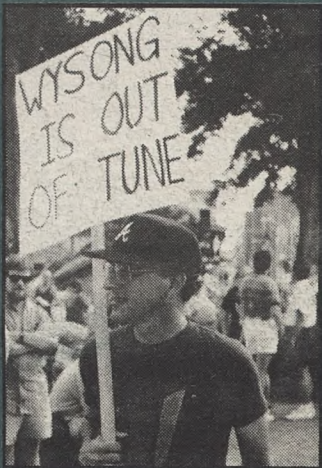


# VOICE

TAKING PRIDE IN OUR CULTURE

SEPT 1 - SEPT 7 / 1994



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VOLUME 7/NUMBER 28 PLEASE RECYCLE 75c WHERE SOLD

## THE LITTLE THEATRE



## THAT DID

*Michael Horne and Palmer Wells of Marietta's Theatre in the Square played a pivotal role in triggering Cobb County's anti-gay resolution. In the past year they have found friends, old and new, who have helped them survive in a county which has no arts funding but plenty of prejudice.*

by MICHAEL KAPE

"This is not Atlanta. This is not San Francisco. This is not New York. This is not America. This is Cobb County!"

With those words, a man from Cobb rose up in a county commission meeting last summer to condemn the perversion he perceived emanating from Theatre in the Square in Marietta.

"That's what he said—this is not America," relates Palmer Wells, the Managing Director for Theatre in the Square. "I think what he was trying to say is America is going to hell—San Francisco, Atlanta and New York are going to hell," Wells says. "But this is America! I have as much right as anybody to live here and try to make it agreeable to me as well as everybody else."

Last year, Wells and Artistic Director Michael Horne, his friend and partner, were simply trying to operate their small, successful theatre, at one time the number one tourist spot in Cobb. But then the two men found themselves enmeshed in a controversy that, in one year, has taken on national ramifications. A patron complained last year to Cobb County Commissioner Gordon Wysong about Theatre in the Square's production of "Lips Together, Teeth Apart," a play that was incorrectly characterized as advocating homosexuality. (Indeed, reviewers in New York and Atlanta criticized Terrance McNally's play because it was missing any homosexual characters onstage, even though it takes place at a beach house in a gay enclave on Fire Island.) Commissioner Wysong, having never seen the production in question, used his commission office as a pulpit to launch an attack against any arts group in the county that did not produce work conforming with "family values." He first threatened to cut off all funding to such art groups, then in the face of a possible lawsuit by the American Civil Liberties Union, upped the ante and rallied his fellow commissioners to cut off all arts funding in the county.

What happened next has been subjected to revi-

sionist history, but the Cobb County Commission, not satisfied with just cutting off arts funding, proceeded to pass its anti-gay resolution, the first of its kind in the country. And at the center of the controversy was the small theatre on Whitlock Avenue.

Many things have happened—to both Cobb County and Theatre in the Square—in the 12 months since the resolution was passed. Cobb County lost its one 1996 Olympics venue, was subjected to a (not entirely successful) nationwide boycott of its brand-new convention center, and saw its name become a national synonym for intolerance. Theatre in the Square found it had many friends—old and new—who would come to its rescue.

### Scrambling for funds

One year ago, things looked bleak for the theatre. Having lost \$40,000 in funding from Cobb County, it was facing the premiere of its new musical version of "Member of the Wedding," which was supposed to star Tony Award winner Daisy Egan. After the controversy broke, her father withdrew her from the play. The musical, directed by Horne, opened to dismal reviews. Because of all that was happening around them, "Michael was distracted," according to Palmer.

Yet there were some extremely bright moments happening at the same time. An angel from seemingly out of nowhere arrived like a theatrical *deus ex machina*. Marietta native Joanne Woodward, along with husband Paul Newman, publicly expressed disgust with the county of her birth. She then came to the rescue with a gift of \$20,000, which had strings attached—the sum had to be matched locally. "And it was," says Palmer. "It was matched locally by one donor, one local individual plus a large number of people who just came forward with the garden variety \$25 or \$50 contribution. Also, a number of Atlanta business and professional people contributed.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17



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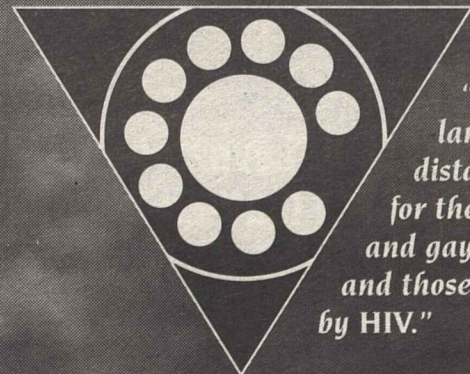
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## Cobb County rally draws thousands despite threats

Marietta—Threats posted on the Internet by Mariettan John DeArmond may have kept the crowds down, but Cobb County's And Justice for All Rally last Sunday was a rousing success.

Police estimated only 1,000 people packed the Marietta Square for the rally, but organizers put the number at closer to 4,000, as speeches and music filled the air on a hot and humid afternoon to protest Cobb County's anti-gay resolution, passed last August in the wake of complaints about a play that mentioned homosexuality.

On the 31st anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have A Dream" speech at the 1963 Civil Rights March in Washington, DC, rally organizer Steven Lebow, senior rabbi at Cobb County's Temple Kol Emeth and founder of the Marietta Interfaith Alliance, one of the sponsors of the rally, offered a contrasting vision of that speech. Lebow described his lifelong nightmare of relatives in Poland that he would never meet—

cousins who died in the Nazi extermination of Jews before and during World War II. "Whenever I see a group, or an individual, threatened, I have that nightmare," said Lebow, surrounded by bodyguards hired by his congregation because of death threats the rabbi has received. "It is a nightmare born in blood and in my people's history, a nightmare nurtured in bigotry and given succor by suspicion."

The same atmosphere pervades now in Cobb County, he said, where "governments [have] set one group of people against another."

"I, too, live in a time when politicians exploit the hatred that lies close to the human heart," he said. "It is a hatred that begins with simple resolutions, but that ends who knows where."

Lebow's words were perhaps the most stirring among a dozen speeches that afternoon, ending with the singing of "America the Beautiful" by Temple Kol Emeth's cantor, and many of the crowd. Ironically, the song was written by a lesbian, Katherine Lee Bates.

Other speakers included NOW vice president Rosemary Dempsey, who detailed her own fights for custody of her children and guardianship of her mother—contested because of her sexual orientation, Leon Berry of the Cobb Network for Social Responsibility, Noel Lytle and Elaine Hill, cochairs of the Cobb Citizens Coalition, Lauren Levin of the Anti-Defamation League, Bill Secrest, running against resolution author Gordon Wysong for a Cobb Commission seat, and Shannon Byrne, daughter of Commission Chair Bill Byrne.

Congressional candidate Ben Jones, running against Newt Gingrich, sparked a chant of "Boot Newt" after his speech, and messages were read from U.S. Rep. John Lewis, Southern Christian Leadership Conference president Joseph Lowery, and tennis great



Organizers say 4,000 people, gay and straight, gathered on Marietta Square in a stand against the county's anti-gay resolution. Right: Shannon Byrne, daughter of Cobb County Commission Chair Bill Byrne, and Elaine Hill and Anne MacPherson.

Martina Navratilova.

But it was Lebow who best articulated the theme of the rally—that lesbians and gay men need not feel they stand alone against the Cobb Commissioners and those who support them.

"Five months ago I had a vision that straight and gay could stand together, here in Cobb County," Lebow said. "Today that vision is fulfilled. We stand together and no one can separate us."

The crowd on Marietta Square reflected that vision—gay and straight, young and old, Republican and Democrat. Missy Gentles, a 25 year old native Cobb Countian who moved to Ellijay 3 years ago, travelled 70 miles with Brian Johnson, 30, from her mountain home to attend Sunday's rally.

"My family [which still lives in Cobb] is very strong against the resolution," Gentles said. "[Brian and I] don't have children yet, but we plan to. I want to raise them as part of the human race. I feel real strong about this."

Another Cobb County resident, Lynne Robinson-Smith, agreed with Gentles. She has already begun to teach her child, Geoff, that acceptance of differences is the true Christian way. She and her son attended the rally with signs touting their belief that gay men and lesbians should not be singled out for discrimination.

"I kind of call it Christian ethics," Robinson-Smith said. "I got it from going to church."

Eight-and-a-half-year-old Geoff understands. He said he is regularly "picked on" in school for being different—wearing his hair long, taking dance classes—and that he doesn't believe it's right.

"I think that judging people by being straight or gay is very wrong and I see no point in having this resolution," he said.

Robinson-Smith and her son, Gentles, Johnson, and all the other gay men, lesbians, and straight people enjoyed the rally



unfettered by counterprotestors. Near the end of the day, however, Marietta residents began to stroll near the area. One group of lesbians leaving the Square reported that a family of four—man, woman, two children—asked them where they were from as they left the Square. When told they were from Atlanta, the man replied, "Stay down there."

Cobb and Marietta police had blocked off streets surrounding the Square and took up posts on nearby rooftops to observe the area. The heightened security came after the threats to shoot rally attendees were posted late last month on Internet, but no incidents were reported, although police did prevent six skinheads from entering the Square.

The low turnout was a surprise to organizers, who had anticipated 5000-10,000 on the Square. Talk around the rally, however, pointed to the threats as the cause for the low numbers. Many people reported that friends had refused to come to Marietta because of them.

Nothing came of those threats, however, and the rally went on with no problems.

"We're bringing out the straight and gay communities," said Elaine Hill. "That's what needs to happen. There seems to be a lot of people who felt that [getting the Olympics out of Cobb] was it. But we're in this for the long term. That was a battle won. We're still focussing on the war."

KC WILDMOON

## Operation Street Sweep catches cruisers in Piedmont Park

Atlanta—Atlanta police staged a citywide sweep on Wednesday, August 24, targeting drug dealers, prostitutes and their customers, and gay men cruising in Piedmont Park.

"It was entrapment, basically," said one man arrested in the park, who requested anonymity. "They had undercover cops wearing tank tops and shorts, hanging out in a known cruise area. They were standing around in the trails, smiling at people, waiting for anyone to cross the line—to say something suggestive, touch himself, or touch the plainclothes officers. Then the cop would show his badge and it would be, bam—you're busted."

According to the August 25 edition of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, more than 300 officers were dispatched during the first mission of Operation Street Sweep. Acting Atlanta police chief Beverly Harvard reportedly told officers to "be aggressive" without violating rights. The AJC reported that preliminary tallies showed police arrested 157 people on 325 charges ranging from cocaine and crack trafficking to prostitution and weapons violations, but the newspaper made no mention of the gay arrests.

The Southern Voice source was arrested at approximately 7:00 pm Wednesday and charged with simple battery for touching an officer on the chest. "He was wearing jeans and a T-shirt and a baseball cap," said the man. "He was hanging around me, smiling and looking over. At first I walked away, but later on I saw him near me again and so I finally went up and said 'Hi.' He said 'Hi' back, and I made some small talk and finally I reached out and sort of brushed his chest with my hand. That was it. He had the cuffs on me in no time."

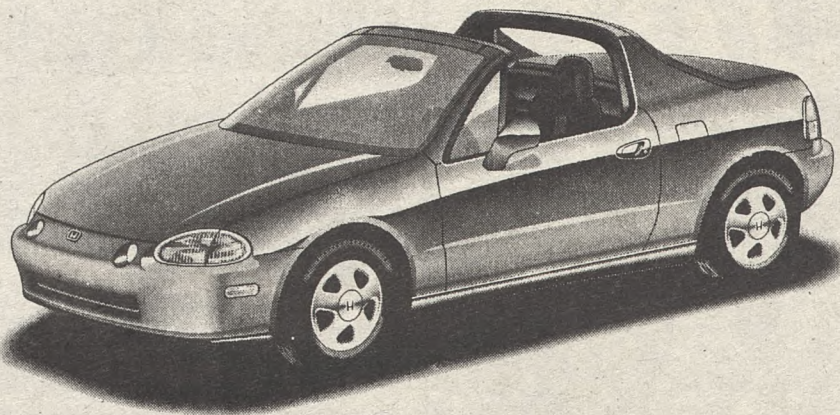
According to the man, there were at least four plainclothes officers in the small area near where Westminster dead-ends into railroad tracks that run through the park. "There were only about ten people altogether in that area," said the man. "Almost half of them, I found out later, had been cops."

Those arrested were rounded up and placed in an unmarked van with tinted windows, which was idling behind a storage warehouse on Westminster. There they were made to wait for nearly an hour while the officers made enough arrests to fill the van. "One guy was charged with indecent exposure," said our source. "Another one was caught in the act of sex and was charged with sodomy. The guy he was with escaped. Another one tried to run after they had him in handcuffs, but they caught him."

As the arrested men were being transferred into a police wagon, the source said, one of the officers told them their arrests were part of a sweep and that "the new chief is serious about stopping this kind of behavior."

CHRIS CASH

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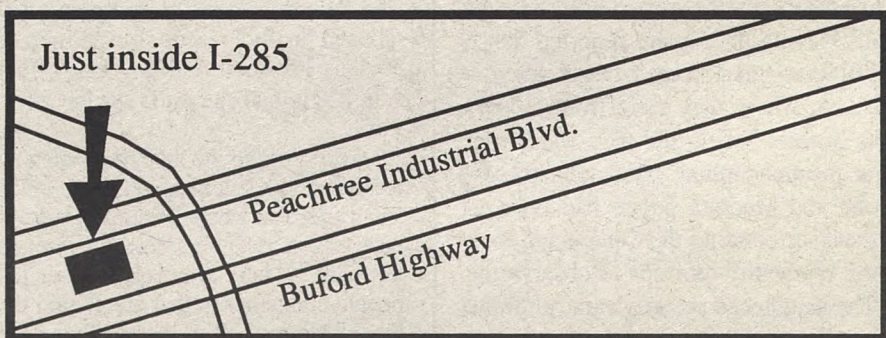
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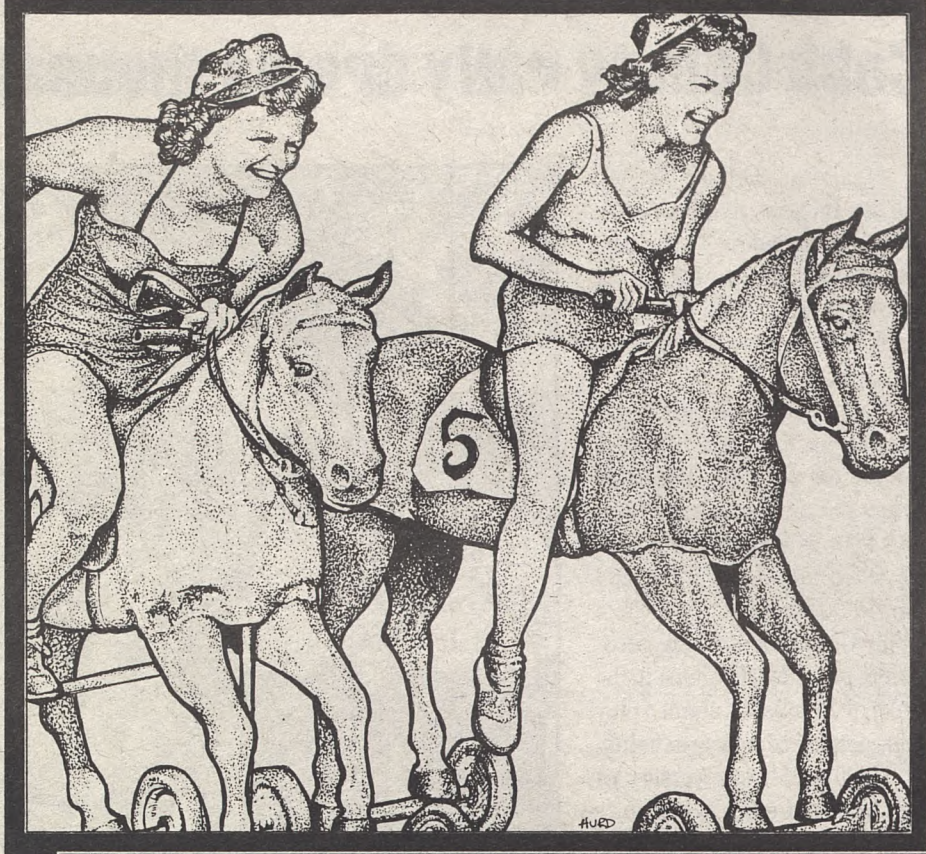
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## Falsettoland nixed by Mississippi parents

Jackson, MS—A complaint by some parents against homosexual content has caused Hattiesburg High School officials to nix a drama production slated for state competition.

Michael Marks, adviser for the school's drama club, said Aug. 18 he agreed to pull "Falsettoland" after he was told it violated state law.

"It is a form of censorship and it discourages academic growth," said Marks.

The play, a musical written by William Finn, is about a Jewish family that is torn apart after the father realizes he is gay and takes a male lover. His marriage ends in divorce. In the final scenes, the father's lover is diagnosed with AIDS and the characters rally around in support.

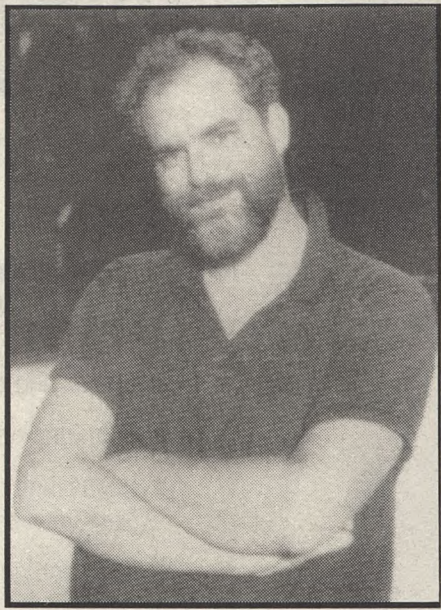
The play was scheduled as a contender in the annual Drama Fest at the University of Southern Mississippi—a staging ground for regional and national competitions.

After hearing of "Falsettoland's" content, two Hattiesburg families complained it violated state laws forbidding minors from being exposed to sexually explicit material, although there is no such material in the play.

In a letter to school administrators, the parents, Robert and Katherine Holliman and the Rev. David and Andrea Jussely, demanded the play be stopped and future productions be subject to official scrutiny.

"We believe that it is inappropriate for students to play the parts of homosexual characters in a public forum," said Andrea Jussely, reading from the letter.

"We believe, and public reviews of the play confirm, that this is a gay-agenda production rather than an AIDS-awareness production."



Playwright William Finn

Hattiesburg schools Superintendent Gordon Walker responded with a letter acknowledging the production would violate state law.

"Based solely upon this (legal) advice, I have directed that the play be canceled," Walker wrote.

Veteran drama students and their parents—many of whom have been active in raising funds for the club—were angered by the decision.

"The biggest thing I resent is that a couple of families question my parents' judgments about the things I do in high school," said Joey Hood, 17. "This play portrays aspects of life that are real and are not going to go away."

ASSOCIATED PRESS

## Gay hairdresser found not guilty in stabbing death

Tampa, FL—Jurors have acquitted a gay hairdresser who claims he fatally stabbed a British man to defend himself from what he feared was a gay-bashing attack.

Jonathan Novak, 27, was found innocent Aug. 17 of second-degree murder in the March 3 slaying of Gavin Murray, 26, of Rainham, England.

If convicted, Novak faced a possible life sentence.

"It's a difficult case," prosecutor Jack Gutman said.

Novak told jurors that two years earlier he had been attacked and beaten by four men who yelled gay slurs. Ever since then, he had carried an 8-inch hunting knife in his car.

So when one of two men leaned on his car in a dark downtown parking lot last March and said "excuse me," he felt it was happening again.

"I reached into the side pocket where the knife was," Novak testified, "and I pulled it out and started to stab him."

Gutman, who contends the stabbing was unprovoked, asked Novak during

cross-examination if he wasn't just overreacting.

"No—it was him or me," Novak replied. "I was trying to defend myself."

Novak and Murray spent the evening earlier drinking at separate downtown nightclubs. Murray and a friend were at a rock music club called 911, and Novak was next door at Hammerjax nightclub, where it was "Gay Night."

Novak's self-defense argument got a boost from one of Murray's friends, who testified Murray noticed the people outside the bar.

"He said, 'I hate...faggots,'" Richard Kaiser quoted his friend as saying. "When I was in England, we'd bash faggots."

"He wasn't talking directly to them, to anyone, but he was talking loud, so I told him to chill out."

On the stand, Novak held up his bloodied, ripped clothing from the night of the slaying to show he too was attacked. His attorney also introduced photographs of him taken after the attack to show he had been banged up.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

## Gay sex movie okay, says Florida jury

Largo, FL—A jury that watched all 75 minutes of a movie depicting gay sex has acquitted a video store clerk of state obscenity laws for renting the tape to an undercover detective.

Defense attorneys said the Aug. 16 acquittal of Sheila M. Craig set an important precedent, since it was the first time in Florida a gay movie has been the subject of a trial under state laws forbidding the distribution of obscene material.

"Gay people exist in your community," attorney Frank de la Grana told jurors in his closing arguments. "They have as much

right as heterosexual people to rent adult movies."

But Assistant State Attorney William McLeod Jr. condemned the move, titled "Bait," particularly for a final scene in which one man is treated as a sex slave for two other men.

"If that isn't patently offensive, I don't know what is," McLeod told the jury.

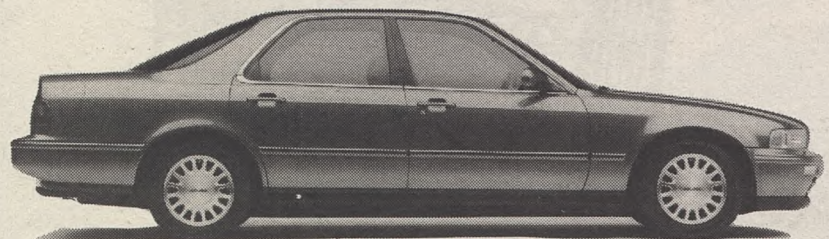
If Craig, 37, had been convicted, she faced a maximum penalty of a year in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

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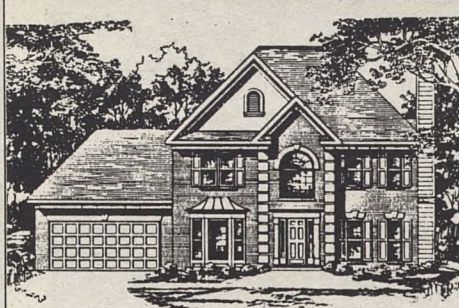
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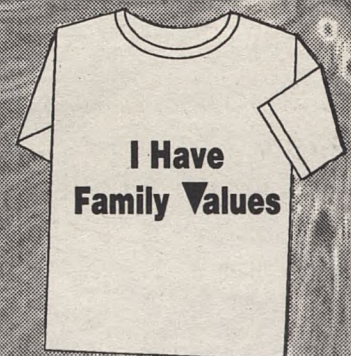
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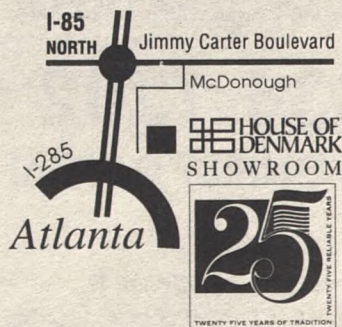
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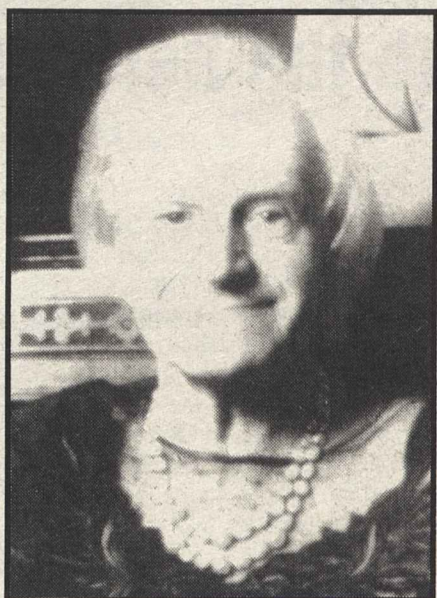
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## Famed Transvestite Fleeing German Violence:

German transvestite Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, made internationally famous by Rosa van Praunheim's film "I Am My Own Woman," is leaving Berlin for Sweden later this year. Von Mahlsdorf, who was born Lothar Berfelde in 1928 but lived as an openly gay transvestite all of her adult life, told the Swedish gay monthly Reporter that she is leaving Germany because of increasing anti-gay violence. The Reporter said that she will bring her extensive collection of antiques to Sweden, but some pieces—including the interior of a gay bar purchased in the '60s—will be donated to Berlin's gay museum.



Charlotte Von Mahlsdorf

## Gay-Baiting Colors California Congressional Race:

A California assemblyman, running for state senate, has angered backers of U.S. House candidate Mark Takano by calling Takano a "homosexual liberal Democrat." Assemblyman Ray Haynes made the comment last month during a meeting that he and Takano's opponent, first-term incumbent Ken Calvert, held with abortion opponents. Takano, who refused to answer a reporter's questions about his sexual orientation, accused the Calvert campaign of orchestrating the statement, saying that Calvert wanted to divert attention from a brush with police last November, when he was found having sex with a prostitute in his car. For his part, Haynes said he was not trying to raise sexual orientation as an issue. "I said quite clearly I personally don't want a homosexual representing me in Congress," he said. "The worst thing is I think [Takano is] a nutzoid liberal."

**Bailiff's Anti-Gay Remark Leads To Suspension:** The Dallas County (Texas) Sheriff's Department has suspended bailiff Robert Earl Smith over a remark he made during the trial of a man accused of raping a lesbian. According to the victim, Smith told the defendant's attorney that "if it was me [on the jury], I'd only give him 30 days for raping a lesbian." Smith admitted to the remark during an internal review. He has been suspended for 10 working days without pay, and was ordered to undergo sensitivity training and give a written apology to the woman. "I trust that this recognition of the incident will serve as a strict notice that such conduct is in violation of our rules and standards," said Sheriff Jim Bowles. "I have not, I do not and I will not condone such behavior."

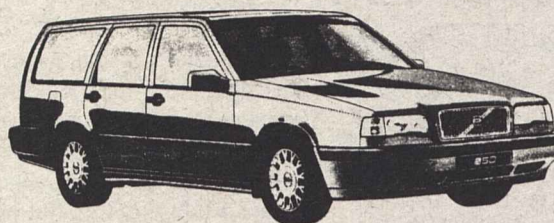
**Gubernatorial Candidate Pulls Gun On Gay Man:** A hunger-striking Ohio gubernatorial candidate who has been living in a tent outside the statehouse could face charges for pulling a loaded gun on a man who he said threatened to urinate on him last week. Billy Inmon's anti-gay campaign platform apparently led to the confrontation. Inmon said the man identified himself as a homosexual before making his threat. Inmon, who was fired as Ohio State Fair manager in 1992 after trying to ban a gay rights group from distributing pamphlets, pulled his gun, for which he has no permit. No charges were filed against Inmon's alleged assailant.

**Teens Get Off In Gay Murder:** Teenagers known to be the tormentors of a retarded gay man killed in an arson fire in Phoenix, AZ, two months ago may never be brought to trial because of a lack of evidence, according to authorities. Michael Despain, 24, died June 9 in his rented condominium in a fire set after an argument he had with some juveniles over his sexual orientation. One of the three teenagers who was in the apartment the night before the fire was arrested but released for lack of evidence, and two others seen running from the condominium before the fire were questioned and released. More than 100 people gathered last week in front of the Gay and Lesbian Community Center in central Phoenix for a candlelight vigil in memory of Despain on what would have been his 25th birthday.

**American Airlines Flight Attendant Charges Discrimination:** American Airlines flight attendant Jay Mauk has filed a lawsuit against American Airlines charging that the airline refused to allow him to work on a Dallas Cowboys' charter flight to road games. "No, we don't use guys on our charters," Mauk said he and his immediate supervisor were told by another supervisor last September. Mauk asked if gay men were allowed, and said he was told "No, they wouldn't like that at all." American denies the charges, saying male flight attendants have been assigned to Cowboys charters. Cowboys spokesman Rich Dalrymple said the team had no comment other than it relies on the judgment of American Airlines for staffing on charter flights.

**Utah Group Calls for Judge's Dismissal:** Gay and Lesbian Utah Democrats have filed a complaint over a judge's decision to reduce the sentence of a man who shot and killed a gay man. The complaint calls for the "strongest possible penalty" against 3rd District Court Judge David Young, including his removal from office. Young was the judge in the case of David Nelson Thacker, who admitted that he and a friend searched out Douglas Koehler and shot him in the head. Koehler, Thacker said, had taken advantage of him when he passed out from alcohol and cocaine. Young called the 1-to-15 year prison term for Thacker "too high" and reduced it to no more than 6 years. The petition filed by GLUD said Young "failed to consider the aggravated assault and hate-crime circumstances surrounding the victim's death."

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## GUEST EDITORIAL

## Are we stuck with the Democrats?

by RICHARD D. MOHR

About once a month, the mail brings me a solicitation from the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. I had given them money in '92, the first year that I had made sacrifices to contribute to national political campaigns. Bill got a tidy sum too. But by now I figure Bill and his Democrats need a new gay message. So I get out my ink pad and "Gay Money" stamp, whomp the return form, and embellish it to read "No GAY MONEY for the Party of Sam Nunn." I slip the form into its pre-paid envelope and post it back to Democratic National Headquarters. You might consider doing the same.

The Democrats—who, remember, control not only the White House but also both branches of Congress—deserve to be punished for their treatment of gays since the '92 elections. By signing the 1993 military appropriation bill, Clinton became the first President in U.S. history to write discrimination against gay individuals into federal law. And what discrimination it is: Don't Ask, Don't Tell treats gays like flatulence in a crowded elevator. No one asks, no one tells, and thereby the thing is reconsecrated as repulsive, abject, and loathsome. The actions of Bill Clinton and Sam Nunn say "Gays are scum."

Even so, it might be argued that, well, we are stuck with the Democrats because the Republicans are even worse, and in any case, politics is inherently a messy business and we have to get on with things. Let's examine these two claims.

First, in the country's long engagement with civil rights from President Lincoln—a Republican—to the present, the Democrats have not done measurably better than the Republicans. Consider the following eerie moments in American history.

For fear of alienating Southern Democratic senators and derailing his economic programs, F.D.R.—a Democrat—did not so much as speak out, let alone twist arms, in support of federal anti-lynching legislation as it withered and died each time it came up in the Senate. Most famously, F.D.R. in 1939, fearing populist backlash, refused port to the St. Louis, which carried 900 Jewish refugees fleeing Hitler. In consequence, two-thirds eventually

died in concentration camps.

Republican President Eisenhower—good trooper that he was—obeyed the federal courts' anti-discrimination rulings and sent in the U.S. Army to racially integrate Arkansas schools, even though this mobilization ran strongly against both his personal and his political inclinations. By contrast, the Democratic Kennedy brothers—John and Robert—acceding to populist pressures, suspended the 14th Amendment in Alabama during the Freedom Rides, even though they said they opposed segregation.

In Congress, a larger percentage of Republicans than Democrats voted for the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Both the tightened enforcement mechanisms that make the Act effective and federal affirmative action programs that mandate set aside programs were products of the Nixon Presidency.

The Supreme Court's 5-4 *Bowers v. Hardwick* decision in 1986 holding that gays have no privacy rights was penned by a Democratic appointee to the Court, Justice White, named by J.F.K., while the two dissenting opinions were penned by Republican appointees, Justices Blackmun and Stevens, named by Nixon and Ford.

It took a Republican President to get rid of the immigration ban on gays that had been passed over Harry Truman's veto in 1952. George Bush signed the ban out of existence in 1990.

On the state level, gay civil rights bills for both the first and the most recent states to pass them were signed by Republican governors: Lee Dreyfus of Wisconsin in 1982 and Arne Carlson of Minnesota in 1993. And who is the only governor ever to have lobbied for and signed legislation specifically protecting gay youth? William Weld, Republican of Massachusetts, in December 1993.

On August 1st of this year, twenty-three Democratic Senators voted to cut off federal funds to school districts that allow "the promotion of homosexuality as a positive lifestyle alternative." So, no, we aren't stuck with the Democrats and the Democrats certainly aren't stuck on us—even as they seem to take us for

granted.

Second, yes, politics is messy. But you have choices with your money that you don't have in the voting booth. There you may well have to pick the lesser of two evils. But with your money, you have real options. Instead of giving money to political parties, you can give your money to projects that build the gay community and that begin to transform the broader culture, which in any case determines the overall course of politics and which still has a long way to go before substantial progress can be made in gay politics.

Instead of funding political parties, consider giving money, say, to the Lesbian Mothers' National Defense Fund (Box 21567, Seattle 98111) or to the Service Members' Legal Defense Network (Box 53013, DC 20009). Don't be duped by Democratic politicians who soon will be scenting the trail with hopes for imminent passage of a federal gay rights bill. You'd do better buying lottery tickets than funding that idea.

What about funding individual candidates? Consider the sorry case of U.S. Senator Harris Wofford, Democrat of Pennsylvania. He was appointed to the Senate in April 1991, but to retain his seat, had to run in a November special election. He had impeccable, indeed amazing, liberal credentials: he was the first white to graduate from Howard University Law School; he helped found the Peace Corp; he served as liaison between J.F.K. and Martin Luther King, Jr., and he was the first male president of Bryn Mawr College. The Human Rights Campaign Fund gave him the maximum PAC donation allowed by law—ten-thousand of your dollars. He seemed a sure gay-positive vote. But once elected, he played the gay community Judas, voting with Nunn to remove the military ban from executive branch discretion and write it into federal law. For gays to fund even liberal Democrats is a messy business indeed.

*Richard D. Mohr is author of "More Perfect Union: Why Straight America Must Stand Up for Gay Rights" (Beacon Press 1994).*

## LETTERS

### Never too old to dance

Jonathan Kivett need never doubt that he is loved. I refer to his "Moving to the Music" guest editorial in SoVo on Aug 11.

His writing opened my heart much like the stranger dancing with him opened his. He suggested that just for those few melodic moments he could return from the worries of today to the joys of yesterday. He did this for me, too. I can continue to live those moments because the music produced by Kivett will live with me, his notes of poesy are mine to read and re-read whenever I need to share with a kindred spirit.

I would be a sorry old lesbian if I thought you would not understand that I know, too, the heartbreak of betrayal. Life itself betrays us from time to time and our traverse is never a smooth one. But I need suffer only as much as I allow myself to suffer. The final betrayal in the end is, of course, my own.

I spent many years in a relationship that was filled with uncertainty—making it a rocky, exciting affair. It ended, what with it being the 90s and all, and what with serial living being

the accepted norm these days. The old "stick with it as long as it's fun" mind set. It wasn't until it ended that I learned that there was no way in Hell that I could fix her. So I fixed myself, but she was lost by that time. Not lost to me, just lost.

And while I was wallowing in frustration for all those years, never giving up hope, I got old. Damn. Old is just a teensy step from total isolation. When I stand against the wall listening to the music and watching the dancers, my "affliction" shows. It is very much in evidence, those wrinkles of wisdom. I suppose they think I can no longer dance! Not to fear. But, it's no secret that I've been somewhere—for a long time.

So, my poetic friend, I wanted to write and tell you that I empathize with your plight, and appreciate the sharing with you that your article afforded. Thank you for revealing yourself. It is the sharing of our own secret hurts and fears that heals our souls, and those of others'. It tells us we are not alone.

And, thank you SoVo for putting me in touch with the community of G & Ls.

Hannah Douglas

### Running in Cobb

I don't get it.

After the pressure on ACOG to pull Olympic volleyball preliminaries out of the country and the courage of at least three groups to boycott the Civic Center, there's not been one audible cry of condemnation or visible act of protestation to Cobb's celebrated "10-K Run."

What, no gay runners in Cobb or elsewhere?

Those sweaty, Phidippides-inspired wanderers indeed must be a close-knit club.

I simply don't get it.

Sincerely,  
Rob Martin



## AIDS scare is real for lesbian mothers and wannabes

I have bad news.

Maybe you missed it in your local mainstream paper. It's about lesbians, so if they carried it at all, it would have been hidden back in the Classified Information section, Section V or W or Z, somewhere around page two thousand. That's, of course, where they put articles about lesbians unless we happen to be exceptionally cute that day, are wearing exceptionally low-cut dresses, or happened to have murdered six or seven upstanding civilians. (If we murder each other, or even severely baseball bat a couple of well-deserving Cameros, that could also move us right up there along with Bosnia, and Bill Clinton's weekly plea bargain.)

But this time it's a lesser story about death and destruction. It's about what's killing us. So they probably didn't run it.

Guess what? AIDS. I promised to tell you anything I found out. Well, I found out something I didn't want to know. I spotted a very obscure mention that is of major magnitude to us. You see, AIDS has found a new back door to lesbians, a new way into our ranks. It could mean that we aren't necessarily Heaven's most favored any more after all. So if you've been (like most of the rest of us) hanging out saying, "Nyah, nyah. Nyah, nyah. Nyah, nyah. God-loves-me-God-loves-me-God-loves-me," hold on, honey, it's time to stop and count the T-cells.

It's nothing so distant as raped nuns. Or bashed and battered sisters in other parts of town, exiting from bars we wouldn't go into. Nor so close and obscure as shared toothbrushes, or razors in the already infected. ('though that's the way it could go from now on for a lot of us if we aren't more careful.) It's not even about the understood dangerous



### Cleaning Out My Closet

by SHELLY ROBERTS

liaisons of being bisexual. It's about a totally unexplored corner of our own galaxy, one we thought was relatively safe from harm. Our insistent passion for babybooming.

It seems that semen has to be considered a bodily fluid. Well, no great surprise there, of course. We already knew that it can do great bodily harm in boys-and-boys, and boys-and-girls. I don't know how we missed the concept in girls-and-girls. Somehow we overlooked the fact that, even though we may not be doing any dirty deeds, (and isn't no sex the safest sex? Or so we thought.) We're injecting the stuff. Into our bodies. In Turkey basters, which have been the hypodermics of choice for an entire generation of lesbians who wanted to become one of Heather's mommies.

And now, it seems, it could kill us. AIDS. You see, apparently there are, or were a lot of

sperm banks that didn't bother screening for the deadly dreadful until just a few years ago. There may even still be some right now, even as you read this, that aren't testing at all. So the virus is getting through. It's hard to imagine that this is possible, that they wouldn't have screened for something this serious. But, then, that is probably what the hemophiliacs said.

Damn, I hate to be the one sharing this. It's just that I didn't see any banner headlines in my Daily Planet or your Clarion-Sentinel-Gazette. Just lesbians, right? So who cares? Well, it looks like we may have to take a lesson from our brothers about caring for each other and ourselves. And this is where I start. By spreading news. Even if it's bad.

I don't want to be alarmist. This is only an inroad. No, that's not true. I want to be very alarmist. All the virus needed was an inroad way back when for the men.

Here's the lecture part. (Assume you're hearing this in your mother's voice. Only this time, of course, you can let yourself listen and actually hear.) We know it's a virus that can stay latent for decades. So if you inseminated early, whether you succeeded or not, please, scary as it seems, go get tested. You need to know in order to do what's necessary to take care of yourself and your baby. If you were successful, you also need to get the baby, or child, or adolescent tested because, s/he needs to do what ever is necessary as well.

Some of you were smarter, or luckier. You asked the bank to make certain that all deposits were clean and safe. And many of the sperm banks figured it out sooner rather than later, and began screening. Some of you simply assumed. I'm sorry. You aren't going to like the answers.

Since some of you are injecting even as we speak, stop and check that vile. Everybody would prefer clean babies. Double check the source. Everyone says that they would die for their children. This is not what they mean.

I've heard a lot of conversation in the past couple of years about disappointment in the men's community because of the lack of reciprocity of caring. The men didn't seem to take our causes seriously when so many of them were withering. Unfortunately, this is not the way we want to establish equality.

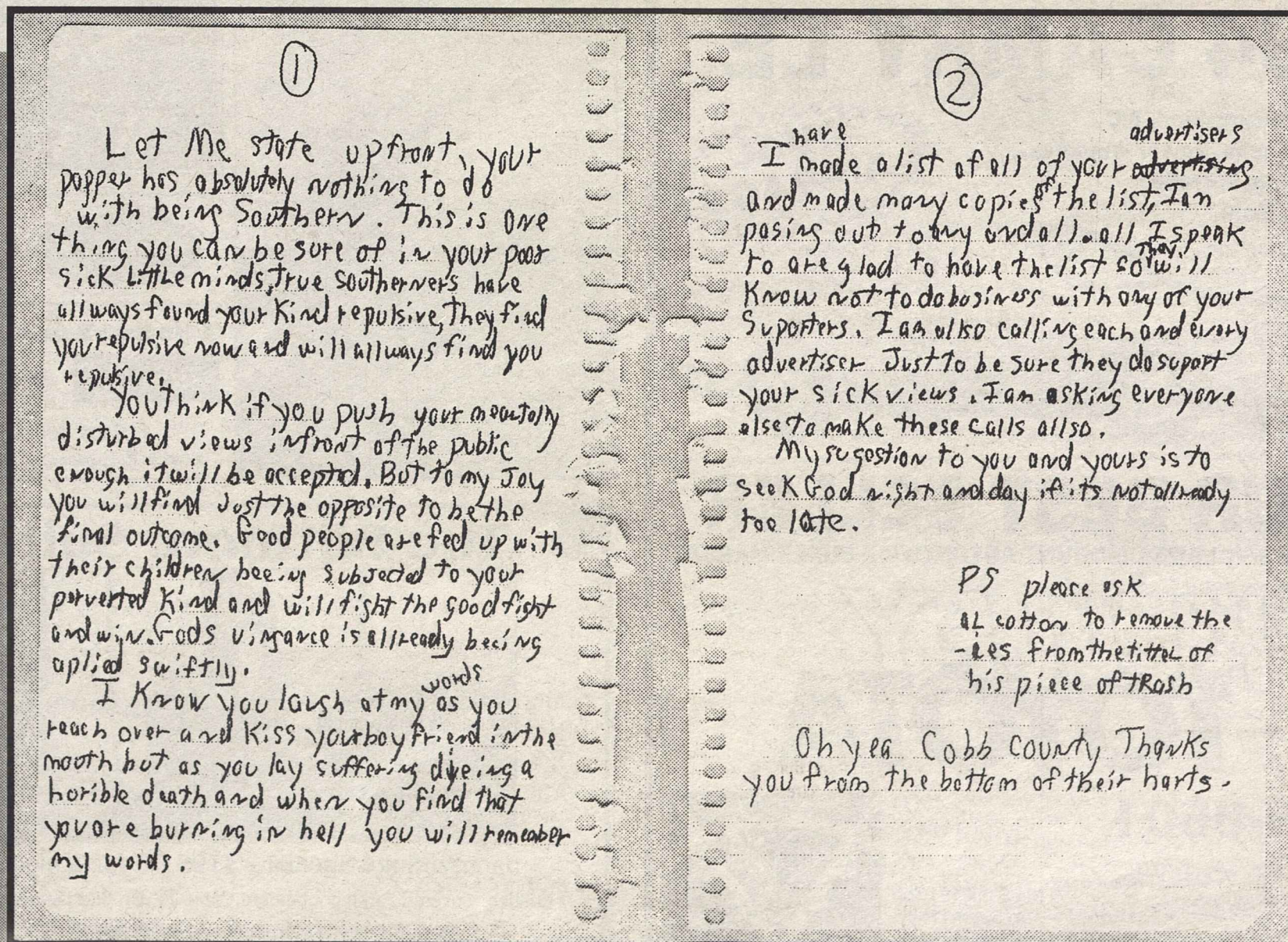
I've lost too many brothers I had hoped to grow up knowing. I've released too many inscribed balloons to the sky, and shed too many tears to the ground to want to have to start now with my women.

Please, please, please, if you want babies they won't let you adopt, be sure the men among you have tested negative. That part you already know. But about the banks. Don't assume anything. Be certain the seed bank screens everything and anything they send out. Ask them. Out loud. Call them today and find out when they started screening, and pray it was before they started sending you anything frozen in a Styrofoam box.

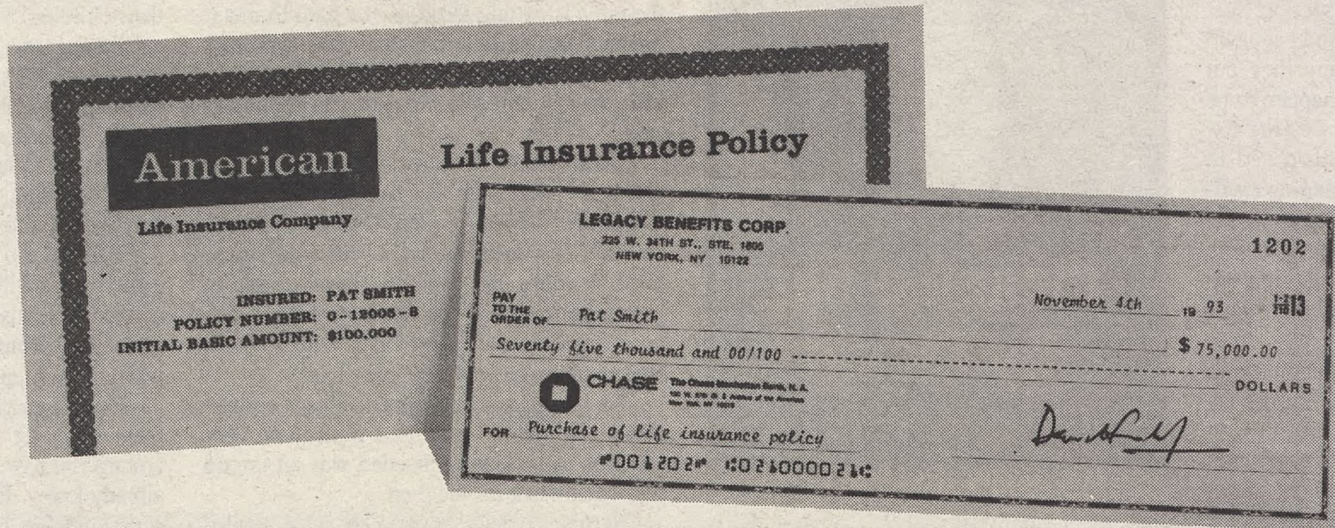
If you aren't involved in the practice, but know anyone who is, tell her, and tell her, and tell her again. Nag if you have to. Make certain that anything she uses is screened and clean. Let everyone you know who's been there and done that to get tested to find out for sure. This is a gateway. A deadly doorway. One we want to keep closed.

I didn't mean to have to tell you.  
But if I don't, who will?

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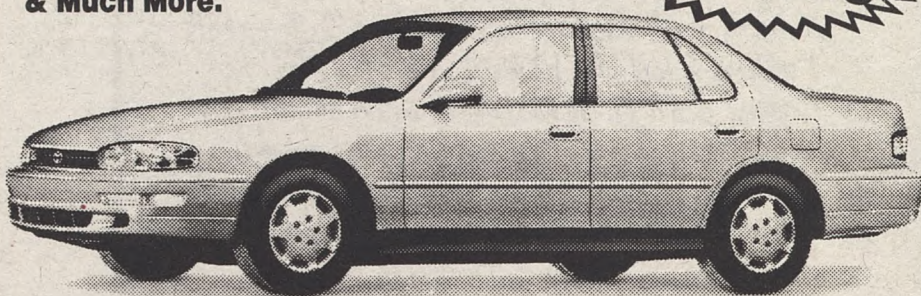
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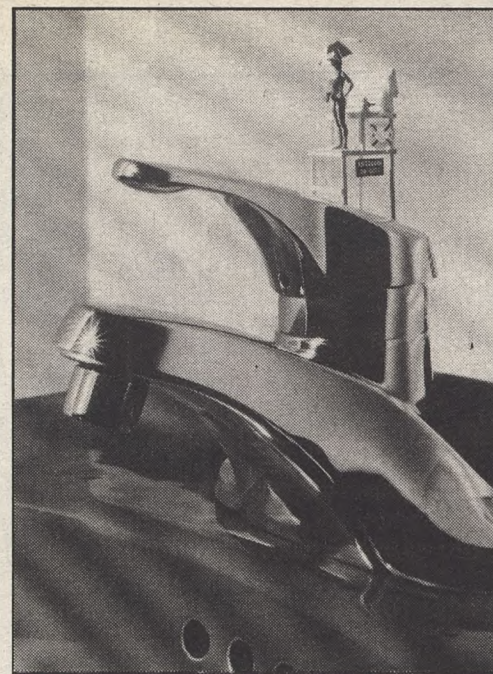
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## Radecic steps down as NGLTF head

*Staff changes continue to shake up gay rights group*

Peri Jude Radecic is stepping down as executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) to return to her old job as the organization's public policy director. Radecic was elevated to her current position a year ago when Torie Osborn unexpectedly resigned after only six months on the job. She will remain executive director until a successor begins.

Three Washington employees of NGLTF will leave the organization in September. This follows a budget cut at the start of the summer that eliminated three program positions, and a fourth which has been left vacant due to resignation for reasons of health.

Among those departing are Deborah Cox, director of finance and administration; spokesperson Robin Kane; and Ivy Young, director of NGLTF's annual "Creating Change" conference. Young, who has five years with the organization, leaves two months prior to the annual conference, ordinarily an event planner's busiest time.

Two board members will come to Washington during this time of transitional turmoil.



Radecic waves goodbye to the job.

Board member Chris Collins of San Francisco will assist with fundraising and other organizational duties. Texan Gregory Fisher will become interim director of communications. An interim office manager will be hired.

These and other issues are likely to be the focus of a board "strategic retreat" in Provincetown the last weekend of August and the Washington board meeting September 24-25.

BOB ROEHR

## Lesbian activist Rikki Streicher dies

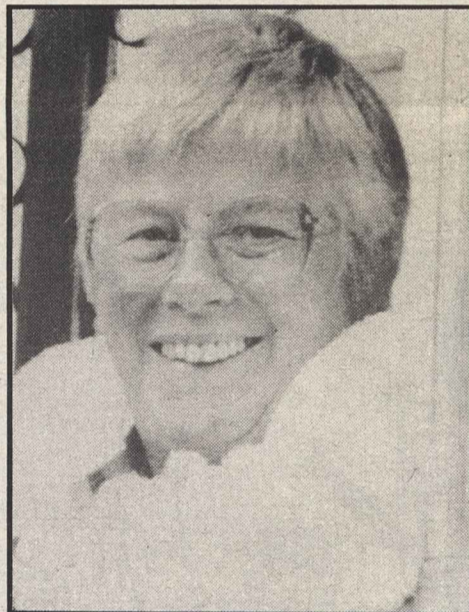
San Francisco—Rikki Streicher, a pioneer in San Francisco's gay civil rights movement and owner of two of the city's most famous lesbian bars, died August 21. She was 68.

In 1966 Streicher opened Maud's, which went on to become the country's oldest continuously running bar for lesbians. The bar closed in 1989 but later inspired "Last Call At Maud's," an acclaimed documentary that highlighted the bar's role in San Francisco history. The film premiered in 1993 and played on public television stations across the country.

Streicher also owned Amanda's, a popular lesbian dance club which opened in 1978.

Along with Dr. Tom Waddell, Streicher was active in helping to organize the Gay Games in San Francisco in 1986 and later helped create the Federation of Gay Games, an organization that oversees the games every four years.

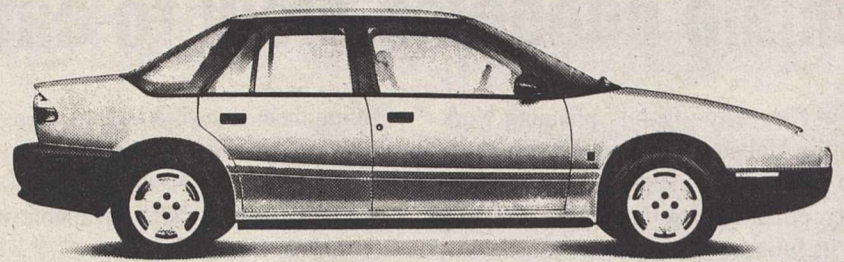
"Rikki Streicher was here at the beginning, fighting for civil rights for gay and lesbian people," said San Francisco Mayor Frank Jordan in a statement. "Her bar...provided a meeting place for lesbians in San Francisco at a time when there were few safe places for



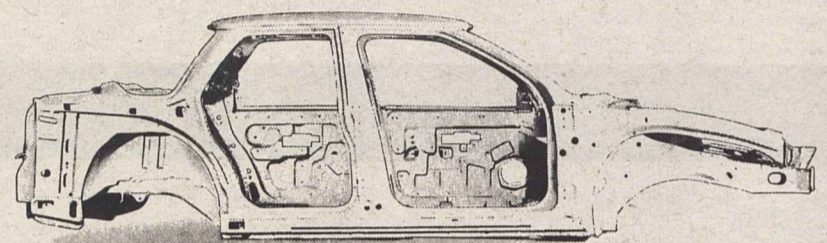
women to meet. She helped build a healthy, thriving lesbian community."

Streicher is survived by her partner of many years, Mary Sager.

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# Female condoms slow to catch on say health care workers

New York City—Family planning workers in the United States and Britain report mixed success convincing women to use the Reality condom, leaving some skeptical about its future.

"They're not the most attractive. They're not terribly easy to use and I think there's a need for greater education if they're going to be promoted," said Helen Axby, director of the Marie Stopes Health Clinics, Britain's version of Planned Parenthood.

Female condoms have been available in British drug stores for several years, with lukewarm response, said Axby, who noted they haven't been promoted very aggressively.

U.S. family planning clinics have been

offering them since last year. Although relatively few American women use them, many health workers hope sales will grow as the condom becomes widely available in drug stores here.

Sue Epler, director of the Planned Parenthood Clinic in New York's Bronx borough, said that, since February, the clinic has sold just 40 three-packs.

But Epler still is a strong advocate. She acknowledged that lengthy instructions women must read before using Reality may be a turnoff, but pointed out they are no more complex than those for a diaphragm or tampon.

"If you read the instructions and your familiar with your body it's not that hard to

figure out how to use this," she said.

One of Reality's biggest marketing challenges comes from the Food and Drug Administration, which required labels warning that roughly one in four users could get pregnant during a year of use. That compares with a 15 percent to 17 percent rate for other methods such as male condoms, diaphragms, or sponges.

Reality's supporters say the high rate was based on imperfect tests and assumes many women will use it incorrectly. They say with proper use, its failure rate is 3 percent.

In one of the few objective surveys thus far, two thirds of the 52 women surveyed at a health clinic in New York's Harlem neighborhood liked it, said Erica Gollub, a public

health specialist who did the study.

Men accepted it too, she said. "For better or worse, the men were happy to be relieved of the responsibility, which many didn't live up to in the first place."

But will women pay the \$2.75-per-condom price?

Mary Ann Leeper, head of manufacturer Wisconsin Pharmacal Co.'s female health division, says the condom is about as expensive per month as birth control pills, and there are no doctors' fees.

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## White House meets with AIDS/gay groups

*Discussions focus on AIDS czar position and AIDS discrimination*

Washington, DC—White House officials held a series of meetings with AIDS activists and gay/lesbian organizations the week of August 15, to discuss the restructuring of the AIDS czar position and how to address issues of AIDS discrimination. Carol Rasco, President Clinton's chief domestic policy adviser, and Patsy Fleming, acting national AIDS policy coordinator, held four meetings over four days.

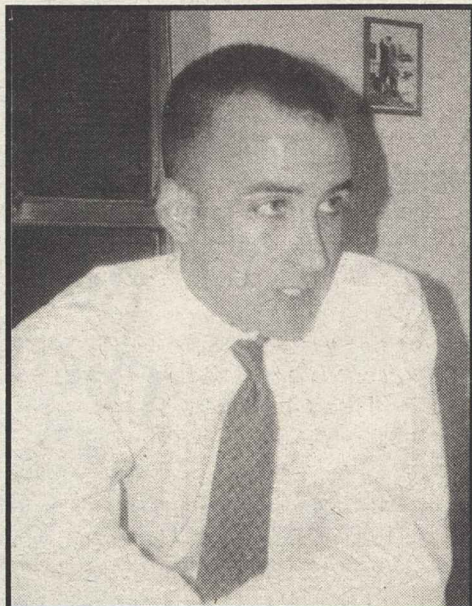
"The Clinton Administration has shown a higher level of commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS than any previous Administration," said Daniel Zingale, public policy director for Human Rights Campaign Fund, who attended one of the meetings. "Gay leaders delivered the message that the White House needs to do a great deal more."

According to the Washington Blade, White House spokesperson Keith Boykin said Rasco and Fleming are holding private meetings with members of the AIDS community as part of an "ongoing discussion" about the administration's response to AIDS.

The first of the meetings included representatives of the National Association of People With AIDS (NAPWA), AIDS Action Council, the American Foundation for AIDS Research, and openly gay Administration official Bob Hatoy. Rasco and Fleming reportedly did not reveal how they plan to restructure the AIDS czar position, but according to Bill Freeman of NAPWA, the office "would not be buried within Health and Human Services."

The second of the four meetings included Zingale, Ruth Eisenberg of NGLTF, Phill Wilson of AIDS Project Los Angeles and Letitia Gomez of the Latino Lesbian and Gay Organization, along with three ACT UP members. In that meeting, according to Zingale, Rasco and Fleming agreed to a new approach in HIV/AIDS policy making that will address the problem of anti-gay discrimination as part of combating the epidemic.

"Discrimination has hampered the battle



**"Gay leaders delivered the message that the White House needs to do a great deal more" — Daniel Zingale, HRCF Public Policy Director**

against AIDS from the very beginning, and continues to hamper education, prevention and research efforts today," said Zingale. "If we hope to end the epidemic, we must also end discrimination against those most vulnerable to the disease. An interdepartmental working group will make HIV/AIDS policy-making better coordinated and more efficient, and the participation of the Justice Department will help bring a new focus to discrimination."

Zingale said Rasco and Fleming promised that a new AIDS czar would be named "by September."

Many of those who attended the meetings emphasized the need for the new AIDS policy coordinator to be in a position to influence the White House and Congress. They suggested that the AIDS policy office be located in the White House, and that the person appointed to fill the position report directly to the President.

According to Tom Sheridan, treasurer of the American AIDS Political Action Committee, who attended the final meeting, said, "What we don't want is someone stuck in an office somewhere who advises the President on AIDS. It needs to be someone who can move the President and affect real change."

## Italy may allow more condom distribution

Milan, Italy—After quarreling over the blocking of an AIDS information leaflet, the leader of Italy's main gay and lesbian group said the government may take steps to allow the distribution of condoms outside pharmacies.

"This is the first time the Italian government has established official relations with our group," said Franco Grillini, president of Arcigay Arcilesbica, Italy's only national gay organization. "We're very satisfied."

Grillini met Aug. 22 with Interior Minister Roberto Maroni, who Grillini said agreed to propose a bill that would give legal recognition to the group and allow them to sell condoms and other material for the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases.

Italian law allows only pharmacies to sell condoms. Arcigay Arcilesbica—which says it has 20,000 members—has sold more than 3 million condoms illegally, Grillini said.

"In Italy, it's scandalous. Not only does the Ministry of Health do nothing to spread AIDS-prevention information, but it also attacks those who try to do something," Grillini said.

The meeting was precipitated by the confiscation Aug. 20 of an AIDS-information pamphlet distributed by the group. Authorities in Rimini, the popular beach resort on the Adriatic, said the pamphlet—entitled "The little book of love without risk"—contained "obscenities."

Maroni also agreed to measures aimed at curbing anti-gay violence and at mending rifts between members of the government and the homosexual community, Grillini said.

Gay and lesbian groups have often criticized the National Alliance party, the far-right members of Premier Silvio Berlusconi's governing coalition, for apparent anti-gay views and remarks.

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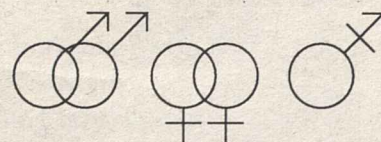
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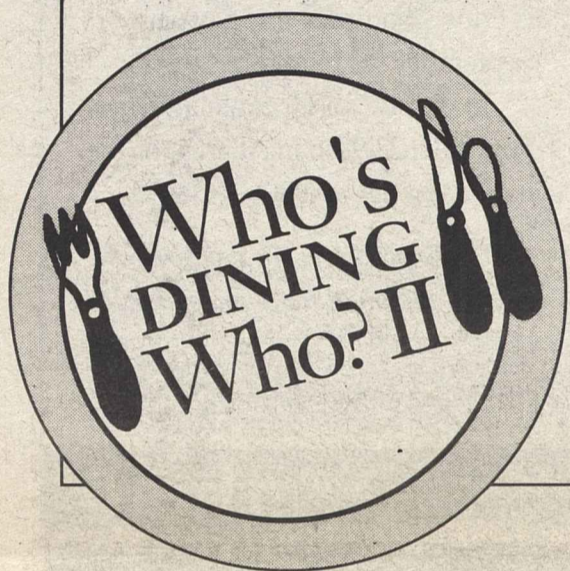
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Photo Courtesy of Skye Mason



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Dear David,

Thank you so much baby for 15 wonderful years together and for a lifetime of memories. You were so incredibly special and brightened everyone's life you touched, especially mine. I felt special just knowing you loved me. You made my life so full, and everything seems so empty since you left. You will never be gone from my heart though, and that will help me through the great emptiness I feel now.

You are in God's loving care now with so many of our friends and family, and I know that heaven is even more glorious with your presence.

Living is temporary, but loving is forever, and we will be together again. You will be sadly missed until that grand day.

I will always love you baby.

Jeff



Chuck Walker

Chuck Walker, 45, died on August 18, 1994, of complications due to AIDS.

Chuck took with him the love of Frank Bartkus, his lover and friend for almost 20 years. He left us all with the gift of a joyous life freely shared. He then allowed us to fully participate in his dying. As we move forward in time we will carry with us and will share with others we have not yet met.

Chuck was an aggressive contributor to

every community to which he belonged, from his work, to his neighborhood and social organizations. Most recently, we saw his heart and his feet firmly planted in the AIDS walk project. We are grateful his suffering is over. Ours continue.

Acknowledgments can be made to Project Open Hand or any other AIDS support organization.

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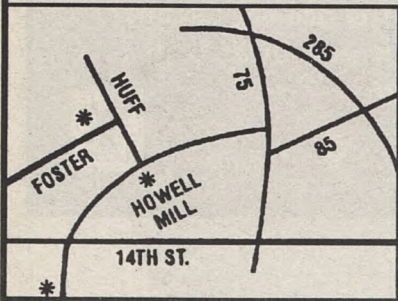
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## Theatre

Continued from page 1

All told, we counted up about \$100,000—as a direct result of us being denied the arts funding from Cobb County.”

Palmer points out, however, that the donations were made on a one-time basis. “Naturally, they weren’t going to come back every year and give us \$20,000. Now we’re back where we were last year,” he reports. “We had the extra \$100,000, but if you deduct the \$40,000 we had expected from the county, we were left with \$60,000. From that, we had to pay for our \$50,000 renovation project and had to buy a new lighting board this year. It pretty much wiped out that wind-fall. We’re pretty much back where we were last year at this time—with a few little twists.

“We know we’ve lost subscribers. Our renewals are running just over 50%. In the past, we’ve had 80-90% renewals. They’re still coming in, but it looks like it will be just over half of what we had last year. We certainly hope to get our numbers back up to close to 4,000 with new subscribers.”

Theatre in the Square has been able to hire a new development director to help it raise funds, but because of the controversy it had to cancel its big fundraiser last year, which was going to help erase the cost of the renovation. “Believe it or

not, we had planned to hold this roast of [Congressman] Newt Gingrich,” Palmer says. The juxtaposition of the conservative congressman and a facility that was alleged to promote the homosexual agenda would have made for an interesting scene. “All of that occurred in just about the same time frame as everything that went on, so we just ran out of time. I personally didn’t particularly care for the idea of Newt Gingrich,” recalls Palmer. “But we would have made enough money from the roast to make a huge dent in that renovation project debt.”

### Cautious optimism

Now that the Cobb County Commission has no influence over the operation, Theatre in the Square has been liberated to include some more controversial plays in its upcoming schedule, especially since the 1993-94 season was among its tamest in years.

This season started with a sterling new production of John Steinbeck’s “Of Mice and Men,” which opened in mid-August. Next comes “Keely and Du,” a play focusing on the question of abortion which promises to raise some real controversy (there’s what appears to be an onstage procedure). Charles Busch’s “Red Scare on Sunset” opens in early 1995. It’s a gender-bender farce about communist witch hunts in the 1950s.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18



Michael Horne (left) and Palmer Wells say the show must go on, even in Cobb County.

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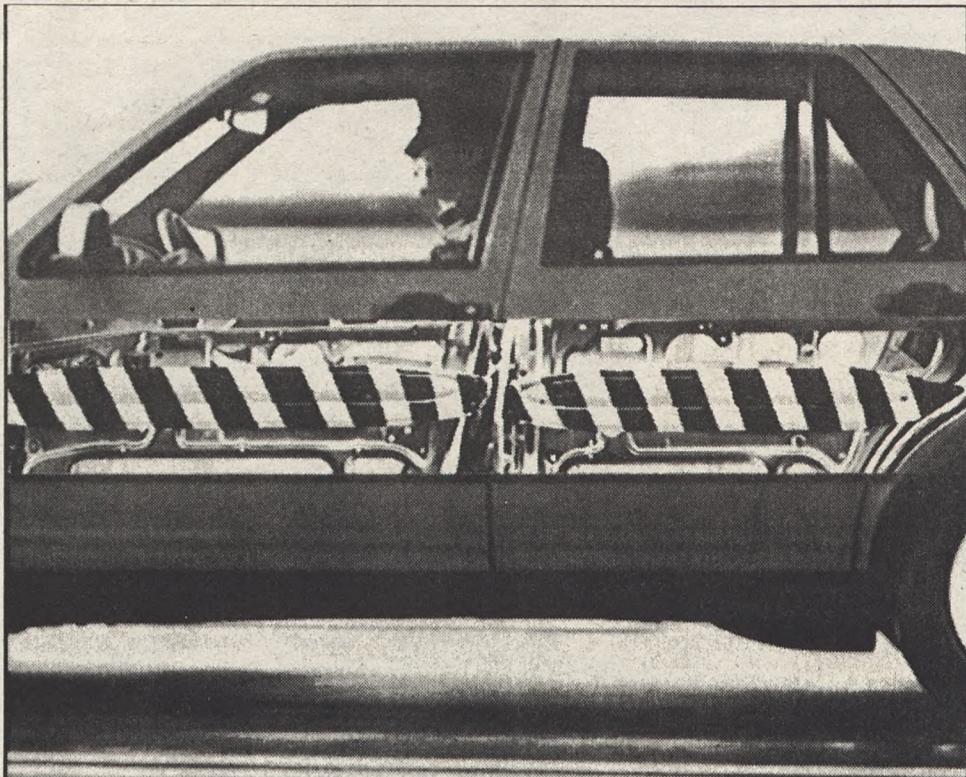
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## Theatre

Continued from page 17

This is followed by Henrik Ibsen's "An Enemy of the People," a 100-year-old play which can be easily seen as an allegory about what happened last year in Cobb County. After this will be a 25th anniversary production of the musical "Company" by Stephen Sondheim and George Furth, which has caused a bit of controversy of its own.

So why did the conservative Christians choose Theatre in the Square as the focal point of their fury? "We were the lightning rod for much of the controversy about arts funding," says Palmer. "So I guess we were the logical scapegoats. People want to blame somebody for the negative events that occurred. All because we did 'Lips Together,' which was characterized as promoting homosexuality. Fine, if that had been the truth, but it wasn't the truth. They had to lie about it in order to achieve their political purpose, which was two-fold actually: get rid of the arts funding, and adopt the anti-gay resolution. So they were anti-gay and anti-arts. Both of those happen to be emotional hot buttons. They only had to characterize the play as advocating homosexuality and perversion or however they put it to get people emotionally aroused. It was well orchestrated for that purpose.

"This has hurt our reputation," Palmer adds. "People simply identify us with producing pornographic theatre. A woman who had been at her hairdresser's overheard someone talking about this 'theatre on the square that shows those porno movies.' Who knows how much misinformation like that is out there? I know there have been sermons preached in churches, we've been told, directly against the theatre. There's been a campaign waged in the Baptist churches and conservative Methodist churches. A lot of that has to do with this anti-gay senti-

ment that seems to be so prevalent among conservative Christians."

Last year at this time, after the county had already yanked the arts funding, Michael Horne expressed concern that Cobb County might not yet be finished with them. "Obviously," he told us then, "there are some concerns that this could be only the beginning. They say for now, 'Okay, we cut your funding, so you're free to do whatever you want to do.' So, we do whatever we want to do. Then a year or two from now they decide, 'Well, we don't even want them in this county.' So they start to look for subtle ways to pressure us out. Suddenly the business license gets caught up in bureaucracy. A building inspector complains about something or other and we have to fix it suddenly. Just harassment. So if they don't want us here—if they don't want our kind of theatre here they can find ways to try probably to chase us out."

In the year since then, the theatre has indeed been harassed in subtle ways: an odd complaint about handicap access (it's actually been improved since the renovation); the sudden loss of its non-profit mailing permit; threatening phone calls to the box office.

Yet Palmer is adamant about staying in Marietta, even though there have been plenty of offers to move, including one from the City of Decatur. "I have to admit from the outset," he says, "we considered the County's action a slap in our face. That was our original thought—why should we stay here where they're so opposed to the arts and good theatre? And then Michael and I started thinking about our considerable investment in blood and sweat and tears and money, as well as the tremendous outpouring of support of our loyal followers who came forward to express their feelings. In addition, I'm not going to let someone chase me off. I'm going to stay here and fight."

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OCCASIONS

ANNIVERSARIES

Jenny Pierce and Alex Furlong celebrated their 1st anniversary on August 25.

Benny Frazier and Jeffrey Elstein celebrate 13 years of marital bliss on Labor Day.

On Sept. 1, Monie Gauthier and Auggie Parker celebrate their one year anniversary. They both say the honeymoon continues.



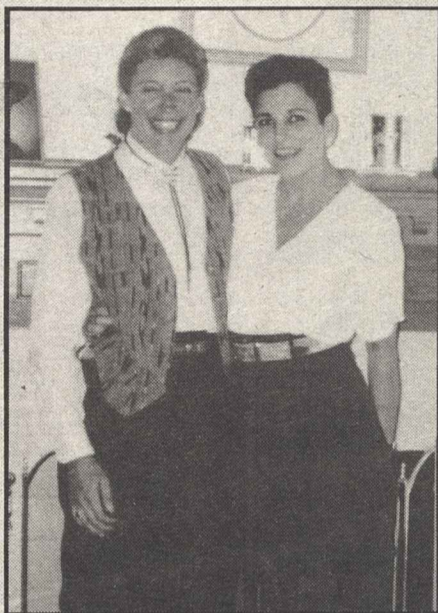
Benny Frazier and Jeffrey Elstein weren't together for these photos, but they have been together for 13 years on Sept. 5.

Congratulations to "SHAQ" and C.J., celebrating 8 months together on Sept. 5.

BIRTHDAYS

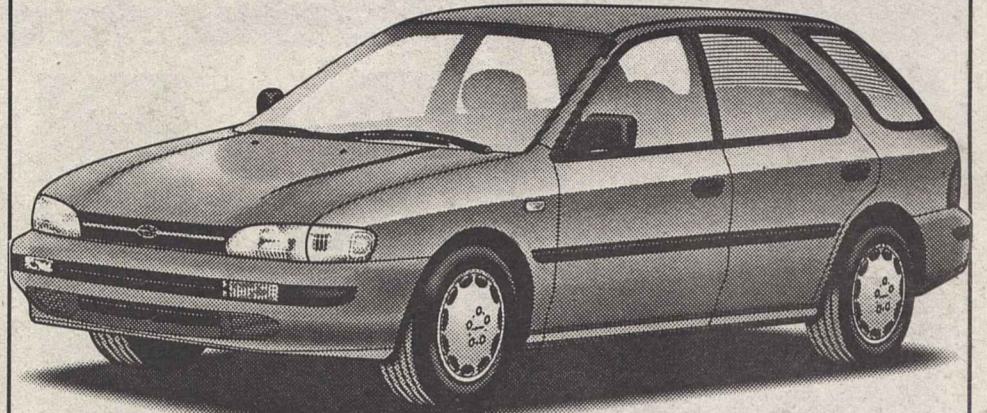
Michael Clark turns 41 on Sept. 2. His spouse, Bob McNeir will be treating him to a romantic dinner at Chow.

Happy 21st birthday to Clarence E. Johnson-Ali on Sept. 2.



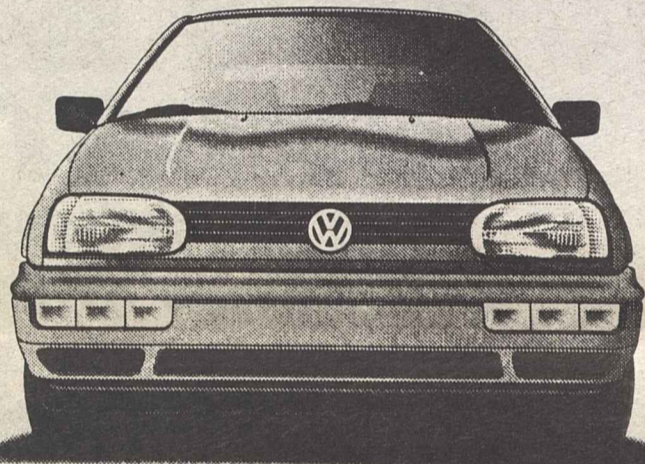
Monie Gauthier and Auggie Parker celebrate their first anniversary on Sept. 2.

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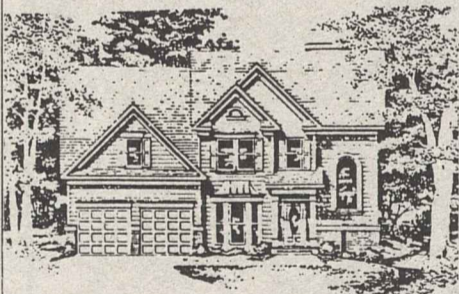
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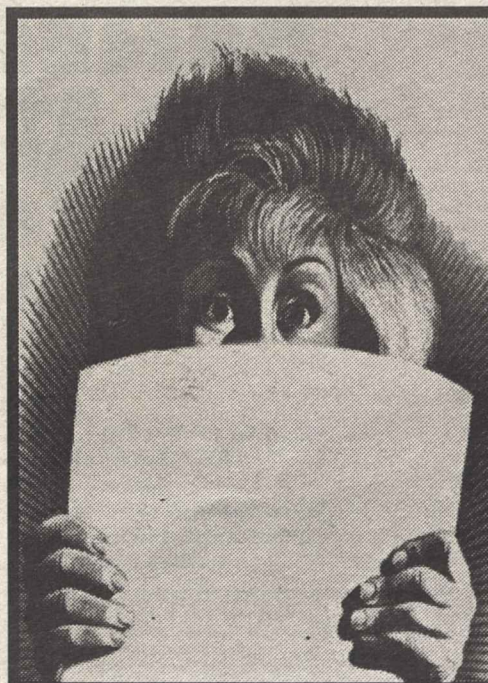
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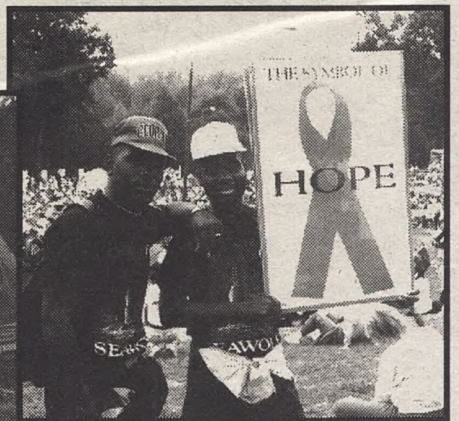


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# OUT & ABOUT

THE ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE OF SOUTHERN VOICE

## Lesbian Leather Mensch

Songwriter/comic Lynn Lavner mines humor from life as a "sexual outlaw"

by ADAM J. SANK

If you're Jewish, talking with comic/singer/songwriter Lynn Lavner is a bit like talking to a good friend of your mother's—a straight-shooting *bubee* with plenty of opinions and equal parts worry and wit. The difference is, your mother's friend is probably not a 5-foot-tall, leather-clad, lesbian mother of three.

Then again, you never know.

"I never feel conflicted being lesbian and Jewish," says Lavner. "These are two communities that have constantly been questioning things, are always debating and arguing and examining, never take the easy way out. I like to say I'm so Jewish I argue with myself," she jokes. "But both the lesbian/gay and Jewish communities are full of a lot of people who have lots of different opinions that they're not easily talked out of. I don't know if that's a weakness; I think it's a very nice thing."

Lavner will be the featured performer at this year's "A Night In the Wild: A Lesbian/Gay Party at Zoo Atlanta" on September 3. Her act, a unique mix of original songs and monologues, has been seen by audiences at venues ranging from the Sydney, Australia, Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras to the 1993 March on Washington to the 1988 and 1993 International Mr. Leather competitions. In addition, Lavner has appeared onstage at clubs, universities, and benefits in 40 states and five foreign countries and has recorded four albums on her own label, Bent Records.

"My act is one that is basically booked for lesbian and gay audiences," Lavner says. "I don't object to that, however the example I always give is that 'Fiddler on the Roof' is a Jewish show but it's not alien to gentile audiences. There are a lot of things about my act that have universal appeal, and I would love to have the opportunity to perform in front of more diverse audiences." She pauses a moment before adding, "But

at the same time never losing the flavor of my act."

That flavor—a rich mixture of both comic and tragic observations, commentaries, and anecdotes concerning the lesbian and gay community—prompted *The Advocate* to proclaim that there is no other lesbian songwriter so appealing to both gay men and women.

Perched on her piano bench, the always leather-clad Lavner accompanies herself as she sings original Broadway-type songs ranging from "Shelly, You've Gone Nelly on Me" to "Fine Young Men," a tribute to friends lost to AIDS which reportedly moves both audiences and Lavner herself to tears at every performance.

When asked why her act is so accessible to both women and men, Lavner responds, "Darned if I know, except that I was certainly never raised with and never developed discomfort about either men or women. Before I came out I dated men. I didn't fall in love with them, but they were very nice guys, some of whom now come to my shows with their wives. I've never wanted to remove myself from straight people, from men or from any other group because of how I live my life. I think we really deprive ourselves when we ghetto-ize."

Indeed, Lavner's own life sounds more like "The Brady Bunch" than, say "Vampire Lesbians of Sodom." She and her partner of 18 years have raised three daughters, now in their 20s. (Lavner's partner is the birth mother. "Not to belabor the point," Lavner quips, "but their father wasn't a tough act to follow.") Growing up with two mothers, Lavner's youngest daughter used to charge friends 25 cents apiece to come over to the house and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24



## A mighty Quinn

Novelist Eric Shaw Quinn spins a Southern gay tale in "Say Uncle"

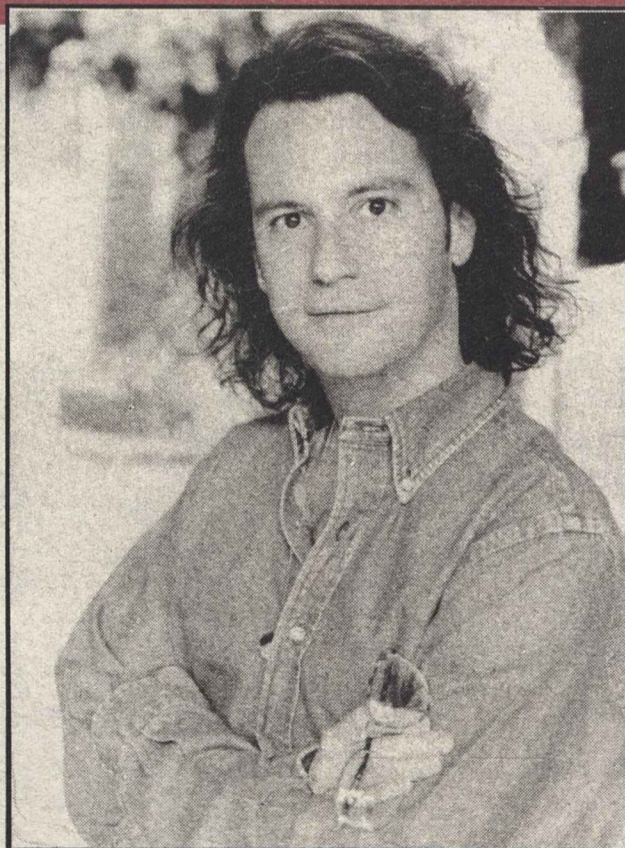
Eric Shaw Quinn is living proof that you can take the boy out of the South but you can't take the South out of the boy. Quinn has lived in Los Angeles now for almost three years, but with his Southern accent and his flare for metaphors, he invokes something akin to the language and intonations of my Tennessee grandmother.

Quinn's mixture of L.A. language and Southern-style metaphor is enough to make your head spin, as when he says of the Southern humidity, "My sinuses went condo when I stepped off the plane."

Quinn's newly released novel, "Say Uncle," is set in Columbia, S.C., where the writer grew up. "Say Uncle" is about a young gay man who inherits custody of his sister's baby when the parents die in an automobile accident. He must then battle the boy's paternal grandfather, a conservative senator, over custody of the infant.

The first half of the book tracks the court battle. The second half is the boy's account of growing up in the care of his eccentric uncle and his "nanny," a young gay French-Canadian.

Though the book jacket places Quinn from Natchitoches, La., he actually spent much of his childhood in a much smaller Louisiana town called Clinton. "Beautiful little town," he says, making the word "beautiful" into about five syllables. "Did you see 'Steel Magnolias'? It was filmed there."



Quinn's family moved from Clinton to Columbia when he was in about the sixth grade. "Columbia was this enormous city to me," he says. "I went to a school where more people were in attendance in the school than had lived in the town that I was from, and I went into absolute culture shock. I went to my room, and I hid there." He spent so much time reading and watching television that his concerned parents put him in drama school "to try to bring me out of myself."

Acting is still a big part of his dreams. "That's why I went to L.A.," he explains. "I would love to get back to acting. It's been a long time, and it's a big hole in my heart."

By the time Quinn moved to Los Angeles, the manuscript for "Say Uncle" had been long completed and had already received so many rejections that Quinn had given up on ever seeing it published. But he took the manuscript ("which I had been using as a doorstop at that time") to Los Angeles and continued to search for an agent. His novel is finally on bookstore shelves, and he already has a film option from Propaganda Films (a division of Polygram Entertainment).

Writing the book took 1½ to 2 years, Quinn says, but "the whole process from beginning to end has taken ten years—getting an agent, getting somebody interested," he explains. "You know, in the Reagan years a book about a single gay man raising a child was, I don't think, as popular an idea."

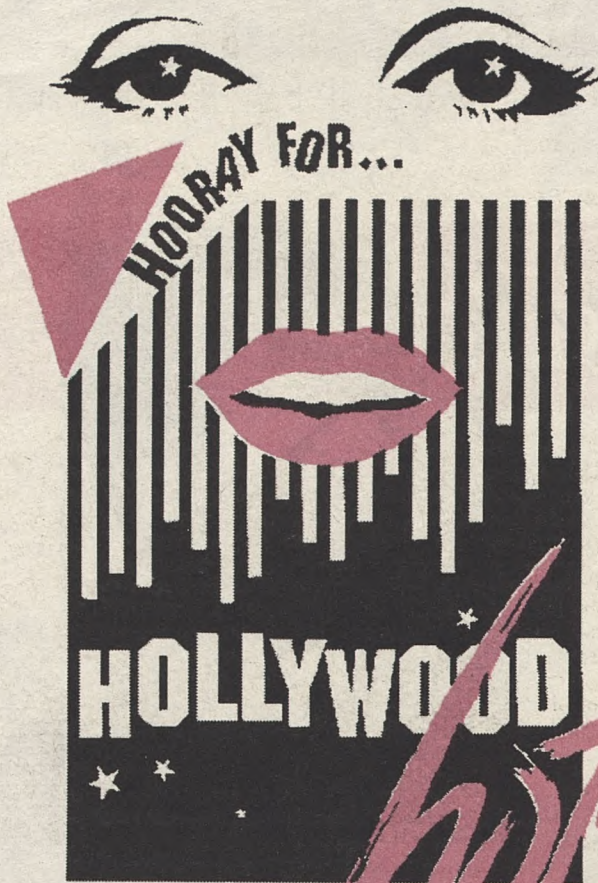
Quinn hopes that people will not see "Say Uncle" as "just a gay book."

"We spend way too much time focusing on the differences—we do and straight people do—rather than the similarities," he says. "I would like to raise a child as much as my sister, who is not gay."

At Quinn's recent signing in Columbia the crowd was mostly straight, so he may be reaching that broader audience. He suspects, however, that some of those people showed up to see if they were in the book.

"Say Uncle" is Quinn's attempt to redefine family values and to offer encouragement to gay youth. "I hope that some agonizing ninth grader who has fallen in love and thinks he's the worst thing in the world will go to the library and read 'Say Uncle,' because it's not been put in the gay section where everybody'll watch if you go pick up *one of those things*, and see that it's okay," he says. "I just happen to have brown eyes, and I just happen to be gay. I guess that's the point, it's not the labels and not the differences, it's the similarities."

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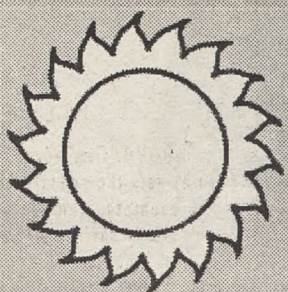
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**Lynn Lavner**

Continued from page 21

see the couple leave in leather to go dancing. Speaking about her daughters with palpable adoration, Lavner describes the challenges of gay parenting. "I suspect they struggled with it more than we knew about. But the truth is, every kid struggles. A rich kid struggles to establish a set of values. A black kid struggles with racism. And little girls struggle with sexism and little boys struggle with the macho crap. To think there's something different about experiencing a lesbian or gay family is very silly. There is no idyllic."

As dedicated to her family as Lavner seems, she is also fiercely committed to putting on the most professional and entertaining show possible. Over the last 16 years, among the thousands of events at which she has appeared, she has cancelled only four performances. "You don't always feel so wonderful every time you do a show," she says, "but I've worked with women with breast cancer and men with AIDS, people far more challenged than I in getting themselves onto a stage with a smile on their face, and if they can do it, damn it, I can do it." Lavner has a deep appreciation for the polished, glamorous stylings of entertainers like Al Jolson, Marlene Dietrich, Fred Astaire, and even Elvis Presley. "They all had a lot of heart," she says, "and a show business style and devotion you rarely see anymore. I hope I put some of that into my show."

Lavner is decidedly not a folkie. "I missed Woodstock the first and second times, and I don't intend to go the third time either," she deadpans. "I always say I was born indoors, and I take that as an omen."

Although extremely sensitive to the human experience, Lavner has been billed as "America's least politically-correct enter-

tainer." When asked to elaborate, she says, "I had a conversation with Larry Kramer, of all people, and he said, 'I don't know anymore what politically correct means.' I think it probably started with an attempt to be more sensitive, more inclusive of people, but it has been misused and abused to the point where people are afraid to express themselves except in the most vanilla, watered-down, inoffensive terms. I'm sorry to see that. I like to be on the cutting edge."

And what's with the leather? Lavner gleefully proclaims, "Leather is never simply fashion. It's a way of life, and it has a very special place in my private life. You can read between the lines." In a more serious vein, she says, "Onstage, it's a visual reminder that we are different, as much as you hear people say, 'Oh, we're just like everyone else except for what we do in bed.' I think we're different from everyone else *except* for what we do in bed. And [the leather] reminds us that we are basically sexual outlaws in the minds of a lot of people. We have to learn to become comfortable about that."

Excited about her upcoming appearance at the Zoo Party, which will also include singer Ramona Dugger, the Gospel Girls, and emcee Leigh McClelland, Lavner says, "What you will see in my performance is me with all the water boiled off. The real Lynn Lavner is a lot more ordinary and less amusing than the person onstage."

And for once, you get the sense that Lynn Lavner is not telling the truth.

*A Night In the Wild: A Lesbian/Gay Party at Zoo Atlanta, to benefit Christ Covenant MCC, is Sept. 3. Tickets are available at Brushstrokes, Charis Books and Outwrite Bookstore. Tickets are \$15 and \$25 in advance and \$20 and \$30 at the gate. For more information call (404) 292-9969.*

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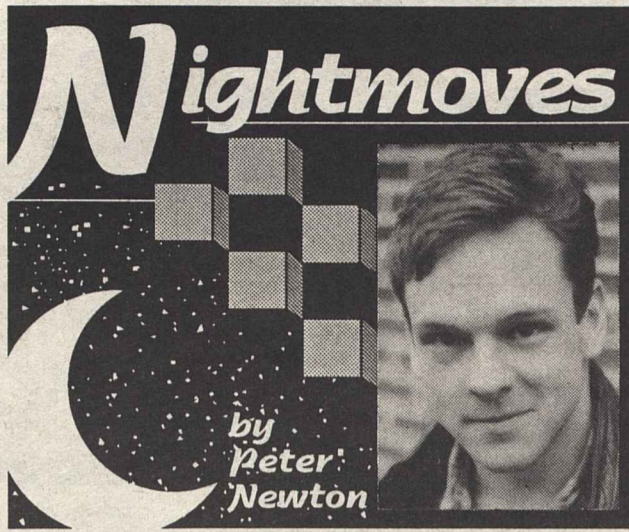


September always depresses the hell out of me. Not that it's the end of summer, mind you. Officially, autumn doesn't begin until September 23. And not a moment sooner. I always associate this month with going back to school, which of course means getting serious, making new friends and, in general, growing up. I hate when that happens. And I will try to ignore the fact that summer is ending.

First off, let me recommend a film at Cinéfest that is a must-see, as if just about everything Cinéfest shows isn't. **Suture** runs through Thursday, September 1, so if you're not going to a movie tonight then skip this paragraph. Two San Francisco area filmmakers wrote, directed and produced this Hitchcock-inspired thriller about who we are on the inside vs. who we are on the outside. Enough said. Except a quick press blurb from Elizabeth Pincus of LA Weekly, "[Suture] is part wiseass, part glorious gimmick! It's inventive enough to inspire renewed hope in the unlimited possibilities of cinema."

He was a man. He died of AIDS in 1984. His name was Warren Johnston, and he mattered enough that his friend, Atlanta playwright Rebecca Ranson, wrote the play **Warren** play based on his life. Ranson is now the Artistic Director of SAME and OutProud Theater, which is celebrating its 10th Anniversary Season this week. "This has been a decade of loss and learning for the gay community," says Ranson. "For me and for many of the actors and audiences around the country, 'Warren' is theater as ritual, the place where grieving, remembering, celebrating, and teaching do take place." "Warren" plays September 1-25 and is directed by Carol Mitchell-Leon, who played Rebecca in the original production and who will be playing opposite her husband, Kenny Leon, in the Alliance Theatre's production of "A Raisin in the Sun" this October. Sunday, September 4, is "Singles Night Sunday" to see "Warren," and the price of a ticket also includes a reception. Call 609-9590 for reservations.

By day and night, there'll be music at Underground Atlanta four days in a row, September 2-5, as part of the 1994 **Montreux Atlanta Music Festival**, celebrating our Southern musical roots with some classic blues, jazz and local entertainers. Usually, Montreux Atlanta is held in Piedmont Park, but the organizers thought they'd give the park a break this year from the wear and tear that a major outdoor gathering can inflict. Saturday, September 3 is a special tribute to Curtis



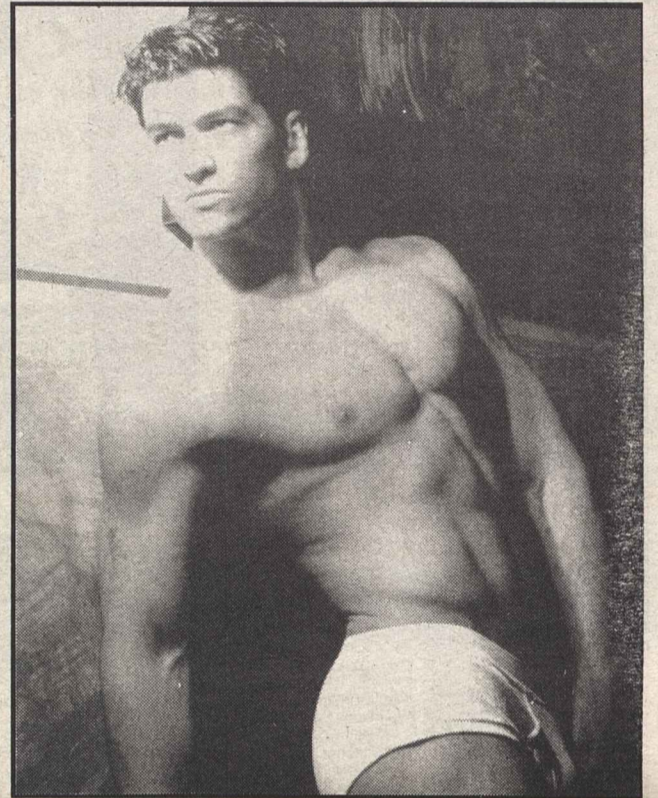
Mayfield. Sunday's a tribute to Texas music, with fireworks and a laser show to wind up the evening. There are too many performers to list. Wander by. Or call 817-6815 for more info on the complete lineup.

What does the term **Cowboy Envy** conjure in your mind? For me, it describes an illness that has plagued me most of my adult life. If you can commiserate, head on over to Decatur Saturday, September 3, at 7 p.m. where they're havin' a concert on the square by these gals called Cowboy Envy. Drawing upon repertoires of artists Roy Rogers, Sons of the Pioneers, Gene Autry, and others lesser known but just as good, Cowboy Envy will drown your sorrows in old-time cowboy music. Members Berne Poliakoff, DeDe Vogt and Kathleen Hatfield—better known as Frenchie, Too Short and Buffalo K—will be joined by Suzette, Brownie and Old Yeller for an evening of singin' under the stars. Bring grub.

He's not Hollywood, but he's hot. That's **Kris Lord**, star of newsstand (Playgirl, Advocate Men, etc.) and video-screen (numerous adult features). A friend of a friend of mine has seen him in both venues of entertainment (have I removed that far enough so as not to implicate myself?) and recommends the Monday, September 5 appearance of Mr. Lord at Velvet. He's back by popular demand, as they say. Doors open at 10 p.m. I think this guy should write a book. There's got to be a story about a guy who travels around making a living off the

way he looks. Maybe I'm romanticizing what could very well be a hobby. He could be a mechanic in Simi Valley, California, for all I know.

And finally, here's some advance notice on the event of the soon-to-be-fall season. **Hollywood Hots** will be an evening of live entertainment to be held on Cheshire Bridge Road, behind the Heretic, on September 10. The outdoor event will feature some of the Southeast's finest entertainment and will be emceed by Charlie Brown, Lilly White and Peg. This year's theme, "1994 U.S.O. Tour" will help relive the days of the old wartime revues. Get your dog tag for admission at Brushstrokes, The Boy Next Door, and Malepak. Or call Hollywood Hots at 321-3983. Hollywood Hots raises funds for Atlanta area AIDS service organizations. This year the recipients are Jerusalem House and AIDS Survival Project.



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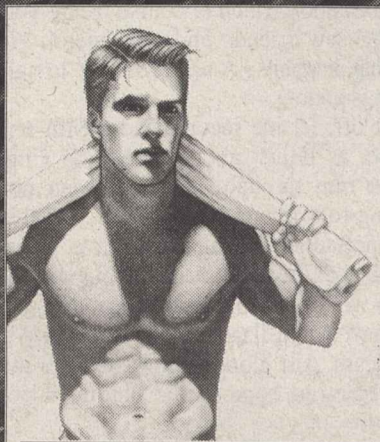
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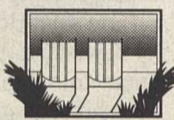
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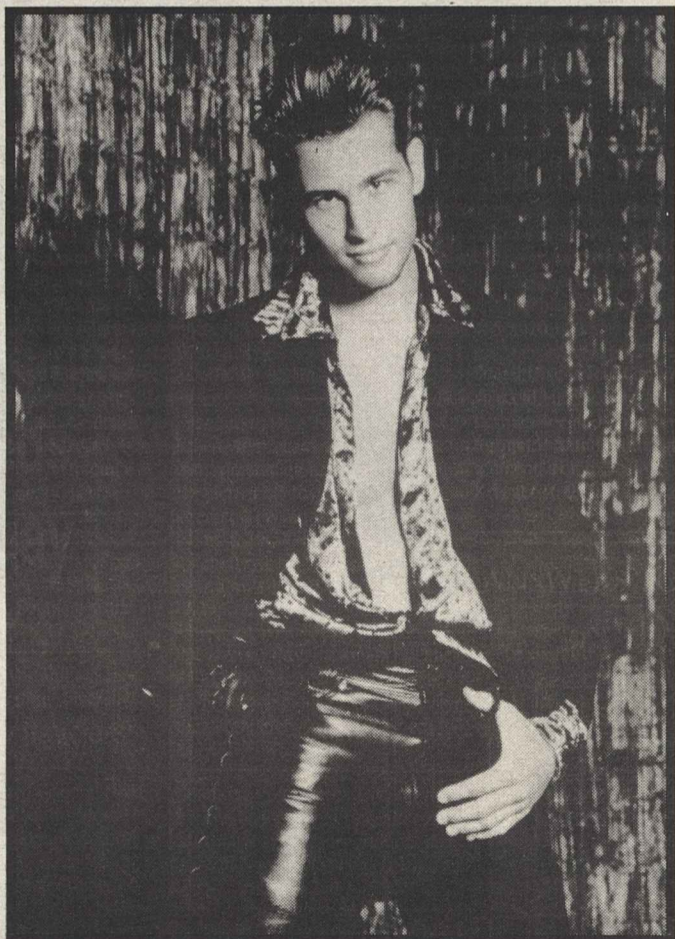
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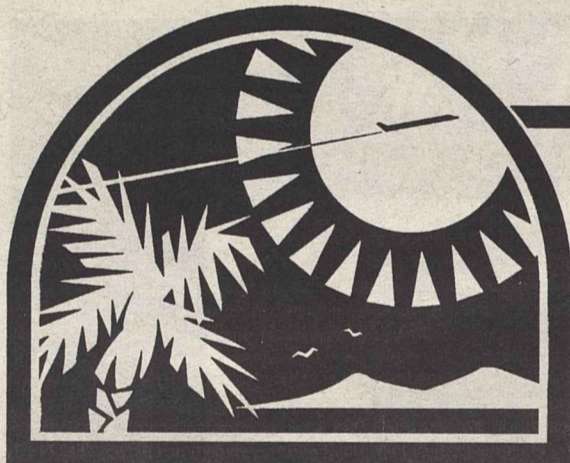
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# "Angels in America" soars to new heights at the Alliance

(Note to readers: It is not usually our policy to review a play after its first preview; therefore, what follows is a look at this production and its impact.)

Watching "Angels in America: Millennium Approaches" at the Alliance, I grasped something about the play. Although I had seen the New York production and read the script, until I saw Kenny Leon's staging I had not realized it is the most religious play I've ever seen. Not religious in terms of Christian, Mormon, or Jewish precepts (which crop up frequently), but rather in terms of the quest for spirituality.

A lot of this has to do with the insight and spirituality of the director, who has clearly brought his own vision to Tony Kushner's script. This is a highly personal, intimate and beautifully wrought version of "Millennium" which takes the play to places it has not been until now.

"Angels in America" is subtitled "A Gay Fantasia on National Themes." The Broadway production, staged by George C. Wolfe, plays up the "fantasia" part, filling the stage with dazzling sights and humor but a slight sense of detachment. The Alliance production is different. Kenny Leon has put his personal imprimatur on the production. It is not so dazzling or eye-popping but is infused instead with warmth and spirituality, reflecting the director's own values.

Leon has set his "Millennium" in a crumbling parthenon—again, a religious metaphor—where events come and go but there is always a feeling another force is overhead looking down. The director has taken theatre back to its Greek origins for this production (and unlike the New York version), the Angel descends to the stage and out to the audience like a Greek deus ex machina (literally a god on a machine—in this case, actress Jessica Phelps descending on wires) to alter the course of history.

The Alliance has mounted "Millennium" with a brilliant set design by Marjorie B. Kellogg, and clothed it in highly original and inventive costumes by Deborah M. Dryden. Phillip DePoy's synthesized music is energetic and moving, nearly religious in approach—fitting Leon's concept.

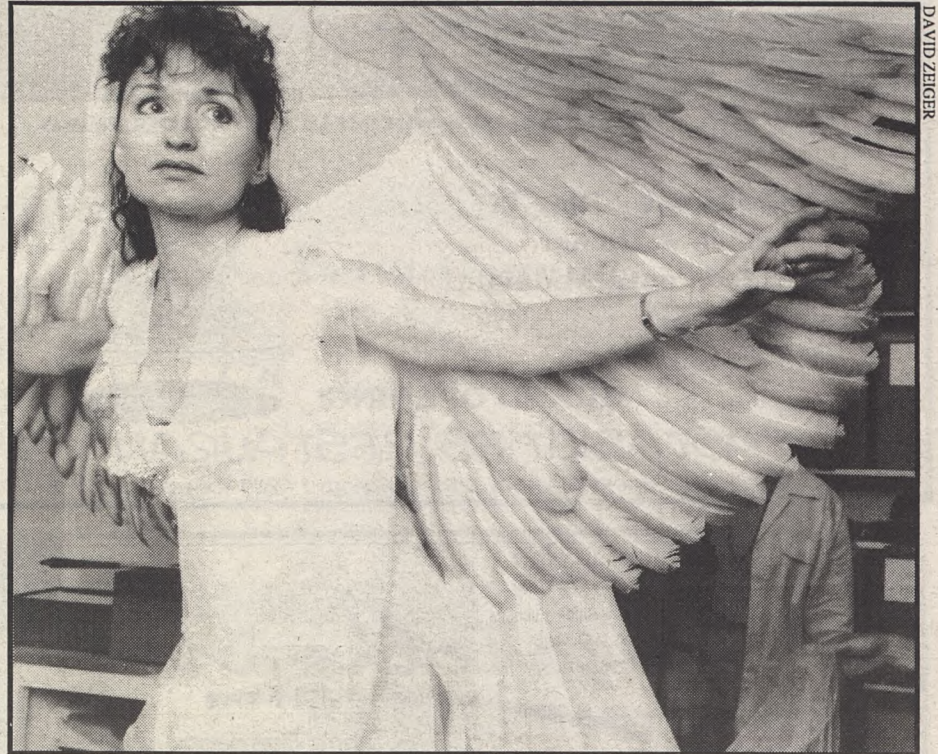
Yet the vision and the wonderful design would be meaningless were it not for eight extraordinary performances. Terry

Beaver as Roy Cohn is a revelation. His version of Cohn is not so bombastic and furious as we've seen it before. He is more intense, quieter, hypnotically seductive and alluring, especially as he spins his web around the naive Joe Pitt (Hank Stratton). He makes Roy more believable—and far more dangerous. Stratton also brings a special kind of intensity to his role, making Joe feel more lost, and in far more need of spiritual salvation.

Brenda Bynum does several hysterical turns as Hannah Pitt, a rabbi, a doctor, and Ethel Rosenberg. Rhoda Griffiths as Harper is a master at showing both internal struggle and external release. Jessica Phelps does several terrific bits, though her best realized ones are as a Mormon real estate agent sneaking a cigarette and as a homeless person. Tyrone Mitchell Henderson is stunning as Belize, a nurse who knows all and sees all, and as Mr. Lies, who transports all.

It is hard to distinguish any performances as being standouts in such a cohesive ensemble cast, yet there are two which are astounding—Andrew Polk as Louis and T. Scott Cunningham as Prior. Polk combines Louis's weakness, his struggle against the spectre of AIDS, his search for justice and order in the universe, and his inclination to be bitchy into a coherent and cohesive whole. When he connects with Joe at the end, what should be a happy moment is transformed by the actor into a sad act of accepting what is not a nice part in him. That's not the script; it's the actor.

Cunningham as Prior has the best bits and funniest lines, thanks to Kushner. But the actor takes what he's given and goes beyond. Cunningham is funny and heartbreaking simul-



DAVID ZEIGER

taneously. He's in a constant internal battle—both against AIDS and his destiny as the messenger of hope, touching all kinds of emotions, using each one as a stepping stone to focus his character.

Kenny Leon's spirituality permeates this production. It is an extraordinary vision of "Millennium" which will invite comparison to the New York production. Let it. It is far warmer, more personal and ultimately more humane. "Angels in America" at the Alliance will be one of the best plays you'll see this year—or any year.

MICHAEL KAPE

"Angels in America" runs through October 2 at The Alliance. Call 733-5000 for tickets.

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**EAT**

A FOOD COLUMN BY GARY KAUPMAN

Yet another new eatery has found its way into the attractive space on the northwest corner of Peachtree and Third Street. Restaurants along this strip have a history of doing well at lunch (when the hoards pour out of surrounding office buildings in search of a breath of fresh air) and die at night (when most of the folks on the streets are dead-set on battling their way to seats at the Fox.)

The owners of **Cooley's Cafe** (710 Peachtree St., 607-7736) may just have found the right concept at the right time. The menu is a simple combination of down-home (fried catfish, well cooked veggies, pork chops and steaks) and generic popular (burgers, nachos, chicken fingers) with a surprise entry of white bean chili (navy beans, rotisserie chicken, green chilies topped with Jack cheese) thrown in for good measure.

The long, narrow dining room is broken by several simple arches. White walls are decorated with bright paintings; fresh flowers and live plants abound. The chairs are those profoundly comfortable big wooden library numbers that invite you to sit, sip and talk for hours. There's outdoor seating, though the chairs aren't nearly so fine.

I've had but one quick meal at Cooley's and spoken to friends who lunched there the same week. Our verdicts have been similar: pretty darn good.

Fried catfish fillets are moist and mild, encrusted with a light, crisp batter that's not the least bit greasy. Hush puppies, also devoid of grease, are dense and spicy but not mouth searing. Add sides of really tasty, long-cooked turnip greens and coarse slaw slathered with mild mayo dressing and you've got a totally satisfactory way to spend \$6.95. My only gripe is a clunky side of tartar sauce that demands the addition of some pickles or capers or something to relieve its monotony. But the catfish is fine (and healthier) without it, so who cares?

I would never have ordered a dish described as spicy peanut chicken in a restaurant that also serves fried catfish, but the Taste Sheriff was hankering for Asian vittles and had fought me tooth and nail about returning to Chin Chin for a rerun of our meal there two weeks ago.



But his large plate of incredibly tender chicken pieces slathered in a dark, spicy, soy-based sauce and served over a mound of white rice had him grinning from ear to ear. (I'd bet a slice of chocolate ice box pie that the chef or owner at Cooley's has worked for the Peasant Corp.—nobody else manages to make fully cooked white meat chicken this moist and tender.)

Sides of skin-on mashed potatoes and blackeyed peas aren't exactly regionally correct accompaniments to the Pac Rim chicken, but both were mighty tasty. A \$4.25 plate of four veggies would be a reasonable and satisfying way to spend your dining time and dollars here.

A simple white layer cake (infused with a squirt of key lime juice), draped in an equally simple white icing is a great way to give your kid a sweet treat without making it difficult for your adult to walk to the car. Good stuff.

Service is friendly and efficient. Prices run as high as \$13.95 (for the steak) but most are in the \$4-8 range. Check it out.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

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Continued from page 28

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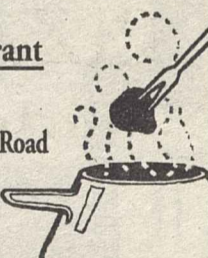
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# EAT

A FOOD COLUMN BY GARY KAUPMAN

Continued from page 29

## Very Good

A gaggle of us descended on **Trés Bien** (121 E. Ponce de Leon Ave., 687-8070), the tiny Decatur sandwich/takeout shop, a couple of Saturdays ago in search of lunch. In addition to sandwiches, we found a simple but elegant brunch menu that held more allure.

I ordered French toast made from banana-berry bread pudding—dense, sweet and rich even before you add maple syrup. Add a couple of slices of perfectly cooked smoky bacon and you've got a very tasty way to clog your arteries for a mere \$4.75.

More expensive, if not any healthier, eggs Benedict (substitute sautéed salmon for the Canadian bacon, add lemon and dill to the hollandaise and sprinkle with capers) was filling and altogether enjoyable, too.

A conventional Benedict is also available, as is a more outré version served on a wild mushroom risotto cake, topped with prosciutto and sauced with roasted garlic hollandaise. But I think I'll try the carrot and zucchini pancakes next time.

There's a small selection of decent salads, prepackaged take-home entrees that I've not tried, and an attractive batch of boutiquey wines. And the cookies are très tasty.

## Tea Time?

A couple of years ago, when I returned from a trip to Seattle, I went on and on about the fact that you could buy a fabulous cup of coffee on most any corner in that city. Since then Atlanta has sprouted a dizzying collection of java outlets with little sign of abatement in sight.

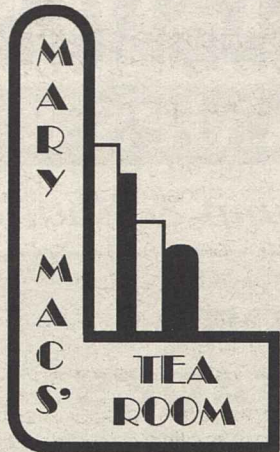
**Aurora** has opened a neighborhood savvy store in L5P and will soon be selling its beans and their produce at Piedmont and Monroe—right across from the first **Cari-bou Coffee** outlet in town. And **Starbuck's** (the big guys in Seattle, Vancouver, Chicago and D.C.) is set to pounce on the Atlanta market—mostly in the 'burbs, but Va-Hi is also on the site shopping list.

All this suggests to me that it's time for tea. Tea salons are popping up in N.Y.C., Boston, and L.A. and may be just the thing for Atlanta, given our penchant for iced and sweetened Luzianne.

And words like Oolong and Earl Grey conjure up images that are a tad more genteel than those wrought by Sumatra gold and dark roast Ethiopian, which is cool by me.

Speaking of coffee, if you haven't been by **Mocha** at 1424 N. Highland to see the show of Mike Luckovich's political cartoons, you need to do so before September 21. Many of the drawings are gay-themed and manage to be funny, sensitive, and scathing all at once. The coffee and confections are tasty, too.

And speaking of Seattle, when I was there a couple of weeks ago most of the corner coffee carts were gone—replaced by Starbuck's stores and condom carts. Both are (primarily) staffed by attractive and affable young gay men, which suggests a whole new take on Mort Sahl's (or was it pre-TV Bob Newhart's?) old (air)line, "Coffee, tea, or me?"



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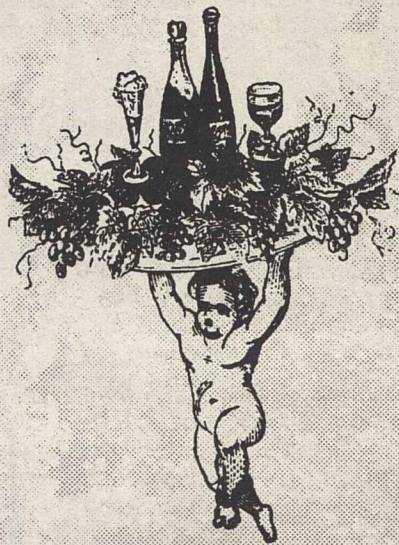
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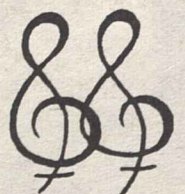
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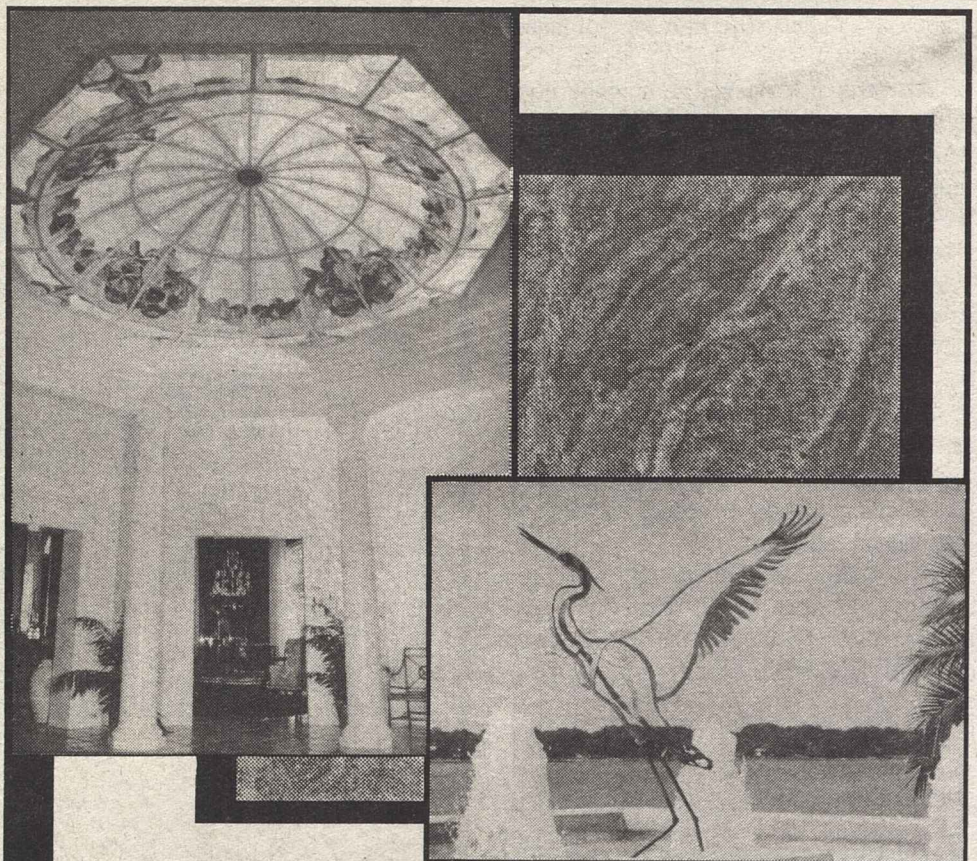


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MARIA HELENA DOLAN

THIS ONE HOT  
EARTHSHAKIN' OBSERVATIONS

the weeds first crept and then leapt back despite heavy mulching.

But I derive satisfaction from the work itself, as well as the end results. Several times now, I've stooped amid the plants, weeding, and drivers-by call out "We love what you've done here! It makes the drive so much better!" Joggers, walkers, and cyclists have likewise chimed in.

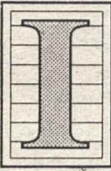
True, zombie dolts still throw trash here. But the volume has significantly reduced, since the land no longer appears abandoned. Instead, it's a pleasant urban spot amidst urban troubles.

Frankly, I think our congressional buffoons made a gross mistake with the prevention provisions in the recently-defeated crime bill. Yeah, sure, midnight basketball is fine to deter urban kids from the streets. But why not also fund gardening programs, so kids can finally learn a sense of mastery (and wonder) that they receive nowhere else in their unfulfilled lives? They can reclaim wastelands in their own neighborhoods. They can finally understand what it entails, physically and psychically, to tend something, to get it to grow, and to enjoy the fruits of your own labors—and also how it feels when dickheads thoughtlessly trash in a moment what you have spent months creating. If you own nothing and have nothing to take care of, how will you ever learn this lesson?

Statistically, I'm willing to wager that dedicated gardeners don't generally participate in activities such as drive-by shootings, car jackings, and vicious vandalism...for one thing, you're too busy. For another, your energies are redirected. For a third, the whole issue of power assumes a different dimension.

The only power many kids learn from their situation is the pay-off you get from exercising power over others: "I'm gonna fuck you up." Yes, there is a power in messing up someone else. Something to brag about, to laugh about, to give you a sense of self acting in the world.

So what a socially useful thing, then, it would be, to expand existing gardens-in-schools programs. What a socially useful thing, too, to reach those who've dropped out of school. And what a socially useful thing to get the really disenfranchised into the soil and among the flowers, instead of under the soil amid the wreaths.



believe in magic.  
And I believe in dreams...

Grace Slick piped that affirmation from my turntable (remember those?) to my cerebral cortex over and over again, eons ago. Despite its import in my life, I hadn't really thought of nor played the song in months. But, the full Moon (in Aquarius, no less) last Sunday brought it rushing back on the heels of heavy sense impressions.

I'd spent an erotically intense weekend exploring the outer limits of love and sensuality with my...what should we call her? My Womom, my lover, mi novia, mi querida, girlfriend, old lady, bsherez, that one. The shimmering radiance of the Moon only enhanced the silvered intensity of feeling passing continually between us.

As we left the restaurant after 10, we decided to drive by my plot on Ponce de Leon, which may/may not be featured soon in the *Journal's* "City Life" section. Actually, it's my plot at Charis which interests them at this time, so we'll see.

However, both plots reflect my penchant for lushness and wildness, as well as my interest in admixing vegetables, herbs, flowers, and ornamentals. This space, though, seemed that night to radiate delights under the illuminating lunar gaze.

Moonflowers trumpeted their connection with Diana herself as they opened wide to almost a handspan, a nacreous white against the vines which were such a dark green that seemed almost black. Their sinuous scent wafted in the air with sensual indolence as they wantonly displayed themselves against their fencing.

The Four O'Clocks trumpeted their knee-high pleasure at being open under the brilliant moon, splashing canary yellow and intense scarlet petals against the dark. Their heady smell thronged and commingled with that of the abundant moonflowers.

Not to be outdone, the 12 foot high Butterfly Bush's lush purple flowers beckoned with aromatic temptations all their

own. Hanging in bunches like tiny grapes, the swollen buds invited ardent admirations.

The spicy scent of the thick stand of tall and sturdy Purple Ruffles Basil also demanded a face amid the leaves, seeking the source of that enchanting smell.

It's hardly surprising that the Moon then caught two Womyn locked in an impassioned kiss on the Decatur sidewalk before this sensuous bounty. It bore all the sweetness and intensity of a fever dream. Yet it was no delirious dream; magic perhaps, but also, a realized dream.

Reality had been transformed. Literally. Not just our perception of it. Here was a living example of what I call "Urban Land Reclamation." When I first negotiated for stewardship of this plot, it held head-high weeds and an abundance of trash. The owner had tried to get this pretty rich soil paved over for a parking lot! Horrors!

Two entire days of hacking at flesh-tearing blackberry vines and the loss of quarts of sweat while mowing, scything, and macheteing produced a near-level field. Then, a tiller made a few vegetable rows. Some friends and I strung a wire fence a few feet from the sidewalk, to serve as the demarcation between the public and private areas.

For curb appeal, I planted things for visual and olfactory interest (for both humans and butterflies): elephant ears, bachelor buttons, viburnum, butterfly bush, catnip, dahlias, lantana, dianthus, and the aforementioned sensualists.

Behind the fence is my beloved dwarf nectarine, as well as all sorts of greens, cukes, melons, maters, corn, nasturtiums, onions, chives, comfrey, fennel, basil, lettuces, etc. depending on the season.

True, I suffer casualties, because I'm not there every day to oversee my beauties. Nor is there a house on the property to discourage pilferage; tomatoes and sunflowers in particular take heavy hits here. And yes, with all this infernal rain,

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OUTLINES

**DANA STEVENSON**

**How long in Atlanta:** 2 years  
**Relationship Status:** Definitely in Love  
**Last Book Read:**  
 "The Holotropic Mind"  
 by Dr. Stanislav Grof  
**Pet peeve:** Dishonesty



"I attribute a lot of my personal growth, a lot of my inner strength, a lot of my understanding and acceptance of myself to my relationship," says Dana Stevenson. "I didn't really have the catalyst for those things here in Atlanta, but I have this kind of wonderful love that pulled me in, and it's just been amazing."

Dana first glimpsed her true love at a k.d. lang concert, but they were not destined to meet that night. "I thought, oh my God, that woman's so gorgeous," Dana remembers, "but she was with a guy, so I thought, oh, well, she's probably straight. I spent a lot of time just watching her and watching her, but I was too shy to speak to her. I just stood there and appreciated her beauty."

"Then, about a month later, I was walking down Highland, past a hair salon, and there she was, working inside. I started dropping by there to buy things just so I could feel her hand when she gave me my change. I gave her an invitation to an art opening and she came and we talked all night. She asked me to go hiking with her after that, and we've been together ever since," Dana says elatedly.

Since that time, Dana and her partner have gone through, as she puts it, "so much transformation." As a result, if things go according to her plans, she will soon be entering an advanced study program in holistic psychology, which will by necessity force her and her partner to relocate to San Francisco. "It's very important for me that she is able to pursue her goals, too," Dana insists, "and that she is happy in that environment, but we're both very open to change right now, so we're ready."

Dana recently made an impromptu appearance at Lollapalooza. "I ate fire for the first time on stage with L7," she says proudly. "It was an incredible experience. L7 had asked Lesbian Avengers to come up onstage, and when I took this fire in my mouth, I just felt this connectivity to all women. There was like this fog and my arms were vibrating,"

she adds. What did the crowd do? "They just screamed," she recalls.

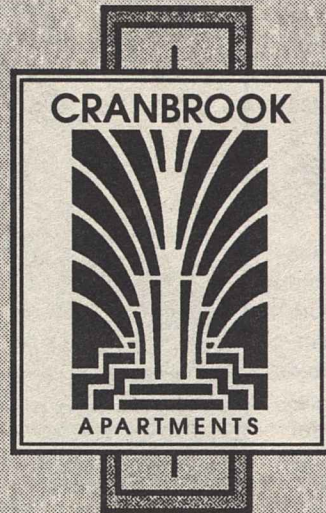
"I would like to be more active with Lesbian Avengers by passing out literature and going to protests, but right now I've been incorporating meditation and yoga into my life and I've been having to focus a lot of attention on that, because when you start doing those things, your awareness becomes so high that you have to kind of cut down on your external activities," Dana says.

In her quest to become more and more spiritual, Dana has acquired understanding about the importance of being true to one's own nature. She acknowledges that a tragedy—her younger brother's untimely death—was the pivotal point at which she learned to listen to her own inner voice. "Even before he passed away, we had a spiritual connection. We were very close in age, only 13 months apart. I didn't know how to talk about it while he was alive; then, after he passed away, I was almost forced to experience the spiritual side of me, although I always knew it existed. I think it made me try to understand even more about it."

"It's a different way of seeing, of hearing," Dana explains. "It's using your body to sense things, even your stomach, your heart. It's amazing, because I have reached this point where I want to incorporate that into my psychology. It's so painful for me sometimes when I see that people are struggling. I just want to say, you're so beautiful, you're so unique! Listen to you, listen to what's inside," she says.

Which is why the choice she has made for her advance studies is so important. "I'm very excited about it," Dana continues, "because I really believe that there's so much beauty in the world and I so much want to help people see it."

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**Different County, Similar Problem:** Dish was prospecting for antiques with a friend in Jacksonville, FL, last week when a helpful (and slightly nosy) clerk asked where we were from. Dish's friend replied that we were from Atlanta. She then asked us what we did for a living (well, we told you she was nosy), to which Dish's friend replied that he was a teacher in a Cobb County school. "Cobb County?," the clerk asked, "isn't that the place that's been on the news so much lately and has caused so much trouble?" Dish could barely suppress our smugness. "You know," the clerk continued, "where Oprah did that show, and they had all the marches?" Dish's friend gently corrected the clerk, telling her that she must be thinking of Forsyth County, not Cobb County. "Oh," the clerk said, still thinking, "but doesn't Cobb County hate someone, too?"

**Gorgeous Degeneres:** We might actually get all the way through the Emmy Awards this year, since our main heartthrob, Ellen Degeneres, is sharing hosting duties with Patricia Richardson ("Home Improvement") on the September 11 broadcast. As an added incentive, Armistead Maupin's "Tales of the City" (which some Southern viewers were unable to see, thanks to skittish PBS affiliates) is nominated for two awards. Dish recently had the opportunity to meet Degeneres and found her even more beautiful in person than on television. Her show, now called "Ellen," (originally "These Friends of Mine") was one of the breakout hits of last year's TV season, yet ABC has revamped it, recasting one major role and making Ellen the owner of the bookstore in which she used to be just a clerk. Though changes this big are usually reserved for shows that are faltering, ABC obviously believes in "Ellen," since the network has moved it to the slot right after "Roseanne" this fall. When Degeneres was asked about why the network chose to tamper with an already successful show, she quipped, "I've always asked myself that about Tide."

**Lucky Day:** It was literally "11:30, Diet Coke break" to hundreds of office workers and shoppers on Thursday, August

# Dish

THERE'S A FINE LINE BETWEEN TELLING THE TRUTH AND TALKING TRASH



Cool comic Ellen Degeneres should make the Emmys worth watching September 11.

18, when Lucky Vanous made an appearance at Lenox Square in order to sign an I-beam used in the construction of Lenox's new addition. The handsome Mr. Vanous, whom Dish suspects has never been near a real construction site before, has been making hearts flutter for months now in the TV commercial in which a group of female office workers leer at him through a window while he takes macho gulps from a Diet Coke can. Dish noted that there were just as many (if not more) male admirers of Vanous's hirsute physique as female. In light of the turnout, Dish would love to see Coke remake the commercial—this time, with male secretaries drooling

right alongside the female ones.

**Seeing The Light About Falwell:** Jerry Falwell's obsession with oral sex has gotten his "Old Time Gospel Hour" yanked off the air in Jacksonville, FL. WTLV-TV suspended Falwell's show Monday, August 15, after viewers complained about Falwell's sexually explicit diatribes against President Clinton. Station manager Ken Tanning said complaints had mounted in recent weeks, with one viewer saying her 9-year-old son asked her what oral sex was after hearing about it on Falwell's show. Dish agrees that Jerry Falwell is a most unfortunate choice for sex-ed teacher and applauds WTLV's decision. Tanning says the show will be cancelled if Falwell continues to focus on political issues over religion.

**Front Runners, This One's For You:** Dish has a suggestion for how all you avid joggers should spend your Labor Day: Send in your entries now for the Cobb 10K Classic, which begins at the Cobb-Galleria Centre/Cumberland Mall area and ends up at the White Water/American Adventures Theme Park. The organizers for this event are encouraging you to bring all your family and friends for a "celebration of festive music, scrumptious food and fun galore." Entry into the race guarantees admission into White Water and all kinds of other goodies including t-shirts, posters and a chance for a free trip to the Caribbean for two. Dish would absolutely adore it if two lesbians or two gay men were heading down to Aruba or someplace equally romantic by winning the contest. Call 432-0100 for entry forms and more information.

**Here's Your Change, Miss—Oops, Sorry!:** It seems banks will do almost anything these days, short of giving away money, to grab new business. But Dish hasn't seen any banks around Atlanta offering the specialized service dreamed up by a bank in Scotland: double check-cashing cards for transvestites. One card features the customer's male persona, and the other features his (or her) female persona. Dish presumes it is the customer's responsibility to figure out which card to take to the bank on payday.

SEPTEMBER 1 - SEPTEMBER 7, 1994

As the season begins to shift from the activity and special excitement of summer, we may feel a sense of letdown or a little lethargy as we adjust to the rhythms of fall. This is a wonderful time of year to clean out closets, emotional as well as physical, and spend some quality time with ourselves. New Moon is on Labor Day.

**ARIES**, be sure you are paying attention to your physical and emotional well-being. Taking good care of yourself is always an excellent choice, even if it seems to take time. Remember, there is such a thing as "Aries Burnout" and it is not fun! **TAURUS**, life can be lovely and fun, even for hardworking Taurus folks. The real "hard work" may be all the personal adjustments we have to make in order to be our own true selves. You may not care for the process, but the result is great. **GEMINI**, with Venus in your 5th house of creativity, fun and passion, you may be experiencing a burst of energy trying to express in several different ways at once. Can you have an affair, write a novel and see a great movie at the same time?

**CANCER**, Uranus and Neptune are still shifting things around in your 7th house of close personal relationships and partnerships, making life a little uneasy at times. However, you are

## STARSIGNS

probably getting very good at going with the flow while staying centered. **LEO**, with Mars in your 14th house of dreams, visions and the collective unconscious, your dreamtime may be very active right now, along with all of your intuitive senses. So just relax, heed your intuition and enjoy the internal movies. Happy Birthday, **VIRGO**! Are you ready for fall? House all neat and tidy? Closets clean? Desk straight? Wait a minute, it's your birthday month! Time to be social, have a good time and celebrate and really enjoy your life. Closets can wait.

**LIBRA**, with Venus in the last degrees of your 1st house, spend some quality time with yourself, getting to know the Internal you a little better. What do you really love to do, what are your most intrinsic gifts and talents? Who are you? **SCORPIO**, some of your discontent could be related to comets crashing into Jupiter, or your subconscious connection to the rapid changes in the collective mind of the planet. Don't

waste time with worry, go see a good movie and eat popcorn. **SAGITTARIUS**, if you are feeling restless and fussy, you may need more exercise and time outdoors. Even if you don't think you have time, get out of town, go for a hike or better yet go camping or get a cabin in the woods for the weekend!

**CAPRICORN**, with the Sun in your 10th house of higher education and world travel, you could have an opportunity to go to a special workshop or training. If something comes your way, seriously consider going. It could help your career blossom. **AQUARIUS**, are you getting enough exercise? Well, it's a good idea and regular exercise will keep you from turning into a grump. Do it with a friend if you have difficulty staying on schedule. You can cheer each other on and get fit at the same time. **PISCES**, how is your job/career going? Are you doing something you really love or just doing 9 to 5 to survive? If you are not fulfilled where you are working, then take the time with yourself and dig down to what you really would love to do.

Mary Bailey Rule is a professional astrologer who specializes in personal and relationship chart interpretation as well as crisis management. She can be reached in Santa Fe at (505) 473-0095 to order charts or arrange a chart interpretation.

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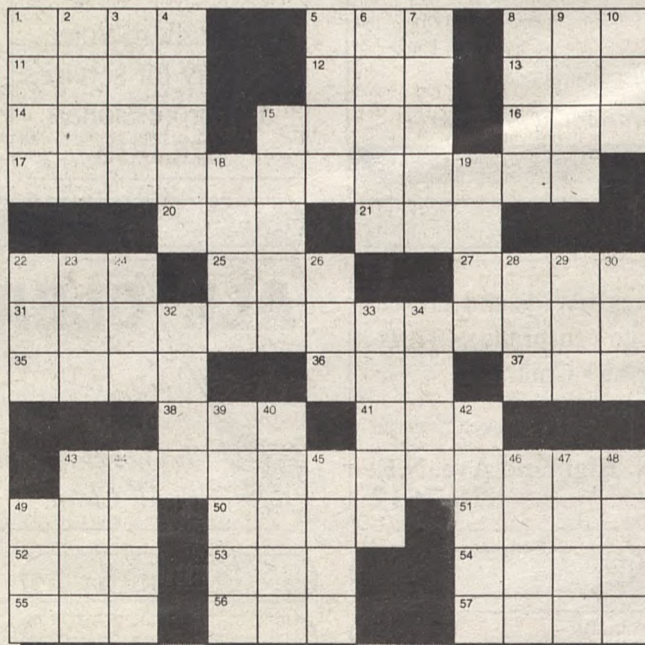
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DOWN

1. Wax-coated cheese
2. Zhivago's love
3. To declare positively
4. The lesser amount
5. A small interstice
6. Chicago's basketballers
7. Took illegally
8. Room With a \_\_\_\_\_
9. Greek god of love
10. Book on gay youth, *One Teen-ager in \_\_\_\_\_*
15. Mosquito tomb in *Jurassic Park*
18. Enormous
19. Large labor animals
22. Rabbit or cat, e.g.
23. Homosexual
24. Cerastes
26. CEO's degree
28. Essential to life
29. Jennifer Levin novel, *The \_\_\_\_\_ of Light*
30. Parapsychology subject
32. African nation
33. Remove the lid
34. Not messy
39. Dack Rambo, professionally
40. Lesbian poet, Audre \_\_\_\_\_
42. Chicks have them
43. Deal (with)
44. Not homos
45. *Charlie's Angels* co-star, Cheryl \_\_\_\_\_
46. Great Lake
47. Desert monster
48. Bitterness of spirit
49. Gay rights pioneer, Harry \_\_\_\_\_

ACROSS

1. Israeli airline
5. *Tales of the City* T.V. network
8. Doggie doc
11. Klein/Weaver presidential spoof
12. Not in the closet
13. Wrath
14. Expanse of earth
15. A Guthrie
16. Age
17. What cute chicks taste like
20. Rub-a-dub-dub locale
21. Madonna's controversial book
22. Palmer's org
25. Precious stone
27. Relaxation
31. They have big baskets

ACROSS (Cont'd)

35. Keyboard error
36. Chemical ending
37. Marky Mark's music
38. Het guy's partner
41. Taxi
43. Cream-filled treat
49. Tilling tool
50. Ensnares
51. Solo for Michael Crawford
52. Dwelling (abbr)
53. Queer
54. Riot grrl group, Bikini \_\_\_\_\_
55. Not no
56. First color in the rainbow flag
57. Harp or elephant

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