Monday of each month, 6:30 pm (social), 7 pm (meeting), Renata's, 2006 Lexington, 713/529-9100.
- **Marriages.** NO FEE for gay, lesbian, or bi marriages. Weddings are performed at anyone's private home or their church with the permission of their church's minister. I am an ordained minister through the Universal Life Church of Modesto, CA, legally authorized to perform all ministerial services (baptisms, marriages, funerals, & conduct church meetings). Lives in Galveston. E-mail address is: bruce_37@cheerful.com.
- **Montrose Writers Project.** Gregg Rodriguez, a published essayist & playwright, leads this ongoing series. Sessions include writing exercises, group readings, & discussion. \$7 per session. Meets every Saturday, 3-4:30 pm @ the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, 803 Hawthorne, 713/524-3818.
- **More Light Presbyterians of Greater Houston** is one of approximately 40 local chapters of the national MLP organization, which is dedicated to full participation of all persons in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) community without regard for sexual orientation, personal background, or human condition. The More Light Presbyterian organization works for full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, & transgendered persons into the life of the Presby-

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Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, Inc.



Sweetheart Party • Friday, February 11
 Celebrate Valentines Days weekend with your beloved at the Community Center from 6-8 p.m. Or arrive solo and see what may happen. Enjoy some sweet treats and try your luck at the 50-50 raffle, which benefits the Center. \$10 donation includes refreshments and supports the Center.

The many regular activities at the community center include the Black Gay and Lesbian Coalition weekly meetings, Computer classes, Lesbian Coming-Out Group, Lesbian Movie Night, Men's Coming-Out Group, and Montrose Writers Project. Call the Center for details.
803 Hawthorne @ Stanford (two blocks east of Montrose Blvd.)
neosoft.com/~hlgcc 713/524-3818

terian Church (U.S.A.), including positions of leadership requiring ordination. Meets 1st Monday of each month, 7:30 pm @ the Presbyterian Center, 1110 Lovett Blvd. More info or to confirm meeting date: 281/440-0353.

• **National Organization for Women (NOW).** Houston area chapter (Houston NOW) works for women's rights and equality in all aspects of life with particular focus on ending violence against women, combating racism, protecting reproductive rights and in support of lesbian rights. Meets the 3rd Thursday of the month with business and program meeting. Call for details at 713/665-8669 or e-mail: HoustonNOW@yahoo.com.

• **OutVote,** a nonprofit organization dedicated to registering, educating, and motivating our community to vote. For more information: 713/520-VOTE or 713/522-9837.

• **People With AIDS Coalition-Houston (PWAC)** is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization of, by, and for people with HIV/AIDS that promotes independence & self-reliance so that they may live with dignity, self-esteem, & acceptance. This is achieved by providing short-term crisis intervention & long-term referrals; creating opportunities for active participation as a member of the PWA community; & providing public advocacy for the needs of PWAs. While committed to ending the epidemic, PWAC endeavors to respond with love, care, & compassion to the unmet & changing needs that arise with PWAs. 3400 Montrose Blvd., Ste. 207. More info: 713/522-5428; fax 713/522-2674.

• **Pride Committee of Houston** is an energetic group of people who meet year-round to develop/organize Pride activities in June for our community. Meets 7 pm, the 1st & 3rd Tuesday of each month @ the Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 W. Gray. Board of directors meets 7 pm, the 2nd Tuesday of each month @ 2700 Albany. For more info or to get involved: 713/529-6979 or fax 713/529-6929. E-mail: info@pridehouston.org.

• **Prism** is an employee network for employees of Equilon Enterprises LLC, Motiva Enterprises LLC, Equiva Services LLC, & Equiva Trading Company. The network is open to any employee of these companies and includes gay, lesbian, & bisexual employees & their friends. The mission of Prism is to provide support for members & co-workers, promote equality for employees regardless of sexual orientation or gender identification, and create awareness in management of issues & concerns affecting people in a diverse workplace inclusive of sexual orientation & gender identification. More info: jim at 281/544-8138, Robert at 713/241-1238, or Dick at 281/544-8730.

• **Q-Patrol** is dedicated to the prevention of hate crimes against gays & lesbians, patrols the bar areas in Montrose, & is always looking for volunteers for one Friday or Saturday night per month. Call 713/528-SAFE (7233). Web: www.members.aol.com/qpatrol.

• **Rice GALA** (Gay and Lesbian Alumni Association) seeks gay and lesbian alumni of Rice University. Contact Neal Tannahill at 713/526-6718 for more information.

• **Roundtable—The Houston Philosophy Forum** is open to anyone interested in civilized & open discussion on topics of the day. 6:30-7 social time, meeting 7 pm, the 1st & 3rd Wednesdays @ Café Express, 1422 W. Gray. More info: Jackie @ 779-8620.

• **SEA Change** (Support, Educate, and Advocate for Change) is open to social workers and social work students who are interested in gay, lesbian, bisexual, & transgendered issues. For

information, please contact Rick at 281/484-3809.

• **Second Chance Pets** is a nonprofit organization that helps stray, abandoned, & unwanted animals find permanent homes. Provides medical care & an adoption site for the animals. The animals live in foster homes during the week. Foster homes are needed (especially for dogs & cats). Also needed: volunteers for adoption days, publicity/fund-raising, & adoptive homes. More info: 281/286-3535.

• **SPECTRUM** is an employees' group of Southwestern Bell Communications which is open to both management & nonmanagement (active & retired) lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered personnel, & those who share their concerns. The group's goals include establishing domestic partner benefits, making the workplace more aware of diversity, & helping direct the company's involvement in the community. Partners are encouraged to attend & to participate. Meetings: 3rd Tuesday of the month unless otherwise announced. To be added to mailing list & other info: 713/567-7733. SBC Intranet Site: intranetsbc.com/SBCWIN/corporate/aware/index.html or Internet Web Site: www.web.com/cmbenny/spectrum/spectrum.html.

• **The Stonewall Democrats of Houston** give gays & lesbians the opportunity to fight for their rights: to love who they want, to be safe from hate crimes, and to be judged—on the job—by the quality of their work, not how they were born. We work to educate voters and elected officials about GLBT issues and offer opportunities to volunteer in political campaigns. At monthly meetings and events, you can talk to city and state politicians one-on-one. There are over two dozen other Stonewall chapters across the country. We meet at Bibas One's a Meal Restaurant on West Gray, upstairs in the Greek room, the last Monday of each month. Social 6:30 pm, meeting 7 pm. More info: Mark at 713/854-8773.

• **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, or in Houston call 713/522-0636.

• **Texas Lesbian Conference** is the only yearly statewide lesbian conference in the country. It will be in Houston in 2000. Organizational meetings are held every 3rd Sunday, 3-5 pm, at the Hollyfield Foundation, 2700 Albany. For more information, call 713/460-3435, ext. 3.

• **An Uncommon Legacy Foundation** is a nonprofit lesbian foundation established in 1990 to promote lesbian visibility, strength, & vitality and enhance the well-being of lesbians today and in future generations. Legacy supports the lesbian community by making grants to projects and scholarships to individuals that help meet the social, cultural, health and educational needs of lesbians. More info: 713/520-1142.

• **The Women's Group** is a feminist group for all women (each woman defines her own feminism) that meets every Sunday at 10:45 am in the Sojourner Truth Room, 3rd floor of the First Unitarian Universalist Church, 5200 Fannin @ Southmore (elevator accessible). For more information, call Iris Greer Sizemore at 713/529-8571 or Laura Reich at 713/529-1886. E-mail: HouWmnsGrp@aol.com.

Counseling/Support

• **AIDS Foundation Houston, Inc. (AFH)** relies on volunteers to help meet the needs of its more than 2,000 clients. Choose from over 22 direct and indirect client volunteer programs. You'll join a pool of more than 300 talented volunteers in Hotline, Information & Referral, Buddy, Helper, Art Therapy, Stone Soup & many other programs. Whether you can commit to 4 hours a month or 40 hours a week, AFH needs your time and talent. Volunteer department: 713/623-6796. Website: <http://www.aids-hp.org>.

• **Astro Rainbow Alliance for the Deaf** general meeting every 2nd Friday of the month, 7:30 pm, Montrose Clinic, 215 Westheimer, 713/861-1544 via Texas Relay 1-800-735-2988.

• **AVES** (Amigos Volunteers in Education & Services). The AVES Men's HIV Support Group meets monthly @ the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, 803 Hawthorne, 713/524-3818. Call for dates & time.

• **The Bering Lunch Bunch Gang** is a walk-in support group for persons living with HIV/AIDS who have retired. Tuesdays, 11 am @ Bering Church, 1440 Harold. Info: Russ Robinett, 713/526-1017, ext. 211.

• **The Bering Spiritual Support Group** is a nurturing space in which we whose lives have been touched by HIV/AIDS unite in spirit for the celebration of life through sharing our mutual support, strength, acceptance, & love. This walk-in support group meets Wednesdays, 6:30 pm @ Bering Church, 1440 Harold for potluck dinner, speaker, & small groups for newcomers. HIV+ only, positive/negative together, caregivers, & family. Info: Christine Coberly, 713/526-1017, ext. 208.

• **Bering Support Network** offers counseling, visitation, retreats, & support groups. Call 713/526-1017.

• **C.A.T.S.** (Community Awareness for Transgender Support) is a Galveston-based transgender support group which meets the first Friday of every month. "We do care and you are not alone." More info: 409/927-1705 or P.O. Box 62, Galveston, TX 77553.

• **Centergy** — Rediscover the joy, the joy of releasing the energy at your center. Reclaim your emotions. Identify & verbalize your feelings & desires. Face & release your blocks to living freely. Create the life you want. Centergy offers weekly programs for anyone willing to face addictions: individuals, pairs, families, groups, organizations, business relations. Groups meet weekly: Mixed—Tues, 6-8:30 pm; Mixed—Wed, 7-9:30 pm; Women—Thurs, 6-8:30 pm. Southwest Recovery Place, 4726 Yoakum. Call Jacklyn Rainossek, Ph.D., @ 942-7181.

• **Chase Bank of Texas' P.R.I.D.E. Team,** a chapter of the Chase Manhattan Bank Pride Networking Group, welcomes you to be a part of equality. P.R.I.D.E. stands for People Recognizing Individual Differences Equally and is the bank's networking group for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, & supportive employees. Our mission is to support the inclusion of all Chase bankers—regardless of sexual orientation & gender identification—as valued employees of the bank & to encourage an environment of equality that celebrates the individuality & diversity of everyone. The Team typically meets the 4th Tuesday of every month at 6 pm. More info: Richard Bielec at 713/655-5423, Elizabeth Goza at 713/216-5574,

or Roy Mendiola at 713/216-8889.

• **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 get these children into homes that are safe, loving, and permanent, please call 713/529-1396.

• **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. 713/527-9864.

• **Crossroads** is a support group for gays & lesbians who are currently in full-time church work, have been in the past, or are pursuing their calling. Not exclusively for pastors—is open to chaplains, administrators, musicians, or music-, youth-, and educational-directors. 3rd Saturday of each month & socials throughout the month. Call 681-9082 for dates, time, and place.

• **Gay & Lesbian Helpline.** Our phone counselors can help you clarify & prioritize your issues & sort through options. The helpline is an anonymous & confidential safe space for you to voice your thoughts. Whether you are concerned about coming out, locating resources, or even just finding something to do on a Friday night. Let us be the ear you need. Our counselors are always friendly & supportive and have your best interest at heart. Fenway Community Health Center's Gay & Lesbian Helpline's hours: M-F 6-11 pm, Sat-Sun 5-10 pm. 1-888-340-GLBT (4528).

• **Gay & Lesbian National Hotline (GLNH)** is a nonprofit organization, providing information, referrals and peer-counseling to the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities. Information is also available for those concerned with gay-related issues. The services are free and anonymous. The hours are 5-9 pm (M-F) and 11 am-4 pm (Saturdays). The toll-free number is 1-888-THE-GLNH (1-888-843-4564). E-mail: GLNH@GLNH.ORG.

• **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, 713/529-9615.

• **gayDAR** (Dream-Affirm-Restore): (n), a new wellness community now forming for persons 18 to 29 years old who are interested in making healthy connections. Come share your experiences in a safe place to dream, affirm, & restore. 7 pm @ Bering Memorial United Methodist Church, 1440 Harold. More info: Russ Robinett at 713/526-1017, ext. 211.

• **Gay Fathers of Houston** is a support group of gay men who meet every Monday, 8:30 pm at Grace Lutheran Church, 2515 Waugh, to discuss problems gay fathers share. More info or directions: 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, call Shane Hennessey at 713/529-0037.

• **Gay Men's Process Group** is a general process group dealing with life issues that affect gay men (coming out, career, family, relationships/dating, etc.). More info: Daniel Garces, MS, LPC, LMFT at 713/526-8390. E-mail: daniel_garces@yahoo.com. On-line: www.dansmnd.net.

• **Gay Men Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse.** Bering Support Network offers individual counseling for gay men who are being abused in their present relationship or for gay men who are dealing with unresolved issues from a past abusive relationship. Abuse can be emotional, mental, verbal, physical, or sexual. Survivors may experience low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts, isolation, a deep sense of shame or embarrassment. More info: Russ Robinett, MS, LPC, LCDC at 713/526-1017 (leave name and a safe phone number where your call can be returned). Men who are violent will be referred to other community services.

• **Gay Men Survivors of Domestic Abuse** is a closed support group for gay men who are being abused in their present relationship or who are dealing with unresolved issues from a past abusive relationship. Abuse can be emotional, mental, verbal, physical, financial, or sexual. Survivors may experience low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts, isolation, a deep sense of shame, or embarrassment. A support group offers a safe place to share your experiences, learn from others, or just listen. For assessment/screening or more info: Russ Robinett @ 713/526-1017, ext. 211 and leave your name & a safe phone number where your call can be returned.

• **Grief Groups** (bereavement, loss/estrangement) are closed 6-week groups for those who have lost a loved one to HIV/AIDS and for loss or alienation from primary emotional relationships. Mondays, 7-8:30 pm @ Bering Church, 1440 Harold. For schedule/assessment: Christine Coberly, 713/526-1017, ext. 208.

• **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.

• **HCDA** (Helping Cross Dressers Anonymous) is a support group for transgendered people dedicated to helping those who are having difficulty accepting themselves or for those involved with a transgendered individual who is having trouble adjusting. HCDA's philosophy is that the wearing of clothing opposite to one's birth sex is but an outward manifestation of an inner feeling. HCDA is run by a licensed counselor and has been meeting since Jan. 1991. All are welcome. Meets Tuesdays, 7-9 pm @ 239 Westheimer (Suzanne Anderson Properties).

• **HIV/AIDS Treatment Mixer.** open forum for sharing info. Men's mixer: 3rd Tues. of the month 7-9 pm. Women's mixer: 4th Wed. of the month, 6-8 pm, 1407 Hawthorne, 527-8219.

• **Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals (H.A.T.C.H.)** is open to gays and lesbians, age 13-20. Fridays, 7:30-10 pm & Sundays, 6:30-9 pm. Location/more info: 713/942-7002.

• **Houston Area Women's Center** provides shelter, support, and advocacy services for ALL survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. HAWC operates two hotlines, one for domestic violence (713/528-2121, TTY 713/528-3625) and one for sexual assault (713/528-RAPE, TTY 713/528-3691). Nonresidential services are provided including individual & group counseling, legal advocacy, housing advocacy, children's services, and job training. HAWC also manages the Second-to-None Resale Shop on

Westheimer. All services are FREE of charge. Volunteers are always needed. Call 713/528-6798, ext. 272: 1010 Waugh Dr. @ Dallas. • **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. Child-care provided. Grace Lutheran Church, 2515 Waugh Dr., the 2nd Tuesday of the month, 7-9 pm. More info: 713/284-4939.

• **Jewish Family Service** offers individual, couple & family counseling to individuals of all ages regardless of sexual orientation or religious affiliation. Our professional counseling staff have received training in working with gay, lesbian, bisexual & transgender issues and can help individuals deal with interpersonal problems, relationship conflicts, dealing with families, HIV/AIDS-related concerns & other issues frequently facing sexual minorities. Services are offered on a sliding-fee-scale basis. To make an appointment or for more info: 713/667-9336.

• **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.

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

• **Lesbian Coming-Out Group** is open to all women regardless of age & length of time out. \$3 donation is requested but not required. 2nd & 4th Tuesday each month, 7:30 pm @ the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, 803 Hawthorne, 713/524-3818.

• **Men's Coming-Out Group.** Each meeting includes discussion, support, & a social activity. A \$3 donation is requested but not required. 3rd Friday each month at 8 pm @ the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, 803 Hawthorne, 713/524-3818.

• **The Men's Network** is for gay & bisexual men to come together in a safe & supportive environment to learn & share about issues that affect them. A donation of \$3-\$5 is requested; however, all men are welcome, regardless of their ability to pay. The 2nd & 4th Tuesdays of every month, 7:15-9 pm @ Montrose Counseling Center, 701 Richmond, 713/529-0037.

• **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, lesbian survivors of domestic violence & more. The center needs office furniture, equipment & interested citizens to serve on boards. 701 Richmond. For more info (24 hrs.): 713/529-0037.

• **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 713/522-3941.

• **Out Together** is a support group where individuals & couples can share thoughts, experiences, & knowledge about mixed orientation marriages—where one spouse considers him/herself gay, lesbian, or bisexual. 1st Sun. & 3rd Thur. of each month. Confidentiality ensured. Questions: Bob 713/667-1535 (Bob@54@aol.com) or Jackie 281/558-3159 (jackie_mag@msn.com).

• **Overeaters Anonymous (OA).** For information about OA's 50 regular weekly meetings, call 713/973-6633.

• **Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians And Gays (PFLAG) Houston.** General meeting with small group discussions, 1st Sunday of each month, 2-4:30 pm, Christ Church Cathedral, 1117 Texas Ave. Mid-month discussion group meets 3rd Tuesday of each month, 7:30-9 pm, Church of the Epiphany, 9600 S. Gessner @ Bissonnet. 2nd mid-month discussion group meets 2nd Tuesday of each month, 7:30-9 pm, Hollyfield Conference Center, 2700 Albany. PFLAG Houston Helpline: 713/867-9020.

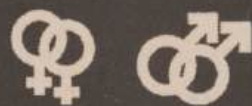
• **Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians And Gays (PFLAG) Galveston County** — 3rd Sunday of each month, 2 pm, @ AIDS Coalition of Coastal Texas, 1405 39th St., 409/744-3200 or janettetexas@aol.com.

• **Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians And Gays (PFLAG) Woodlands** — 3rd Sunday of each month, 2 pm, Northwood Unitarian Church, 1370 N. Mill Bend Dr. For more info: 713/867-9020.

• **Project CAESAR** is the Gay Men's Health Initiative at AIDS Foundation Houston. By providing the latest information and education to the gay community, Project CAESAR intends to slow HIV infection rates among gay and bisexual men in Houston. Through self-esteem, motivational and relationships topics, the program helps uncover healthy paths buried under the pressure of everyday life. It also reaches over 20,000 men a year in the Houston area through its outreach team, The Legion. To attend a workshop, volunteer for The Legion, or to find out more info, call the Project CAESAR staff at 713/623-6796. E-mail: education@aids-hp.org.

• **PROTECT** (People Respecting Ourselves Through Establishing Community and Trust) is a walk-in support group for HIV-negative people to share our experiences, strengths, & hopes in an effort to remain HIV negative and to help ourselves understand & change behaviors that could lead to infection. Tuesdays, 7-8:30 pm, Bering

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Church, 1440 Harold. Info: Russ Robinett, 713/526-1017, ext. 211.

- **STEPS** is a transitional living facility for homeless young adults between the ages of 18-21. Services include free housing, GED preparation, independent living skills training in money management, housekeeping, apartment search, nutrition, HIV/STDs, drug & alcohol awareness, job search, on-site case management, counseling & referrals. After completion of our 6-9 month program, clients will be referred to independent housing and will be provided with up to 1 year of supportive services. STEPS Program provides culturally competent services to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender & heterosexual young adults. HOPE Center, 3118 San Jacinto. For more info: 713/524-1992.

- **StreetWise Houston** is a drop-in/educational & support center for homeless, street, & lesbian/youth, ages 13-24, located @ 202 Tuam. 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. 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 @ 713/524-5757.

- **Support, Equality, and Awareness, at Shell (SEAShell)** is a Gay & Lesbian Employees Group whose mission is to provide support for members and co-workers, promote equality for employees regardless of sexual orientation, and create awareness in management of issues and concerns affecting people in a diverse workplace. For more information, call Becky at 713/245-1960 or Rick at 281/544-7098.

- **Tau Chi Chapter of Tri Ess** is a local support group for heterosexual crossdressers of both sexes and their spouses, and family. For info: Jane at 713/349-8969.

- **The Women's Network** is a support group established to serve the lesbian & bisexual women's community of Houston; any woman who is sensitive to & comfortable with lesbians is welcome. The network provides an opportunity to discuss women's issues in a safe environment, network with other women and socialize with old & new friends. A donation of \$3-\$5 is requested; however, any woman is welcome regardless of her ability to pay. 2nd & 4th Wednesday of each month, 7-9 pm, Montrose Counseling Center, 701 Richmond, 713/529-0037.

Health

- **AIDS Foundation Houston, Inc.** is committed to improving the quality of life in the greater Houston community through HIV/AIDS education, health care, social services, & volunteerism. AIDS Foundation Houston is a direct provider of resources for HIV/AIDS services & information and works in collaboration with other community-based groups to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS infection and to support people infected & affected with HIV/AIDS. Services include: Stone Soup Food Assistance & Nutrition Program; housing, employment resources; hotline: Red Ribbon Toy Drive; camps Hope & H.U.G.; prevention and secondary education; and Project CAESAR, AIDS Foundation Houston's gay men's health initiative. More info: 713/524-AIDS or visit www.aidshep.org.

- **AIDS Housing Coalition Houston (AHCH)** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit agency that provides short-term, low-income, single-room housing for people with HIV/AIDS in transition. A gay-positive, all-volunteer, neighborhood-based agency which seeks public donations and public transportation. To join: 713/521-1613.

- **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, sexual relationships are primarily with women who have a debilitating or life-challenging disease, illness, condition. Assistance may extend to woman's partner, caregiver, family. Services provided regardless of ability to pay, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, economic status. Volunteers 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's realistic to expect 2 visits/week from volunteers. PO Box 131605, Houston, TX 77219-1605, 713/521-4628.

- **AVES** (Amigos Volunteers in Education & Services) provides social & healthcare services to HIV-positive individuals. 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 & willing to commit at least 2 hours a week; 5) able to staff the hotline during office hours; & 6) willing to make at least a 6-month commitment. 4126 Southwest Frwy, Ste. 1310, 626-2837 or 1-800-981-2837.

- **Bering Omega Community Services** provides seven programs free of charge for persons living with HIV/AIDS: 1. Advocacy Program helps us keep current with HIV/AIDS issues and congress (713/524-9304); 2. Bering Care Center is a licensed adult day-care center (713/529-6071, ext 141); 3. Dental Clinic provides comprehensive dental care (713/529-6071, ext 120); 4. Financial Assistance provides comprehensive budget planning, financial counseling and financial assistance (713/520-5327); 5. Omega House provides residential hospice care (713/523-7110); 6. SENTRY Program provides in-home care visits (713/524-9304, ext 103); and 7. The Bering Care Network provides counseling & support groups (713/526-1017). To volunteer or make an in-kind contribution to any of the Bering Omega Community Services programs: Dena Gray (713/523-7110). To sponsor a benefit or give a financial contribution: the development office (713/524-9304, ext 100).

- **bodypositive Wellness Center (BPWC)** provides a venue where qualified clients with HIV/AIDS can obtain HIV-specific nutritional assessment/counseling, supervised resistance exercise, massage therapy, chiropractic adjustments, relaxation classes, community forums, peer counseling groups, & at-cost nutritional supplements. The 3-month core program enables clients to take important measures in restoring their health & quality of life as they augment the positive effects of advanced drug treatments. (Yoga Classes are held every Tuesday at 6:30 pm and Thursdays at 12:30 pm, with a limited 15-person participation & a requested \$5 donation. Ask for Tom.) (Chiropractic Therapy services are held Tuesdays from 3-6 pm and Thursdays 9-noon. Ask for Alberto or Tom.) Info: 713/524-2374.

- **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 newly/used children's clothes, sizes birth to 14; new children's socks/underwear; medium, large, & extra-large diapers and pull-ups; baby wipes; paper towels & toilet paper; and food for homes that serve abused, neglected, & HIV-positive children. P.O. Box 66581, Houston 77266-6581, 713/529-0639.

- **Family Hospice** is dedicated to serving people experiencing the final phases of life & those who care for them. We provide comprehensive services through our commitment to the highest standards of care. Volunteers can assist in a variety of tasks: patient care, nursing home volunteer, respite or relief visit for the caregiver, bereavement phone calls/visits, office work, assist during training seminars, delivery person, crafts volunteer or other activities. To inquire about volunteering, call Kevin Phillips @ 713/290-1746.

- **Houston Buyers Club** provides vital nutritional supplements & info at no profit to people living with chronic illness. We welcome business from people who are not living with chronic illness; it financially supports our mission. Phone 713/520-5288; fax 713/521-7419; Web site houstonbuyersclub.com; e-mail address hbc@neosoft.com; mailing address 3400 Montrose Blvd., ste. 605.

- **Lesbian Health Initiative (LHI)** is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to identify, address, educate, serve, & empower the Houston lesbian community in all its diversity, on issues of health & well-being. Board of directors meetings are on the first Tuesday of each month, 7 pm @ Hollyfield Conference Center. Volunteers are needed to assist with health fairs & other events & activities. Call 713/603-0023; write POB 130158, Houston 77219.

- **Lesbian Health Outreach Project** is a united effort of Montrose Counseling Center & Montrose Clinic to educate lesbians

about risk factors for breast cancer, breast self-exam techniques, & other health concerns and to provide low-cost (sliding scale) well-woman exams that include pelvic exams, pap smears, breast exams, lab work, & referral for mammograms when needed. These services are available by appointment only at Montrose Clinic, 713/830-3000. To inquire about therapy support group for lesbians with life-threatening illness or to schedule educational presentations through Montrose Counseling Center, 713/529-0037.

- **Methodist YNA Hospice** is a nonprofit United Way agency that provides in-home care to terminally ill patients in Harris County. We are currently recruiting volunteers to provide emotional support and practical assistance to the patients in their neighborhood. Training, which is held on weekends, is provided to prepare you for the job. No medical skills are required. For more info: 713/630-5513.

- **Milam House** Volunteers Needed! Reach out, make a difference, show someone you care. Walk the talk at Milam House, a residential center for people living with HIV/AIDS. Volunteers work directly with the residents, providing companionship & emotional support in a one-on-one setting. More info, call 713/520-9248 or e-mail ahhvlr@neosoft.com. You can also visit the Web site at <http://www.neosoft.com/MilamInfo/pwvach.org>.

- **Montrose Clinic/Houston Clinical Research Network** is a community-based, nonprofit agency. It provides low- or no-cost health, social, educational, & research services; specializes in treatment of sexually transmitted diseases & HIV/AIDS care. Needed: cash gifts for indigent-patient care; volunteer time from general & specialty physicians/lab persons interested in HIV counseling/office support. 215 Westheimer. Please call the clinic @ 713/830-3000 for current outreach HIV-testing sites.

- **Next Step** is a confidential educational workshop for those who are HIV positive. Topics include treatments for HIV, nutrition, safer sex, & stress management. Free T-cell count and viral load tests included. For more info or to sign up for the next workshop: Montrose Clinic at 713/830-3000.

- **Spiritual Gym** is an inner-fitness workshop. Sessions incorporate aspects of different traditions, including Tai-Chi, yoga, & breathing exercises in the quest for strength & inner peace. \$5 donation requested. Meets Thursdays, 6-7 pm, @ the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, 803 Hawthorne, 713/524-3818.

- **Steven's House**, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, provides intermediate care in a homelike environment for men & women living with HIV/AIDS. Needed: soft drinks, laundry detergent, bed pillows (new), towels, twin-size comforters, twin-size sheets (extra long, fitted or flat), basic cleaning supplies, office supplies, new bicycle, chest of drawers, 2 comfortable reading chairs, lamps (table & floor), VCR, cable-ready TV for resident room, bedside tables, apartment in Montrose area for office/resident's family lodging; volunteers for tasks/services. Info: 713/522-5757.

- **Substance Abuse Research Treatment** is offered free of charge by The University of Texas Houston Health Science Center. Free research treatment programs are offered for cocaine use, and cocaine use complicated by either depression, opiate/heroin use or alcohol use; and for cigarette smoking, and cigarette smoking with alcohol use. Programs may involve individual therapy led by trained clinicians and investigational medications. For more info: 713/500-2800 or visit the website at <http://trcuth.tmc.edu>.

- **Tobacco-Free Greater Houston** provides a list of smoke-free restaurants in the Houston area and works to promote health through the reduction of youth access to tobacco & promotion of a smoke-free environment. For free guide, send SASE to Tobacco-Free Greater Houston, POB 890769, Houston, TX 77289-0769.

- **Thomas Street Clinic** is part of the Harris County Hospital District (HCHD) providing medical, social, & educational care to the HIV/AIDS-infected person. As an outpatient clinic for the past 10 years, the clinic has served & supported residents of Harris County in understanding such a complicated disease. Educational workshops, social assistance, up-to-date research studies, & state-of-the-art medical care assists the HIV/AIDS patient daily. Located at 2015 Thomas St. @ Paschall, between I45 & N. Main. Info: 713/793-4000. For understanding of HIV education programs: 713/793-4026. For bilingual assistance: 713/793-4051. *Thomas Street Clinic's Patient Advisory Board* is an elected board that advises the Harris County Hospital District on matters concerning Thomas Street Clinic. Meetings open to the public, 2nd Wednesday each month, 2 pm, 3rd floor conference room, 2015 Thomas St. @ Paschall, 713/793-4000.

- **Women's Clinic**, Montrose Clinic offers a women's health clinic. Visits include complete well-woman examination, lab work, medication, & referral if needed. Fee \$40; but no one turned away. Wed. & Thurs., 5-8 pm, by appointment only, 713/830-3000.

- **Yoga**. Free yoga classes. Yoga benefits individuals by providing stress relief, better health & a clear mind, achieved by a combination of physical postures, mental exercises, breathing techniques, improved diet. Mon., Wed., & Fri. at 6:30 pm, Sat. at 9:30 am. Free meditation class on Tues. at 6:30 pm. Devanand Yoga Center, 3115 West Loop South, Ste. 21, 713/965-9642.

Social

- **Asians & Friends Houston** is a social organization for gay Asians & their friends, made up of couples & singles. Events include potluck dinners, movie nights at members' homes or movie theaters, and large parties celebrating Asian holidays. Recognizing that many people are not out of the closet, membership is kept confidential. It's an easygoing & fun-loving group, and all are welcome. Info: 713/626-6300 or <http://members.aol.com/texasians>.

- **BiNet Houston** is a social/support/educational group which is open to bisexuals & bi-friendly individuals. More info: 467-4380. It is best to call 6-10 pm most evenings; otherwise, leave a message, & a representative will return your call utilizing utmost discretion.
- **Bluebonnet Young Democrats**. As a member of this lesbian/gay-friendly group of young Democrats in Texas, you will have a chance to make a great impact. Possible projects include trips to Austin, community forums, and other fun activities. Voice mail is 632-9974 and pager is 786-0493.

- **Classic Chassis Car Club of Houston** is open to everyone (car not necessary) who enjoys cars, trucks, models, automobilia, or hanging out with those who do! Meetings are the 1st Wednesday each month at the Blue Agave Restaurant, 1340 W. Gray, 7 pm. Additionally, the club hosts driving tours, workshops, & events at members' homes. For more info: 713/863-7024, ext. 69; or write P.O. Box 920888, Houston, TX 77292-0888.

- **Garden And Yard Society (G.A.Y.S.)** is a gay gardening club for women & men. Bring your gardening friends and supporting partners. Meets the 2nd Friday of each month at 7 pm. More info: 713/661-6378, 713/520-1066, or 713/869-8245.

- **Gay Alumni Noon Group (G.A.N.G.)**. Gay men & women who are 40 or older and their friends and other persons who might be interested in addressing the concerns and exploring the interests of older gays meet at 1 pm, the 2nd Saturday of each month @ the Montrose Library, 4100 Montrose. For more info: Jen @ 713/622-6918 or Robert @ 713/665-6446.

- **Gay & Lesbian Health Professionals** meets monthly, providing socials, speakers, networking, and practitioner referral line. For information or a referral, call 713/523-4700.

- **Gay, Lesbian, & Bisexual Alliance (GLOBAL)** is a support, social, educational, & political group for the University of Houston's gay, lesbian, bisexual, & transgendered community and its allies. GLOBAL strives to educate & to be a resource to the UH community on gay issues & to provide a welcoming atmosphere for all UH students. It is diverse in its ethnic, racial, religious, political, & gender makeup. It welcomes students from other area colleges & junior colleges, who often do not have the support & resources that UH & GLOBAL do. GLOBAL provides educational outreach programs for the entire UH & Greater Houston community. Whether you are struggling to come out, a hard-core gay rights activist, or just looking for some fellow queers to hang out with, GLOBAL is the place for you. Info: 713/743-5180. E-mail: slopez2@jetson.uh.edu or briant419@hotmail.com. Write: GLOBAL, University of Houston, 4800 Calhoun Rd., Campus Activities, Box 211, Houston, TX 77204-2610.

- **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 @ 713/521-SING.

- **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 Area Motorcycle Society (HAMS)**, a gay/lesbian motorcycle club, has a social at a different coffee shop in the Montrose area each Wednesday night. If you own a motorcycle or are involved with someone who does and would like to find out more about our socials & group rides, call 713/688-1300 or e-mail to: hams1999@yahoo.com.

- **Houston Outdoor Group (HOG)** is a social group for gay men & lesbians who enjoy the outdoors. Activities include camping, hiking, horseback riding, canoeing, etc. They have day trips, weekend trips (typically a 2- to 4-hour drive from Houston), usually in state parks or private campgrounds. Local social events include Saturday morning breakfasts & once-a-month potluck dinners. Call 713/KAMPOUT for info or your complimentary newsletter, or write to P.O. Box 980893, Houston, TX 77098.

- **Lambda Rollerskating Club** invites all ages to join in the fun every Tuesday, 8-10 pm, @ Tradewinds Roller Rink, 5006 W. 34th St. (off 290). Admission is \$5 (+ \$1.50 for skates). For more info: call 713/523-9620, write lrs@neosoft.com, or visit <http://www.neosoft.com/~lrs>.

- **Lesbian Film Night**. On the 4th Friday of each month, a flick with a lesbian theme is screened; a potluck precedes the movie, and discussion follows. A \$3-\$5 donation is encouraged, but not required. Call for title & time @ the Houston Lesbian & Gay Com-

munity Center, 803 Hawthorne, 713/524-3818.

- **Lesbian/Gay Unitarian Universalist Potluck**. The lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders, friends, and families of the First Unitarian Universalists Church cordially invite you to bring a dish & join them on every 4th Friday of the month, 7 pm, First UU Church, Crane Fireside Room, 5200 Fannin. Schedule may change at Thanksgiving or Christmas. For more info: 713/526-5200.

- **LiB**, a lesbian empowerment group, promotes lesbians, jobs, networking, & businesses. 3rd Friday of each month, 7:30 pm. Holiday Inn Select, 2712 Southwest Frwy. LiB's hotline: 713/529-0077.

- **Life Begins at 40** is a singles group for gay women or lesbians over the age of 40. For those women who have been out for a long time or for those just considering changes in their sexual preferences who want a safe, healthy environment to meet other women and enjoy fellowship and loads of fun, laughter, & good times. Bering Memorial United Methodist Church, 1440 Harold St. @ Mulberry, 2nd & 4th Fridays. 2nd Fri: 6:30-9 pm, potluck & discussion/speaker. 4th Fri: dance, 8 pm-midnight. \$5 donation requested for each night. Info: Beth Christian 713/526-2579 or the church office 713/526-1017.

- **LOAF** is a social, networking, & support group for lesbians 50 years of age and older. For info: 713/869-1482.

- **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.

- **Lunch Bunch**. Meet the gang for camaraderie & gossip. You bring the sack lunch, the center provides the soft drinks every Wednesday, noon-1 pm @ the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, 803 Hawthorne, 713/524-3818.

- **Outrage, Inc.** is a nonprofit social group raising funds for Houston area HIV/AIDS charities by producing special events including the annual Halloween Party & the Pride Party. Meets 2nd Tuesday. Other events include beach parties, Austin splash & other socials. More info: 713/706-2508. Web site: outrage.org/~outrage.

- **Out Skate Rollerskating Club**. Skate every Wednesday night 8-10 pm at the biggest/best rink in Houston—Zenith Roller Rink, 8075 Cook Rd. @ Beechnut. \$5 plus \$1.50 skate rental. Everyone welcome. 281/933-5818. Website: www.flashnet/~lauer1/.

- **Pride** is a GLBT organization at Rice University. Its goals are: to provide a healthy & safe place for Rice students who are discovering their sexuality to find understanding & develop a network of support; to educate the Rice community on GLBT issues, cultures, & history through various programming efforts; and to allow GLBT students & their allies to meet, share info, & socialize. More info: visit www.rufice.edu/~pride; e-mail pride@rice.edu; or phone 713/630-8667 (ask for Amanda).

- **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**. Monthly 12-hour deep-sea fishing trips from Galveston during Red Snapper season, January to August. To get on the free mailing list for this fishing club for gays and lesbians, call John @ 713/523-6381.

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

- **Rainbow Riders** is a bicycling club for womyn. Meets every Sunday morning. All womyn are welcome regardless of ability & experience. More info: Cookie Davenport @ 713/869-1686.

- **Scriptwriters/Houston** is a stage-and-screen writers' 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.

- **Sisters** is a social/support group for African-American lesbians & friends. Meets 2nd Sunday of the month, 5-8 pm. Call 713/801-0027 for meeting location.

- **Southern Country Houston** is a nonprofit lesbian and gay dance club. All types of country western dance, including swing, are taught Wednesday nights at the Barn from 7:30-9:30. The lessons are free, and the money we raise goes to charitable & service organizations in the Houston area. More info: 713/226-2228.

- **Texas Medical Center Lambda** is a social/support organization for students, staff, & faculty in the Texas Medical Center. There is one social event each month. Info: trclambda@hotmail.com.

Sports

- **Bowling**. Join Houston's gay & lesbian bowling community for summer league fun & sport. Mixed leagues meet at Palace Lanes at 7 pm on Sundays & 6:30 pm on Wednesdays. And starting June 3, mixed leagues will also meet at Dynamic Lanes at 6:30 pm on Thursdays. The men-only league meets at 9 pm on Mondays at

Palace Lanes, & the women-only league meets at 6:45 pm on Mondays at Dynamic Lanes. For more info: 713/522-9612; e-mail to wiccad@aoi.com; or visit www.Texasinvitational.org.

- **Golf**: weekend playdays, beginners clinics, & short-game clinic. After-work playdays: Wednesdays at 5:30 pm (Sharpstown) and 6:00 pm (Jersey Meadows). For more info: 281/589-7380, or visit www.LPGI@aol.com.

- **Good Sports**. College football/basketball fans. More info: 713/523-9000 or P.O. Box 667070, Houston TX 77266-7070.

- **Houston Tennis Club**, an affiliate member of the Gay and Lesbian Tennis Association, welcomes men & women of all ages & skill levels. Meets Wednesdays & Fridays 7:30-9 pm & Sundays 9 am-12 noon at Memorial Park Tennis Center. To join: 713/692-2703.

- **Houston Women's Flag Football League (HWWFL)** is a nonprofit organization open to all women, 18 & over. Competitive & recreational. Can join by bringing in own team. Info: 713/981-6753.

- **Houston Women's Softball League (HWSL)** is a nonprofit organization for women who enjoy softball. More info: Trish Jarvis, 713/688-9468 or write P.O. Box 70666, Houston TX 77270.

- **Independent Billiard League (IBL)** is a recreational BCA-sanctioned billiard league that welcomes everyone of all skill levels, either on a team or as substitute players. We have 3-player teams that compete at various bars & clubs in Houston on Thursday nights. IBL promotes sportsmanship & friendly competition and is an excellent way to make new friends. More info: 713/524-4190, or P.O. Box 542345, Houston, TX 77254-2345; e-mail at ibihouston@biihouston.com, or visit www.biihouston.com.

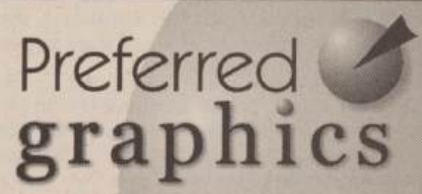
- **Lone Star Volleyball Association (LSVA)** is encouraging interested volleyball players to join in the fun of playing indoor volleyball. The LSVA leagues play at the Univ. of St. Thomas-Jaraback Center, 4000 Mt. Vernon (between Richmond & Alabama) on Sundays, 4:30-7 pm for recreational & advanced players and 7-9 pm for intermediate players. We are looking to begin a women's league and encourage all you women to come out. Those who have never played with LSVA before play for free on first visit. If interested: 281/878-4629 or <http://www.neosoft.com/~lsva/>.

- **The Montrose Softball League (MSL)** is a nonprofit adult softball league serving the greater Houston gay community since 1980. Open to both men & women of all skill levels. More info: league voicemail 713/867-3913; write to MSL, P.O. Box 541954, Houston TX 77254-1954; visit www.montrosetballleague.com; or e-mail MSL@QMAIL.COM.

- **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. More info: Team Houston, P.O. Box 66405, Houston, TX 77266-6405 or call 877-1191.

- **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 fund-raising 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.

- **The Texas Women's Racquetball Club** is open to women racquetball players of all skill levels. Meet monthly to play racquetball for about an hour. More info: Kiki Hummel at 281/556-0703 or e-mail: khummel@msn.com.



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FOR MORE INFORMATION
CALL 713/520-7237.

Our Sexual Bodies, Our Sacred Selves

continued from page 41

Sacred erotic work is significantly different than other spiritual practices which deny or ignore the body. It is a path that embraces and explores the body's ecstatic energy as a gateway to truth and inner peace. The ecstatic path engages the entire being from the root, or sex, up through belly, the heart, the mind and beyond, allowing us to fully open to ourselves and the universe.

"The queer heritage of the [Body Electric] work has inspired the need for self-identified sexuality," says Selah Martha, coordinator of women's contingent at the Body Electric school, "that each individual must 'come out' as the unique erotic being which they discover themselves to be, free of the identities imposed by family, society, or even mates."

The conspiracy against the body starts young. Our parents teach us to control our emotions and sounds. They say, "There, there, now, don't cry," "Quiet, now," or "Good little girls don't scream." In doing so they unwittingly repress our natural pathway to processing and integrating both traumatic and ecstatic experiences. We receive early messages that the natural functions of the body are distasteful. We learn that our poop is smelly, our snot is disgusting, and we shouldn't touch ourselves in certain places.

As we enter school, we learn to control our vibrant energy. Intense outbursts of emotion, movement, or desire are discouraged, because they make the adults around us uncomfortable. By puberty, the misinformation and discomfort that surround the changes in our bodies and our growing interest in sexuality compound our distress. As girls we get the message we are all wrong: our bodies are

ugly, our sexual parts smell, and good girls do not have sexual desire.

When we sit together, the stories start to come out: stories of being slapped or shamed when we started bleeding, stories of being called a slut, stories from women whose partners have never looked at, touched, or appreciated their sexual parts, stories from brave women who have never taken a look "down there" and who are starting a positive relationship with their genitals for the first time.

Sacred erotic work provides opportunity and encouragement to explore fully being in our bodies. We welcome and celebrate the natural expressions of the body, from the biological functions of burping, farting, sweating, and vaginal excretions, to the emotional expressions of crying, laughing, yelling, to deeply creative, energetic expressions such as shaking, undulating, sound, and self-touch, contain valuable and essential information. We learn to experience our bodies from the inside out again, from a place of sensation rather than how we look in the mirror or what others might think. This safe sanctuary for the natural expressions of the body can be profoundly healing.

The foundation of sacred erotic work is a deep acceptance of the whole self, an acceptance of the much ignored and maligned body. As women, who have been taught repression and hatred of our bodily functions and desires, this acceptance is a pioneering first step toward claiming and honoring our bodies as the sacred vessels of our spirits.

K. Ruby runs a private practice, Total Sexual Health, in Oakland, Calif., and teaches classes in intimacy, sacred sexuality, and sensual massage. She can be reached at Rubyrichardson@yahoo.com.

WRITERS WANTED

Do you get excited at the idea of writing about Houston's lesbian and gay community? *OutSmart* is looking for writers of all types. Our mission is to report and write about our community in such a way that we have a fuller, richer, more informed, and more human picture of ourselves.

Journalism is a glorious excuse to go out and meet the people you're most interested in, learn about the subjects which fascinate you. Maybe you have a personal essay lurking within you, either funny or serious. Write about some aspect of life in this community that you're passionate about: art, politics, health, etcetera. (The editorial department is not, however, looking for articles by business owners who are looking for marketing, although we'd be happy to connect you with our advertising department.) Prior writing experience is splendid, but not required; if you've got a facility with language and are willing to learn, we'll help you develop as a writer. Mail a few samples of your work, or a letter explaining what kind of writing you are interested in, to: **Ann Sieber, Editor, OutSmart, 3406 Audubon Place, Houston TX 77006, or call at 713/520-7237.**

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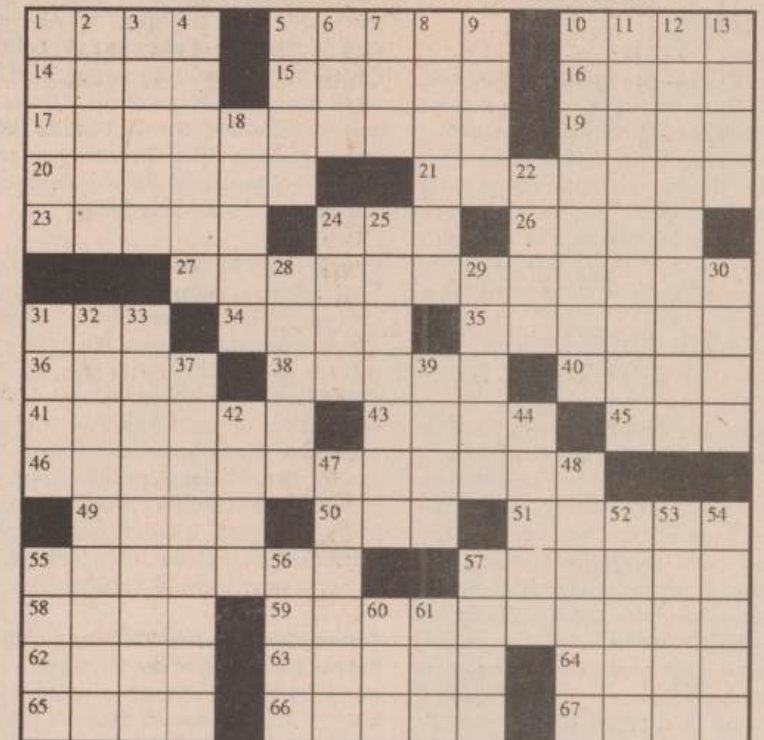
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Based on survey conducted by Overlooked Opinions, Chicago



Answers

POTENTIAL PORN STARS



ACROSS

- 1 You might get dates from it
- 5 What you do after you drop the soap in the shower
- 10 Donned
- 14 Tennis-shoe brand
- 15 Explorer ____ de Leon
- 16 It's measured using length and width
- 17 Talk show host with porn-star potential?
- 19 Little boys
- 20 Leaf gatherers
- 21 Crucial part
- 23 Come next
- 24 One who's under the "don't ask, don't tell" rule: Abbr.
- 26 Therefore
- 27 French detective portrayer with porn-star potential?
- 31 Beatified Fr. woman
- 34 Clinton of comedy
- 35 The Patsy actor Everett ____
- 36 Vacationers in South Beach usually come home with them
- 38 Fictional blaxploitation detective with porn-star potential?
- 40 German-Polish border river
- 41 Vehicle drawn by Bunyan's Babe
- 43 Trickle through the cracks
- 45 The Gay '90s, for one
- 46 Country music star with porn-star potential?
- 49 19th-century women's rights advocate Lucretia ____
- 50 Supper scrap
- 51 Pigeon's hangout
- 55 Like breasts that have been implanted with silicone?
- 57 Like a saint's head
- 58 Blow away
- 59 Eerie tale producer with porn-star potential?
- 62 Captain in Benjamin Britten's *Billy Budd*
- 63 "____ Pretty" (West Side Story song)
- 64 "Would ____ to you?"

- 65 David Geffen, vis-a-vis Geffen Records; Abbr.
- 66 The Deep Six actor Zimbalist
- 67 Kim Carnes' "Bette Davis ____"

DOWN

- 1 San Diego baseballer
- 2 Concerning tits, dickeys, etc.
- 3 Takes advantage of a sucker?
- 4 What a couple might do after kissing
- 5 Places where women might sweat together
- 6 "Mazel ____!"
- 7 "You're a Queer ____" (song from *Carousel*)
- 8 Some Schubert chamber pieces
- 9 Engages in foreplay
- 10 1974 Abba hit
- 11 Fruity drink
- 12 1997 film starring Richard Gere and Bai Ling
- 13 "____ on Down the Road" (tune from *The Wiz*)
- 18 Dawson's ____
- 22 Hawk, but not chicken hawk
- 24 Idle Hands actor Green
- 25 Crisco applier, e.g.
- 28 Sample some buns, e.g.
- 29 ____ Park, Colorado
- 30 Repeated word in a Doris Day song title
- 31 What dockers do
- 32 Fare displayer
- 33 Prison cell, for one
- 37 Soup crackers
- 39 Made it to second base, so to speak
- 42 1976 comedy set in a gay bathhouse, with "The"
- 44 Kind of bear
- 47 Insensitive thing to do after sex
- 48 Nervous gay man?
- 52 Small lace mat
- 53 It may come out after some rubbing
- 54 Rims
- 55 Say whether or not you're coming
- 56 Canal traveled by New York ferries
- 57 Ship's wheel
- 60 James Van ____ Beek (star of 18-Down)
- 61 Go out with

SignOut

by Lilly Roddy

Shake off the doldrums, because on Feb. 5 at 7:03 a.m. there will be a solar eclipse at 16 degrees Aquarius, giving everybody the itchy feet, ready to be done with all those tired routines. But get a move on, because Mercury is going stationary retrograde from Feb. 21–March 15. What this means is: Lay low! If you have new projects to start, get them going before the retrograde, or just wait.

Days to stay in bed: Feb. 13, 21–22, 27, 28.

Days to party: Feb. 1–2, 4–6, 18–19, 26.

Aquarius (Jan. 20–Feb. 18) During your solar return time (translation from astrologese: Happy birthday!), take the time to look back at last year's goals. For many of you, doing the same-old same-old just won't do. Venture forth. In your work, your life, everything, you on feeling connected and whole. Just getting by won't get you by this month. Many are looking at totally new career paths, brand-spanking-new relationships, or simply re-evaluating your whole existence. Much of what you start this important year will be with you for the next 18 years. Choose wisely.

Pisces (Feb. 19–March 20) As this month begins, you're feeling *verrry* sensitive and need time alone to rest, retreat, and review who you are and what this life of yours is all about. Psychic powers are tuned high and just about everything feels like too much. And just to reinforce your retreat mode mood, Mercury goes retrograde in your sign. As you move closer to your birthday, you are probably the most contemplative you will be this entire year. Those of you born Feb. 28–March 3 are especially doing the cosmic enema. Be prepared to get rid of *lots and lots* of things. But take your time, all you Pisces mermaids, mermen, and mer-transgendered: You don't have to come up with the perfect solution until March 17.

Aries (March 21–April 19) Busy busy busy. The time has come to get *out* there and spend time with friends ... or make some new ones. Get active in the community. Find an interest that peaks your passion and go for it. You will immediately find yourself up for a leadership role. For the business types, this is a good month for networking or looking for new areas to market yourself. After mid-month, you'll find your courage at a high; normally scary risks suddenly seem doable. Toward the end of the month, pace yourself so that you keep your energy up. You are also more sensitive than usual: Before you fly off the handle, make sure you listen to the intent behind the words.

Taurus (April 20–May 20) Lots of focus on your career this month. Most of you are feeling more optimistic than you have in 12

years. Jupiter—planet of growth, expansion, travel and mind tripping—is entering your sign on the 14th, lightening everything up. Career tension will be strong Feb. 4–7 for those of you born May 4–9. All of the cows and bulls need to keep their schedules light during those days. After the 22nd you will hear from out-of-touch old friends. Time to get social and have some play time.

Gemini (May 21–June 21) Time to live up. Routines are taking their toll. A change of scenery will do wonders. But try to get going before your ruling planet, Mercury, goes retrograde on the 21st. After this, shift gears: time to review and re-envision your life. You may have *thought* you had successfully avoided facing all those sticky areas at work and in your relationships. But noooo, they've come back to haunt you. Work will seem especially confusing. Clean up your desk, files, work station, cubical, etc.: Things are not going to move forward until you do.

Cancer (June 22–July 22) Time to explore the deeper meanings of the universe, your connections to soul energy ... or at least that kitchen drawer with all those odds and ends stuffed in. You are looking for a deeper emotional commitment from lovers and close friends. You're tired of the barriers that keep you from being close; you're ready to tear them down. Hidden agendas or masked feelings will create more distance. If you have a partner, spend some time together away from all the everyday distractions; this could help reassure you of their interest. Therapy might be helpful. At month's end, your work and career take the spotlight.

Leo (July 23–Aug. 22) In a word, RELATIONSHIPS! If you have one, you will be extremely focused on it; the smallest deviations will grab your attention. If you don't have one, then you *want* one. This time, try to find someone who at least lives in the same city. Expect some reexamination with business associates. The time is ripe to recommit yourself with both lovers and business partners. If you have any problems, you'll find them impossible to avoid. It is a good time to fix them.

Virgo (Aug. 23–Sept. 22) Work, health, and everyday habits are going to be explored this month. Watch out, that famous Virgo-nian efficiency is about to kick into high gear. Any part of your life not working at peak capacity, you will be taking apart and figuring out why. Mostly this will show up at work; you will be even less tolerant of those cerebrally challenged types than usual. You might as well give them a lesson in how to make their lives run better. This gets even stronger when your ruling planet, Mercury, goes retrograde on the 21st. You may want to get yourself a warning label. Then you will focus this revisionary light on your partner. Love or some other euphemism will find a way.

Libra (Sept. 23–Oct. 23) Creativity just oozes from your every pore. You are in a very playful and artistic mood for almost the whole month. Avoid intense discussions or pedantic types who feel that they must educate you. This is a good month for meeting someone new. Your sexual energies are radiant and will be broadcasting on all bandwidths. In business, it's easy to sell your products, ideas, or yourself; your charm simply overwhelms. Relationship energies are turned up after the 11th. Try something spontaneous: Let that animal out and let her prowl. At the workplace, expect some need for reorganization and general cleanup, especially after the 21st.

Scorpio (Oct. 24–Nov. 21) Just when you thought it was safe to come out after the holidays, your family comes back to visit. As you explore your emotional and psychological roots this month, you will get to find out who in the family bequeathed you that obsessive-compulsive behavior. If things at home seem unsettled, you're right on track. You may feel restless at work and have a hard time sleeping at night. You are overturning the base on which you have built your life so you can see what really motivates you. Although in the end you get more control, along the way you will just feel very naked.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22–Dec. 21) Communicating your ideas is top priority, as your mind works at lightening speed and the new ideas keep surging in. Your fixer skills are really working great. You need lots of activity for your mental gymnastics or you will get bored quickly: new projects at work, new people to talk to, anything to purge your brain of those stale routines. After the 21st, your interest wanders home. Time to clean up the old home place, maybe even painting or redecorating. And with your home focus, your thoughts drift back to your early home life. Consider a trip back to that environment and see all of your old friends: It'll do a lot to help you feel grounded.

Capricorn (Dec. 22–Jan. 19) You are brushing up against your thorny issues of security this month. Did you overspend for the holidays? How is that 401K? Should you ask for a raise? Should you increase your fees? Who will take care of you when you can no longer take care of yourself? Although these are just the normal questions that Capricorns *always* ask themselves, they will be more intensified at the beginning of the month. By the 11th, you are more proactive and feel more in control.

Start your new projects before the 18th or you will have to wait until mid March to start them.

Lilly Roddy is a Houston-based astrologer. She can be reached at phil@cybersim.com or www.cybersim.com/hermes.



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OUT IN HOUSTON

On Jan. 15, 2000, The Houston Outdoor Group met at Hermann Park for a monthly outdoor social:

1 Darlene Valliant (l) and Barb Ralston.

2 (Back, l-r) Don George, Art Gonzales, Don Marrs, David German, Bill Ciminelli, and Richard McClain. (Front, l-r) Kal Ibrahim, DJ Jecker, and Ed Baltz.

3 (Back, l-r) Jon Gray, Lisa Thomas, David Scott, Dennis Milam, Bruce Aleksander, and Howard Kanelakos. (Front, l-r) Barb Ralston and Penny Corman.

Opening night, Wednesday, Dec. 22, 1999, The Atomic Acting Company's latest selection, Cat's Paw—A Meditation on the Don Juan Theme, an original work by Mac Wellman, explored the tangled lives of four women in an intoxicating evening of wit, wordplay, women, and weirdness:

4 (L-r) Jodi Ann McLaughlin, Anessa Ramsey, Veronique Enos, and Barbara S. Hartman in Mac Wellman's Cat's Paw.

On Friday, Dec. 17, Doc Java, an upscale coffee and pastry shop at 3833 Richmond, held its grand opening with an art show and sale by Montrose artist Chris Alexander:

5 Chris Alexander standing in front of his painting.

6 (L-r) Tommy C. Tam, Nakia Keys, Chris Alexander, and Jeffrey Roeske.

New Year's Eve "Millennium Masquerade" party held at On the Cover on Main St.:

7 (L-r) Ma Calgrove, Robbin Colgrove, and Ken Smith.

8 Two mysterious men found having a fabulous time in the new millennium.

9 (L-r) Darrell Judd, Randy Judd Harrison, Bob Gallup, and Kevin Besch.

Opening Night, Wednesday, Jan. 5, Theater LaB Houston presented Die! Mommy! Die!, the story of aging diva singer Angela Andrews Sussman, who plots the demise of her husband to run off to New York with her gigolo boyfriend. It's a parody of such 1960s gothic films as Hust, Hush Sweet Charlotte crossed with the Greek tragedy Electra. Die! Mommy! Die! runs through Feb. 13, 2000.

10 Cast member Joel Sandel as Angela Andrews Sussman seems to be thinking, "Die! Mommy! Die!"

Correction: In the January issue, the photo of STUTZ was taken by Tina Travis.



1-3: LAURIE JONES; 4: UNCREATED; 5-6: DICK DAGE; 7-10: UNCREATED



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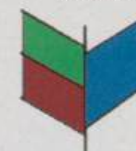
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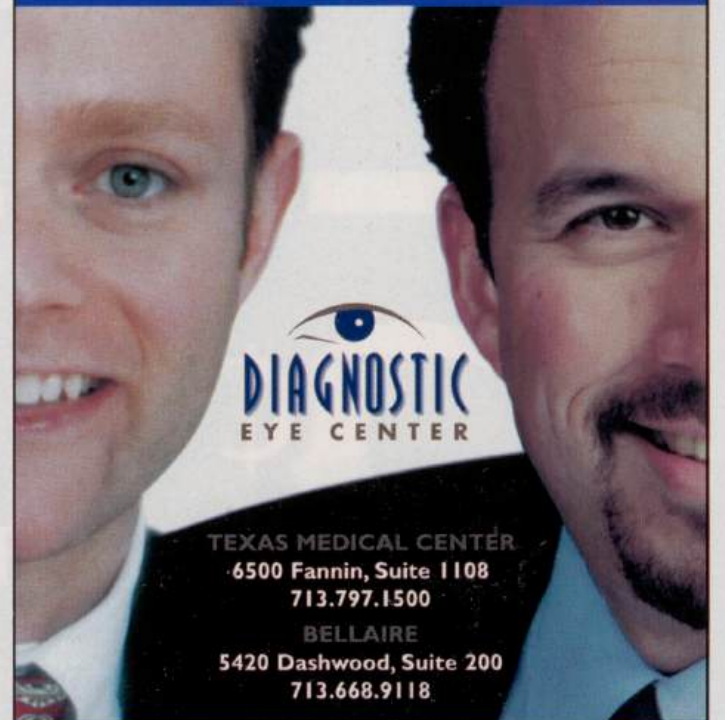
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