

# IMPACT news

Pistol Pete and Popgun Paul talk about the bumpy road to success—just before they hit the highway for their summer tour. Page 15



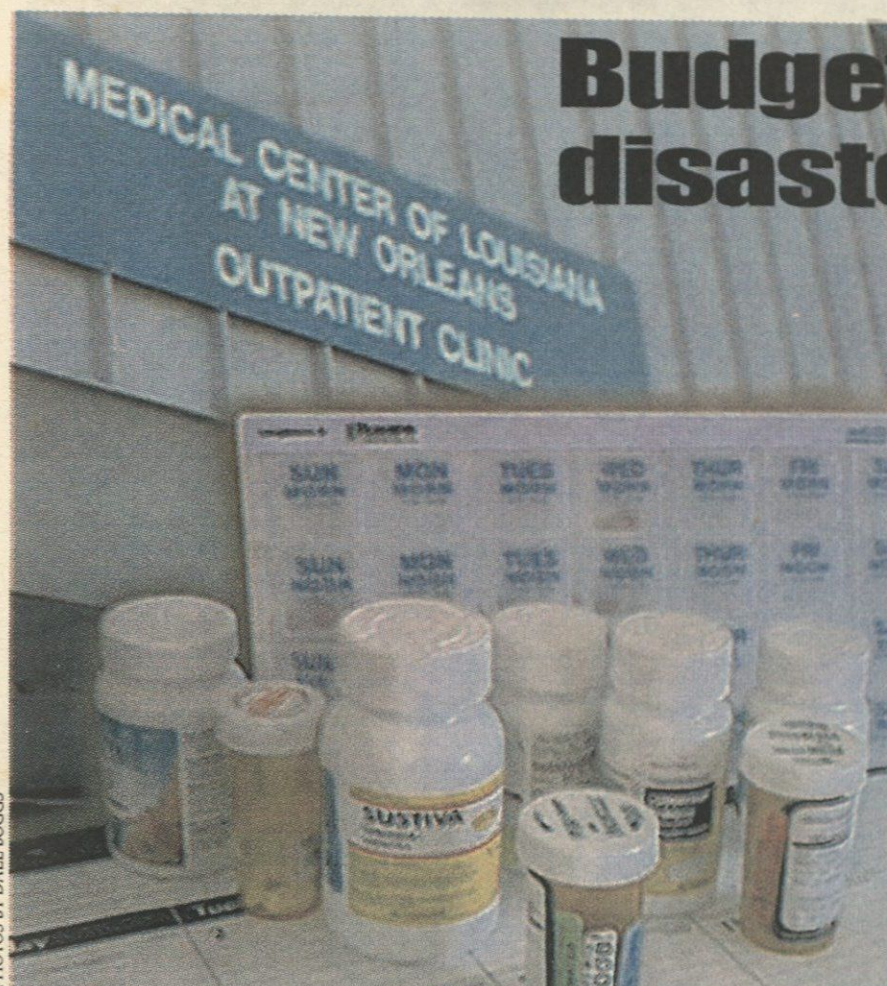
Yep, she's coming home. New Orleans' own Ellen DeGeneres brings her schtick to the Saenger. Page 15



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GAY & LESBIAN NEWS FOR NEW ORLEANS AND THE GULF SOUTH SINCE 1977

JUNE 2/2000



PHOTOS BY DALE BOGGS

## Budget cuts could spell disaster for AIDS patients

While most of the U.S. revels in economic prosperity, Louisiana is in financial peril. Legislators are slashing funding to state services, leaving thousands of HIV patients in life-and-death limbo

by GIP PLASTER

Services for people with HIV/AIDS in Louisiana are in jeopardy as statewide budget cuts threaten the crucial charity hospital system. Budget cuts could be especially devastating to the more than 3,300 active patients—1,900 of whom are indigent—who depend upon the HIV outpatient clinic at the Medical Center of Louisiana in New Orleans.

The HIV clinic, known locally as "HOP clinic," sees more than 5,000 HIV patients a year, many of whom travel from across Louisiana seeking treatments and medications offered only in New Orleans. Staff also provide 20,000 home visits each year, according to medical center statistics.

More than half of the state's 12,000 HIV patients reside in the New Orleans metropolitan area.

For weeks the Louisiana Legislature has wrangled over how to deal with a budget deficit that exceeds \$300 million. Across-the-board budget slashing has been proposed to all state agencies, including health-care providers like the nine statewide charity hospitals.

Unless the Senate and House pass taxes to generate revenues that will eliminate the budget deficit, there will be major cuts in services and some hospitals or clinics will be closed, according to hospital system officials.

The Legislature must take action before its session ends June 6, or call a special session.

### HOP clinic in trouble

There may be yet another twist to the story, according to Noel Twilbeck, director of the New Orleans AIDS Task Force.

The state is required to match one state dol-

> Continued on page 24

## Elizabeth Toledo, a newly out mom, takes NGLTF helm

Can someone out for less than a year lead one of the nation's oldest gay groups?

by LAURA BROWN

A lesbian mom who has been out less than a year started June 1 as the new executive director of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, the 27-year-old group focused on state and local organizing.

But Elizabeth Toledo, 38, stresses that while she may be new to lesbian issues personally, "I'm not new to organizing on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered political issues."

Toledo comes to NGLTF from the National

Organization for Women, where she has served as "action vice president" since 1997. Toledo was elected to a four-year term in July 1997 and is one of very few elected NOW leaders to leave office early.

Lesbian rights is among NOW's five main platform issues, and during her tenure as vice president, Toledo said she oversaw planning for last year's Lesbian Rights Summit, an event that drew a who's who of activists from across the country.

Lesbian issues were also prominent when she served as president of San Francisco NOW from 1991-1993 and president of California NOW from 1993-1997, Toledo said.

"When you look at the skill set of someone who needs to come together and build on the grassroots movement, I have excellent credentials," she said. "I got one of the best educations growing up at NOW on how to respect and understand community building."

> Continued on page 8



Elizabeth Toledo and children Mia and Tomas, modeled HRC clothing in a promotions booklet.



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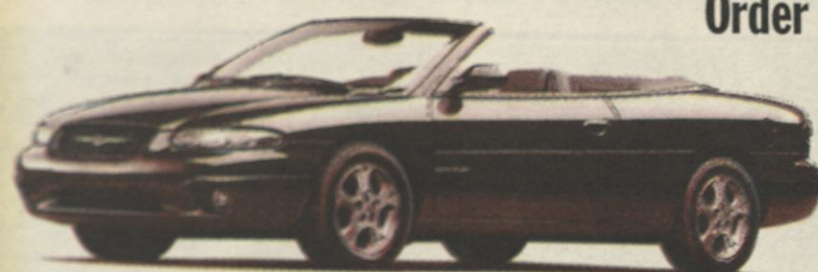
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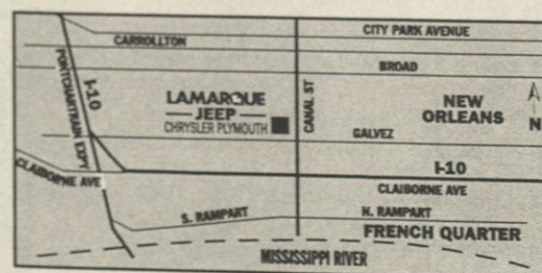
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## IMPACT news

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## Civil unions require some creativity

by ROSS SNEYD

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP)—"And now, by the powers vested in me by the state of Vermont, I pronounce you ... What? Partners? Together as one? Joined as family?"

Unlike marriage, there's no common syntax for the new world of same-sex civil unions. Because the couples are two men or two women, the old tried-and-true "man and woman" or "husband and wife" phrases don't quite make it.

Vermont's justices of the peace and couples entering civil unions are crafting their own conventions and rituals for this practice that currently has no rulebook, few traditions, and no other state models to follow.

There has been a lot of discussion, both lighthearted and serious, about how to conduct a ceremony.

"There's so much creativity in our com-

munity among gay and lesbian couples in how to create outward signs of their commitment," said Mary Hurlie, a justice of the peace in Hinesburg who has been with her female partner for 13 years. "But we haven't gotten to that level of detail, yet."

As marriages must be "solemnized" by judges, justices of the peace or members of the clergy, so, too, will civil unions have to be "certified."

But there aren't any rules. The civil unions law says only that they must be certified. There's no script in state statute that must be followed for a marriage, either.

"Just like marriages, there aren't any magic words," said Secretary of State Deb Markowitz. "We pronounce you man and wife, husband and wife, they're just made up. You don't find them in statute."

Training sessions have been held for justices by the secretary of state's office in recent weeks because it is almost unquestioned that it will be to them that the primary responsibility for performing civil unions ceremonies falls.

That's because there are few religious faiths that bless same-sex unions and so there won't be many clergy members willing or able to certify civil unions on behalf of the state.

Justices of the peace have a handful of responsibilities under state law. Most have to do with taxes and elections.

A town's justices—there are as few as five in small towns and as many as 15 in larger communities—sit as the board of civil authority to certify voter checklists or to hear tax appeals.

They also have the option of officiating at wedding ceremonies. Beginning July 1, they'll also have the authority to officiate at civil unions.

The one catch is if they do one, they'll have to do both, and that's enough to prompt some justices to quit the marriage business because they oppose the civil unions law. Experts who are guiding justices through the new responsibilities, such as lawyer and former Deputy Secretary of State Paul Gillies, say that's fine, so long as they don't discriminate.

Under Vermont's non-discrimination laws, if justices perform weddings for heterosexual couples, they may not refuse to perform civil unions ceremonies just because those couples are homosexuals.

"A couple (justices) have tried to debate the law, but it doesn't matter because it is the law," Gillies said.

Some justices have put out the word that they're happy to officiate at civil unions ceremonies.

"I feel they deserve it," said Huntington justice Don Dresser, who has officiated at two weddings. "It's the law, and I'm comfortable with it. I have a lot of gay friends. ... I'm



The three Vermont couples who successfully sued for civil unions now face the hard part: organizing a ceremony.

going to treat everyone the same."

Some gays and lesbians who happen to be justices say they're excited that they'll be able to officiate at civil unions ceremonies.

"I'm excited. I'm so thrilled," Hurlie said. "This is really an honor to certify civil unions for folks."

So, now, what's left is to determine just what ceremonies should be. The short answer is that whatever is done for a wedding would work for a civil union.

"The big question was, 'What do you say at the end?' 'I hereby ... what?' Gillies said. 'We suggested: 'I hereby certify this civil union.'"

Markowitz said her office did not want to dictate the words, but she recognized they would carry emotional weight.

"The justice has to say something that shows the imprimatur of the state is making the union official, whether it's a marriage or a civil union," Markowitz said. "The most straightforward, kind of sticking to the law pronouncement would be: 'I now certify your civil union.' Really, that's what a person is doing."

There are some traditions to follow, though. There have been a few religious faiths, for example, who have blessed the committed same-sex relationships of their adherents.

The Unitarian Universalist Society is one. The Rev. Brendan Hadash of the St. Johnsbury Unitarian church, for example, estimates he's performed probably 20 opposite-sex marriages and about an equal number of same-sex commitment ceremonies over the years.

He's developed a series of phrases at the end of his ceremonies and uses the one that the couple finds most comfortable.

"I usually pronounce that you are partners forever," Hadash said. "There are different phrases that people use."

"I recognize you as spiritually united. 'You are now joined as wife and wife, which I find a little odd."

"You are joined as spouses, partners, lovers."

"I declare that you are now united in love, that you are duly wed."

With the civil unions law, though, he'll be adding one phrase to his blessings.

"At the end of the service I used to always make a point of saying, 'By the power vested in me by my denomination, I declare you ...' Hadash said. "Now I can say 'by the power vested in me by the church and the state.'"



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## Around the Nation

### Lazio adds spice to NY Senate race

NEW YORK (AP)—Advocates for abortion, gay rights and gun control didn't have much to say about the Senate race between Hillary Rodham Clinton and Rudolph Giuliani. Both candidates pretty much agreed on those issues.

Now that Rep. Rick Lazio has replaced the New York mayor as the GOP candidate, voters have a starker choice. Lazio does not share Clinton's unequivocal support for abortion rights, increased penalties for gay bias attacks, or gun licensing.

Meanwhile, gay rights advocates are disappointed with Lazio. The Human Rights Campaign, a gay advocacy group in Washington, gave Lazio a rating of 18 out of 100 last year, down sharply from a rating of 50 in 1998. While neither Clinton nor Giuliani had a voting record to compare, both had "been supportive of some core issues on the lesbian-gay agenda: comprehensive civil rights protection, domestic partnership, recognition of the rights of gays to serve openly in the military, and support of hate-crimes legislation," said Tim Sweeney of the Empire State Pride Agenda. "That is no longer the case with the entrance of Rep. Lazio."

Clinton was in New Orleans May 24 for a private, \$1,000-per person fund-raiser that raised more than \$100,000.

### N.J. congressman acts to ban gays from foreign adoptions

WASHINGTON—A New Jersey Republican congressman is trying to ban international adoption by gay men and lesbians, the Newark Star-Ledger reported May 18. An international adoption treaty, the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption is designed to simplify and professionalize the overseas adoption process. But Rep. Chris Smith says that an "alarming trend" of increasing numbers of gay couples going overseas to adopt children, needs to be curtailed. "Vulnerable children need households that don't practice that kind of lifestyle," said Smith, who is seeking a House vote on his amendment to the treaty's implementing legislation. Several congressional aides on both sides of the aisle said anonymously that Smith's amendment adds a controversial issue to a treaty that was expected to receive speedy approval. Maureen Hogan, director of Adopt America Advocates, said Smith has been unwilling to discuss the issue with representatives of adoption groups, and has taken a stance she described as "irresponsible."



'Vulnerable children need households that don't practice that kind of lifestyle.'—N.J. Congressman Chris Smith, on the 'alarming trend' of gay couples adopting children overseas

### Air Force seeks recoupment from psychiatrist who came out

SAN FRANCISCO—An Air Force psychiatrist who came out in 1997 is facing a demand from the military that he repay \$71,000 in tuition, the *San Francisco Examiner* reported May 19. "I felt it was very important from a psychological standpoint to be open about my personal life to co-workers," said psychiatrist John Hensala, 35, who came out when he started practicing in 1995, and was honorably discharged in 1997. Now, the Air Force is trying to recoup tuition money from him, and Hensala sued the Air Force in federal court May 18, asking for a ruling that he does not have to repay the funds. Steve Collier, Hensala's attorney, says that the Air Force can attempt recoupment of funds under the law only if his client had committed misconduct, refused to serve, engaged in homosexual acts, or made his coming-out statement in an effort to escape service.

### Appeals court says Yeshiva can bar live-in lovers from school

NEW YORK (AP)—An appeals court in Manhattan has ruled unanimously that Yeshiva University can bar a lesbian medical student's lover from living with her in school-subsidized housing. The court upheld a lower court ruling that Yeshiva's policy—which provides housing to students, their spouses and dependent children at below-market rates—violates no city or state laws. The suit was filed by Sara Levin, 28, of San Francisco, a fourth-year student at Yeshiva's Albert Einstein College of Medicine. She said the school discriminated illegally by not allowing her domestic partner to live with her. The court pointed out that the university does not let unmarried heterosexual students live with their lovers in school housing either, and rejected the argument that the housing policy discriminates on the basis of marital status and sexual orientation, because lesbians can't marry each other.

### Gay teens march for fired staffers who facilitated sex talk

BOSTON (AP)—Several thousand gay teens marched in a peace rally May 20, wearing black armbands to show support for two Department of Education staffers who lost their jobs May 19 for running a workshop for gay teens that turned into a graphic talk about sex. The workshop, held last March at Tufts University, was secretly taped by the Parents Rights Coalition. It was sponsored by the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network, but also included two members of the state Department of Education's HIV/AIDS awareness program. It started as a question-and-answer period but rapidly turned graphic, detailed and what many have termed inappropriate for the attendees, who ranged in age from 14-21, including a discussion of sexual positions, whether or not to use condoms and how to have oral sex. Gay & Lesbian Advocates and Defenders won an emergency restraining order on May 17 barring distribution of the tapes on the grounds they violated state wiretap laws. The controversy has threatened legislative support for \$1.5 million in Gov. Paul Cellucci's budget aimed at supporting gay and lesbian teens.

—From staff and wire reports

## Around the South

### Commander at Army post where gay soldier was killed set to go

FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. (AP)—Maj. Gen. Robert T. Clark will leave his position as commanding general of the 101st Airborne Division and of Fort Campbell in June, the Army announced. Clark was in charge of Fort Campbell, the base where Pfc. Barry Winchell was murdered last summer. The Army called the change in command routine, pointing out that Clark has been on the job two years, the typical tenure for a post commander. But the fact that Clark will receive neither a third star nor an immediate promotion may signal that the upcoming report from the Army Inspector General on the command climate at Fort Campbell may not be favorable. "This raises a concern that Army leaders may be intending to shield Maj. Gen. Clark rather than holding him accountable for the widespread anti-gay harassment permitted under his watch," said Michelle Bencke, co-director of the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network. That report will be released the week after Clark's departure, which is scheduled for June 9. Any increase in rank for Clark would have to be approved by the U.S. Senate, which would create an opportunity for Democratic senators to hold hearings on Winchell's death, the Washington Post reported May 22.

### King widow, gay assistant cited but not prosecuted for jury flap

ATLANTA—A Georgia Bureau of Investigation released recently decided against prosecution for Coretta Scott King, Lynn Cothren, her openly gay special assistant, and others, for a confrontation in a courtroom hallway with jurors considering charges against the son of civil rights leader Ralph David Abernathy. Details of the investigation were reported by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. King, Cothren and Rev. Al Sharpton were among a group that blocked a hallway as jurors retired during the corruption trial of former state Sen. Ralph David Abernathy Jr. According to the report, King and her entourage showed up outside the ninth-floor courtroom and refused to allow the jury to leave until a guard pleaded with them. But when the jury was walked down to the eighth floor to catch an elevator, King and her entourage again materialized, this time in the elevator. Guards asked them to stay on the elevator because "we have the jury here." But Cothren, a longtime gay rights leader, told the guard, "This is a public building," and instructed the guard to get out of the way. Cothren, who is also a board member of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, later insisted he hadn't heard the guard mention anything about the jury, and the King party didn't realize it was the jury they were walking past. The report concluded that criminal charges could be filed against the entourage but recommended against it. Abernathy was convicted in the January trial and sentenced to four years in prison.

### Investigation into Texas murder leads to gay papers' personal ads

DALLAS—Investigators affiliated with the National Park Service are poring over personal ads in three Texas gay publications as part of their investigation into the murder of a man whose body was found nearly two months ago in Big Bend National Park, the *Dallas Voice* reported. Supervisory Park Ranger Cary F. Brown said that Shannon Roberts, 43, was a fourth-year medical student in San Antonio. Investigators have requested copies of personals ads published in the *Dallas Voice*, *This Week in Texas* and the *Texas Triangle* for a four-month period beginning last November. Roberts' body was found in the West Texas park March 31 after he had been reported missing from his home earlier that month. Roberts had "a history of using personal ads to find other gay men," and his death could have been a kind of "pick-up crime," Brown said. Investigators do not believe Roberts' death was a hate crime.

### Bob Jones tells grads to 'walk the Bible line,' avoid 'heathenism'

OXFORD, Ala. (AP)—In a graduation speech, the president of Bob Jones University assailed President Clinton's positions on gay civil rights, telling graduates from Trinity Christian Academy that they should "walk the Bible line." University President Bob Jones III spoke May 21 at the Baptist-affiliated school, saying that the morality of political leaders can be judged by the laws they make. "The laws of this land are increasingly promoting heathenism. Morality is more important than issues of education, economics and world view," Jones said. The school had a dozen graduates and about 200 people at the church service. Jones said he is "very concerned" about Clinton's efforts to make anti-gay statements a hate crime. "What would we do?" Jones asked. "We'd go to jail for preaching the word of God. We'd be criminals." On the doctrine of other denominations: "I believe more people are going to hell through church doors than through tavern doors."

—From staff and wire reports

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## Toledo takes NGLTF helm

> Continued from page 1

Toledo replaced veteran activist Kerry Lobel, who stepped down as NGLTF executive director in April after three years. Toledo was chosen for the job after a search process that NGLTF leaders said began with a list of more than 80 names of potential candidates, and eventually ended with unanimous approval from the group's staff and board of directors.

Jerry Clark, co-chair of the Task Force board, said Toledo's grassroots experience with NOW and her ability to speak articulately and extemporaneously "on issues that face our community" were key points in her favor.

"The fact that she is a lesbian mother of two, and also Latina, were also considered, although not decisive," Clark said. "Given that emphasis is so extensive now on family issues in our community, we felt that she would be a great person at this particular time in the movement to take on the job."

"It was a hard choice, only because we had a lot of good candidates to choose from," said Atlanta activist Lynn Cothren, an NGLTF board member who served on the search committee with Clark.

### Coming out at NOW

Born in California, Toledo was raised in Tucson, Ariz., but returned to California for college, stayed, and became a leader in state and local NOW chapters.

Married in 1992, she moved to Washington, D.C., in 1997 after being elected as NOW's action vice president.

At NOW, Toledo met Cindy Jordan, the group's then-field organizer for lesbian rights. Last year, Toledo and her husband divorced, and Jordan left NOW for a position with the Human Rights Campaign.

Toledo and Jordan now live together in Montgomery County, Md., where they are raising Toledo's two children: Mia, 4, and Tomas, 3.

"Not a day goes by that I don't worry about what kind of homophobia they will face because of my sexual orientation," Toledo said. "But I believe any challenges will pale in comparison to the harm it would do if they saw their mother grow-

ing up in a lie, hiding who I am and unwilling to challenge the world."

Toledo declined to offer much information about her marriage, saying she wants her children to have a good relationship with their father and not read about their parents' problems in the press.

"I will say that we had a very nontraditional marriage, and for the bulk of the marriage we didn't even live in the same city," she said.

As for her sexual orientation, "there are people who say they have known from a young age, and I wouldn't put myself in that category, but I do think I could have come to this reality earlier," Toledo said.

"I don't spend a lot of time on regret, but if I did, one thing I would focus on is that I didn't have the vision or courage or strength [to come out sooner]," Toledo said.

While right-wing groups could latch onto her story as proof that feminist activism causes women to become lesbians, Toledo dismisses the idea.

"Anybody who thinks you can recruit someone into their sexuality has really missed any type of understanding about it," she said.

### Facing the critics

Despite praise from the NGLTF board, Toledo's selection as the group's new executive director has its share of critics among both gays and feminists.

Some have wondered whether someone out for such a short time is prepared to head one of the nation's oldest gay groups.

"Anyone who's been out less than a year is in gay diapers, is wearing gay training wheels," wrote columnist Rex Wockner. "Heading up NGLTF when you



came out less than a year ago is like getting appointed to the Supreme Court while you're still in law school."

But both Toledo and NGLTF board members insisted she is prepared for the task.

The "compassion and energy" of someone who has just come out can be "tapped and utilized," Cothren said, while Toledo said she hopes to be an inspiration to others living in the closet.

"I don't spend a lot of time on regret, but if I did, one thing I would focus on is that I didn't have the vision or courage or strength [to come out sooner]," she said.

"One of the challenges of our movement is to create an environment where more people can come out earlier, and that's one thing I hope to have a great impact on."

Wockner also questioned NGLTF's decision to appoint its sixth consecutive lesbian feminist executive director.

"What are the odds that six times in a row the best applicant was a female?" he asked.

Clark said one man was among the final three candidates brought in to interview with the entire board and staff, but Toledo proved the best choice, regardless of gender.

Meanwhile, as Toledo prepares to leave NOW, leaders offered nothing but praise.

"I certainly regret her leaving," current NOW President Patricia Ireland told the Washington Blade. "but I understand completely that, professionally as well as personally, it's an opportunity for her to help build the grassroots strength of a movement we all care about."

However, one longtime NOW activist, who spoke to *IMPACT News* on the condition that her name not be used, said she and other members were upset that Toledo was leaving before the end of her elected term as vice president, and when she was already working to become president.

"This is a crucial time for feminists," the activist said, citing the upcoming presidential election. "I'd rather NOW's leadership focus on who will appoint Supreme Court justices, not who will replace Elizabeth."

Toledo called leaving NOW "the hardest career decision that I've ever made," but said the job at NGLTF—which doesn't

require an election, and isn't a term with a time limit, like the NOW presidency—was a chance she couldn't pass up.

"This opportunity presented itself very quickly, and I made a decision that I believe is right for me," she said. "I've worked many years of my life for NOW."

### The future of NGLTF

Under Kerry Lobel's leadership, NGLTF declined to endorse the recent Millennium March on Washington, which had been dogged by criticism that too few grassroots activists and people of color were involved in planning—criticism Lobel cited when she publicly withdrew from the MMOW board last year.

But Toledo served on the MMOW board representing NOW, and less than two weeks after the announcement that she would take the helm at NGLTF, she addressed the crowd from the march stage.

"I think the right position to take on the march is to celebrate the great action that happened, and learn from some of the missteps," Toledo told *IMPACT*.

Her goal at NGLTF will not be drastic change, Toledo said, but to "build on the momentum Kerry Lobel has been creating."

"I also think I have the unique opportunity to move the movement to be more diverse," she added. "As a Chicana, I don't see a lot of other faces that look like mine being very active in the movement."

In the controversy surrounding the Millennium March, NGLTF was frequently used as an example of grassroots, local organizing, while the Human Rights Campaign—with its focus on federal-level work and key role in planning the march—was seen as the other end of the spectrum of gay activism.

Though debate has pitted the two groups against each other, Toledo said she supports HRC. In addition to the job her partner has there, Toledo and her children recently posed for an HRC catalog.

Both Toledo and Elizabeth Birch, HRC executive director, said they look forward to working together.

"Elizabeth Toledo is a wonderful person, and I can't tell you how thrilled we are that she has taken the helm at NGLTF," Birch said. "She's a wonderful, wonderful choice."

"I think we all understand who the real enemy is," said Toledo, citing the "God Hates Fags" protesters who dogged events at the Millennium March.

"At the same time, ... I believe there is a good and healthy place in the movement for debate and discussion. ... And I expect that [Elizabeth Birch] and I will have those debates fully and passionately," she said. "That is actually a sign of a vibrant and healthy movement."

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## EDITORIAL

# Can New Orleans PrideFest be saved?

by MELINDA SHELTON



"Only in New Orleans." Typically that line is used in jest, a good-humored reference to a city that embraces its decadence, colorful politics, and its extraordinary people and their *joie de vivre*.

There are times, however, when those of us who live here experience something that leaves us exasperated, shaking our heads in wonder.

New Orleans' Gay Pride can be one of those exasperating experiences.

For a little perspective, consider this: June is Gay Pride Month. Millions of LGBT community members and our supporters take to the streets and parks in an amazing show of unity and pride.

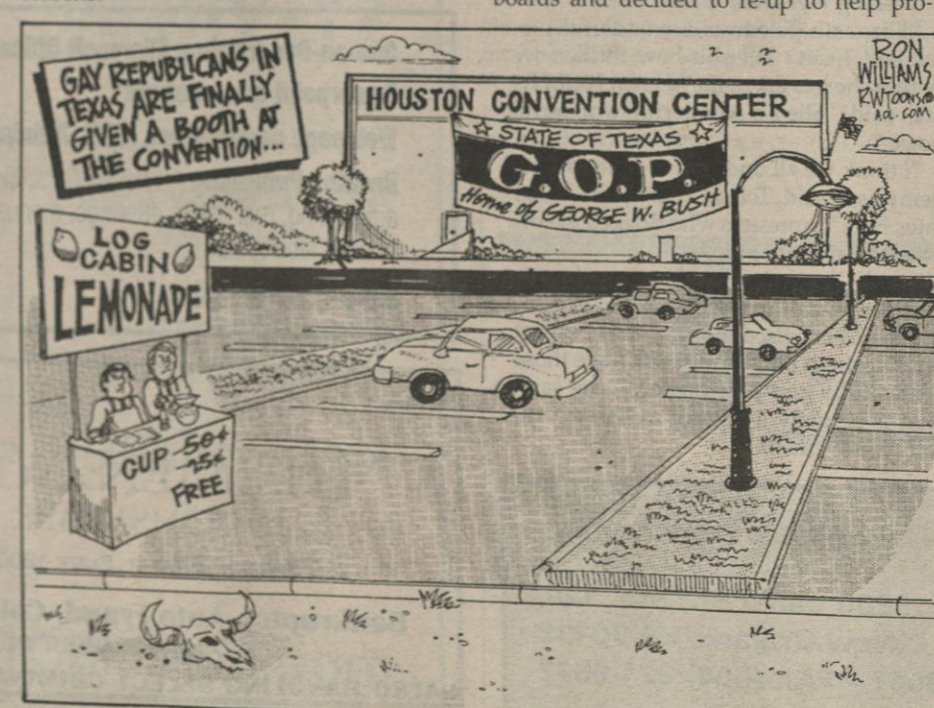
This doesn't mean Pride should be celebrated only in June. Some communities, particularly those where summer heat can be problematic, schedule Pride events in other months. The New Orleans Alliance of Pride board moved our celebration to September or October in hopes of attracting more people and avoiding searing temperatures.

When a Pride festival is held doesn't really matter. What counts is community support and unselfish involvement.

Here in New Orleans there seems to be a recurring problem in getting our sizable LGBT population involved in PrideFest. For more than 20 years, local Pride festivals have come and gone in fits and starts; committees have worked together and produced fine events, while others have self-destructed or thrown in the towel when there wasn't enough support. Even Mother Nature has canceled a PrideFest.

Yet more trouble is brewing.

IMPACT News recently received a letter from Alliance of Pride board co-chairs Linda Hubble and Joey LeBlanc. The pair said they resigned, effective May 13, "for personal reasons."



Last August, just weeks from PrideFest '99, board co-chair Mike Barrington resigned, also citing personal reasons. Remaining co-chair Sonny Cleveland and a determined committee dug in their heels and managed to pull off a respectable two-day affair in late-September.

Cleveland's two-year tenure ended, and health problems have prevented him from participating in the planning of PrideFest 2000.

After a session of musical chairs, a committee with a combination of veterans and newcomers met in February and elected Hubble and LeBlanc—both experienced organizers—as co-chairs.

But during a period when members should have taken their various assignments seriously, apparently in-fighting, disrespectful behavior and lack of follow-through took hold.

Last week, Hubble told *IMPACT News* that on several occasions other committee members yelled at her. She specifically said yelled, not "raised their voices in spirited disagreement."

"I'm not anyone's whipping girl," she said. "I volunteered for this because I believe in Pride and I want it to be a success here. But I'm not going to sit back and take abuse."

LeBlanc also said he felt some committee members were disrespectful toward Hubble, "and I wasn't going to let that happen. Yelling at someone isn't the right way to do business."

Obviously it was more than a few yelling sessions that led to their resignations, they said. Both cited back-biting, constant references to past planning and execution mistakes, and lack of follow-through on assignments, as continuous problems.

Hubble first volunteered for PrideFest in '95, and joined the board in '96. At Cleveland's request, she served on last year's board as the vendor director. Likewise, LeBlanc has served on past boards and decided to re-up to help pro-

duce this year's event.

Fellow board members James Swire and Ronny Laseur also resigned, Hubble said, and others may follow. Currently, the board consists of secretary Timm Holt, treasurer Ron Wilcox, Crystal Little, Tiffany Raie Button, Melissa Adderhold, Thomas Franklin, Keith Oalman, Rex Romans, Allan Spach and Sherri Tucker.

Little and Holt told *IMPACT News* this week that they felt the former co-chairs made too many decisions without board approval, and took disagreements too personally. They also accused Cleveland of making crucial decisions, cash payments and entering agreements—including an "exclusive" gay media "sponsorship" with his then-employer, *Ambush*—without board approval.

"We didn't want past problems to happen again, and they were," Little said. "The board is supposed to make decisions, not the co-chairs."

It is impossible to determine where the absolute truth lies, because there's some in everyone's perspective. However, in talking with past and current board members, it's easy to discern one fact: New Orleans PrideFest is in trouble now and in the past—except when strong supporters rallied together no matter what.

Blame for canceled events, poor attendance or lack of sponsor support can not and must not be placed on Pride boards, present or past. Many volunteer boards often are a mixture of work horses, schmoozers, slackers and trouble-makers, unless strong leaders surge to the forefront and clean house.

Instead of trying to place blame or dissing PrideFest and its organizers, it's time for the community to shake off the past, tell the trouble-makers to take a hike, and become problem-solvers.

The remaining board is determined to make this year's PrideFest happen Sept. 30 and Oct. 1. With only \$2,000 in Pride's coffers, and more than \$60,000 needed to pull off an event similar to last year's, the odds seem insurmountable, however.

Should PrideFest 2000 be canceled? Is it salvageable? Can enough fund-raisers and sponsors generate the revenues needed? Will the board unite long enough to pull it off?

IMPACT News will continue to support PrideFest, despite its problems. We know complainers and critics usually have self-serving agendas, and they have no place in this community event until their hearts are in the right place.

There is a slim chance to make PrideFest happen this year. If not, the opportunity is ripe for real change on the organizing level. Getting involved is the key; criticizing and doing nothing is worthless.

The Pride board meets Monday, June 5, at 7:30 p.m. at the Lesbian and Gay Community Center, 2114 Decatur. Meetings are on alternating Mondays until PrideFest. All meetings are open to the public. Timm Holt (504-940-0377) and Crystal Little (504-943-1999) say they're open to suggestions and help.

## VIEWPOINT

# Need for Equal Rights Amendment exists

by JENNIFER VANASCO



The U. S. Supreme court doesn't take cases to resolve an injustice against a particular person, group or agency. It takes cases because the justices want to prove a point. Because they want to further define and refine the law.

But sometimes the technical point they make comes at the expense of the humans involved—not only the people who actually brought the case, but also the people who may benefit from the law being scrutinized.

That's what happened when the Court struck down a central provision of the federal Violence Against Women Act.

Now women's rights activists have declared war—and we should join them.

The Violence Against Women Act, passed by Congress in 1994, sought to fill the gaps left in many state judiciary systems concerning the protection of women. (Though the law is gender-neutral, specifying "persons," let's be realistic; systemic violence such as domestic violence mainly victimizes women and, clearly, that is the population the law addresses.) Some of VAWA's provisions were not at issue here; for instance, \$1.6 billion in federal funds was set aside to support efforts such as rape prevention programs and battered women's shelters, and that remains constitutional.

But the most vital, controversial provision of VAWA is a civil rights remedy that says all persons have the right to be free from gender-motivated violence. Basically, it allowed women to sue for damages in federal court.

Most of us in the gay, lesbian, bisexual

and transgender community support this idea; some of us would say it doesn't go far enough. After all, much of our community's work revolves around the right to be free not only of crimes motivated by gender (and, we would add, perceived gender), but also crimes motivated by real and perceived sexual orientation.

Be that as it may, VAWA was an important step in the right direction, echoing the Civil Rights Act by starting to provide a constitutional baseline of equality for women.

As the report says, "Violent attacks by men now tops the list of dangers to an American woman's health. Every 15 seconds, a woman is battered, and, every 6 minutes, a woman is raped in the United States."

Then why did the Court strike down that crucial VAWA provision?

The reasons are a complicated lesson in jurisprudence and a call-to-arms for civil rights activists.

The act was tested in two ways: under the Commerce Clause, which provides that "The Congress...shall have Power to regulate Commerce...among the Several States"; and the Equal Protection Clause, which guarantees that no State shall "deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

The important thing to remember here is that reasonable people can—and do—disagree (the decision was 5-4) over whether VAWA falls clearly under these mandates.

To the layperson, putting civil rights under the Commerce Clause may seem silly, even though Congress spent several years

detailed the large economic impact systemic gender violence has on 50 percent of the population. (And, in fact, the Commerce Clause is where the 1964 Civil Rights Act sits).

The Equal Protection Clause may seem more intuitive, but it has that funny part about no STATE denying equal protection. This seems to mean, as legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon adroitly points out, that a police officer beating a prostitute in a jail cell is unconstitutional; but a private

report says, quoting 1991 figures, "Violent attacks by men now tops the list of dangers to an American woman's health. Every 15 seconds, a woman is battered, and, every 6 minutes, a woman is raped in the United States.")

But then maybe the Constitution is what we have to change.

Because the states, clearly, aren't doing their job. Congress reported that pervasive bias among police officers, prosecutors, judges, juries and court employees often prevents women who had been victims of violence from seeking criminal or civil justice in state courts. Violence against women is simply not seen in the same way as violence against men.

We in the GLBT community see this, too: Prosecutors refusing to press charges because we "provoked" violence; juries looking the other way because of our sexual orientation.

It's time for an Equal Rights Amendment.

There needs to be a place in the Constitution where civil rights are protected from the abuses of private actors, not just public/state ones. And since those rights don't sit easily within the Constitution we have, we need to press for an Amendment that would finally protect all of us, no matter what our gender or—why not be fully inclusive?—sexual orientation.

All it needs is to say something as simple as "No person shall be denied the equal protection of the laws."

Women are half the population; it is time we had our full rights.

Contact Jennifer Vanasco at [vanasco@chicagoexpress.com](mailto:vanasco@chicagoexpress.com)

## The Mostly Unfabulous Social Life of Ethan Green...

...by Eric Orner



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## LESBIAN VOICES

# Hillary Clinton a hit in N.O.

by MARILYN  
McCONNELL

On Wednesday, May 24, about 75 people gathered in a New Orleans uptown home to see and hear Hillary Clinton, the popular senatorial candidate from New York. The fund raising event, coordinated by Ray Reggie and hosted by Dr. John and MiMi Bowen, raised an amazing \$100,000 for the candidate. Seven HRC Federal Club members, women who are also LAGPAC and FFE members, attended. As a group without full civil rights, and as women whose right to control their bodies is in danger, it is imperative that lesbians and gay men align themselves with candidates like Clinton who supports human rights issues and freedom of choice for women.

One of the organizers, a friendly Mayor Mark Morial, was on hand. Clinton was personable, poised and eloquent, and addressed the crowd from a massive oak staircase. She spent much time shaking hands, posing for photographs and greeting each guest. She

spoke of the importance of helping elect qualified candidates to the U.S. Senate from all states. She said that New York, "once you leave Manhattan, has many of the same problems as in Louisiana." Clinton had nothing but praise for Louisiana Sens. Mary Landrieu and John Breaux, and stated that she "cannot wait to join them." Breaux's wife, Lois; Landrieu's mother, Verna; and Mississippian Mike Espy, former Secretary of Agriculture, were in attendance.

Clinton was impressive with her adamant support of public education and health care. Clinton is not a one or two issue candidate. She is a proponent of environmental responsibility and works tirelessly for women, children and health care issues. Her visibility on these issues has not come lately. As wife of the President of the United States, she endeared herself to—and alienated a few as well—politicians and citizens.

On an ironic note, I received a letter from her now former opponent Rudolph Giuliani asking me for a contribution and warning me that Hillary Clinton is seeking the Senatorial position as a step to the Presidency. Oh, Rudy, I do hope so!!!

## PFLAG scholarships

In only 10 years, PFLAG has come from presenting five scholarships the first year to 30 \$1,000 awards this year. It's always a joyous occasion when a student receives positive reinforcement for being lesbian or gay.

Richard Sacher, owner of Aquatic Gardens, provided the first \$1,000 for the scholarship fund over 10 years ago. Niki Kearby, Betty Caldwell and Sandra Paillet were instrumental in actually implementing the scholarship procedure and getting the donors connected to the recipients.

You can make donations for scholarships in memory or in honor of a loved one, for a group, club or sports organization to: PFLAG Scholarship Fund, P.O. Box 15515, New Orleans, La. 70175.

## Entertainment

### Thanks for the memories

Saturday, June 3, doors open at 6 p.m. at Body and Soul, corner of Chartes and Marigny streets. The Lloyd Alexander Orchestra will feature favorite local vocalists. This event will honor women who have owned and managed lesbian bars over the years in New Orleans. Remember The Other Side, The Clinic, Kukies, Brady's, Dixie's, Pino's, Grog, Charlene's, Toney's Garage (Ellen DeGeneres worked there), Galley House, Tiger Lounge, Pinstripes and Lace, Blue Odyssey and the Soiled Dove? What a great opportunity to renew acquaintances, dance to the big band sound and pay respects to the women who provided a place for lesbians to have fun, be safe and socialize. Great Raffle prizes include a 25-inch color TV, weekend for two in the French Quarter, and more. Proceeds go to Buzzy's Boys and Girls and Belle Reve. Raffle tickets are \$1 each or 6 for \$5. The \$20 entry fee includes a raffle ticket and the post-party at Presley's Pub in Metairie. Do not miss this historical trip down memory lane!

## 2000 HRC dinner

Lesbian novelist Rita Mae Brown will be the featured speaker at the Human Rights Campaigns annual New Orleans fund-raising dinner June 17. The event at the Sheraton includes a silent auction with fabulous gifts, dancing and entertainment. Tickets are \$125 for the dinner and dance and \$175 for a weekend of events. For dinner tickets call 1-800-494-TDIX.

If you see a cute VW bug around town

with the yellow-on-blue HRC logo on the door, it could be yours. Entire proceeds go to HRC. Raffle tickets are \$100. each, with only 200 tickets being sold. You cannot beat those odds! Call Chuck LaCoste at Crescent City Motors for information 827-1200.



Sue Martino of Blue Odyssey and Shirley Pino of Pino's



Nikki Patterson and Sally Swetlik, owners of "Soiled Dove", 1981-1985



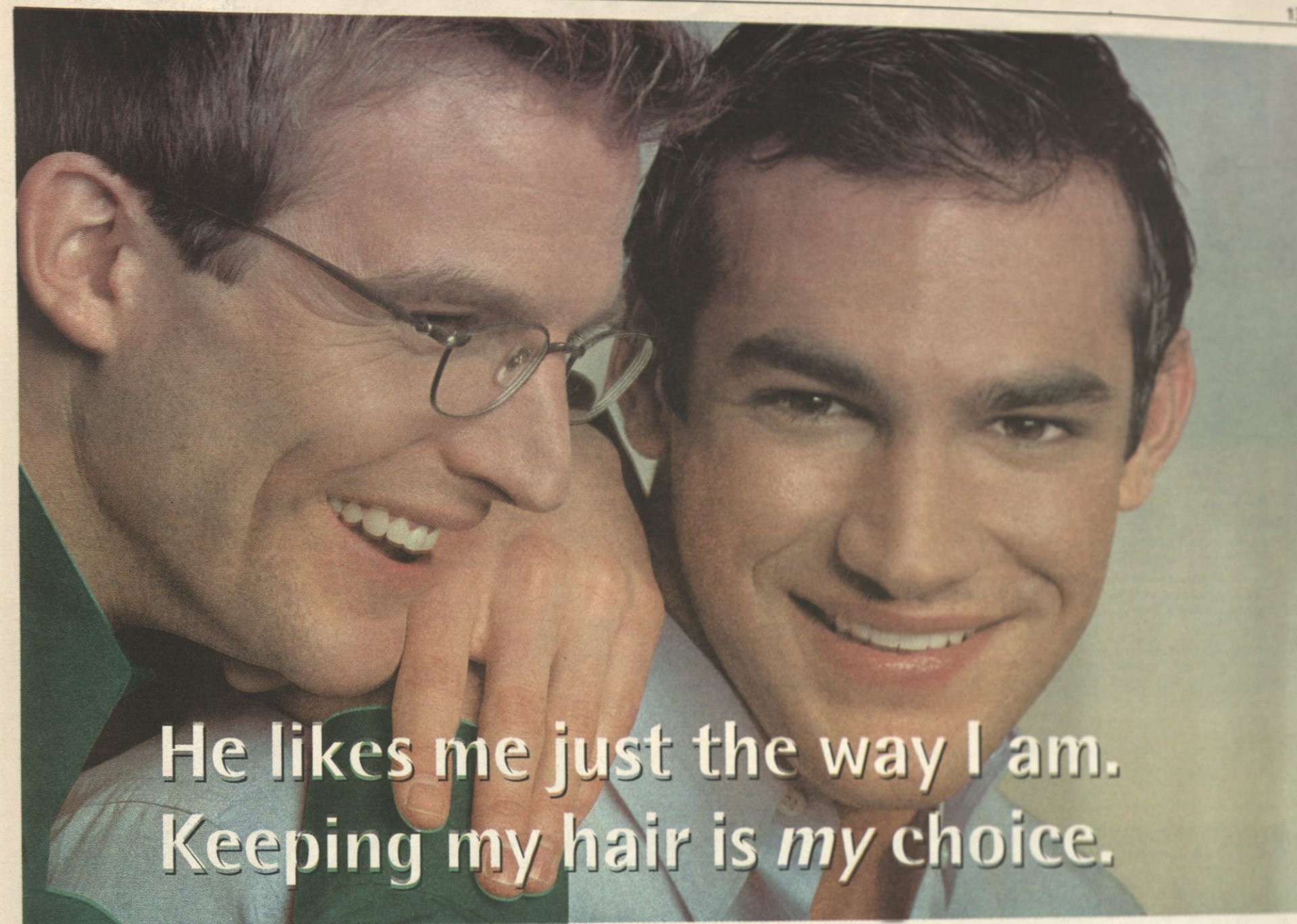
Joyce Zamora, writer/UNO faculty and PFLAG 2000 Scholarship award winner Justin Tisdale

## Women's sports Basketball

Get ready for an exciting season in the WNBA. Fortunately, 30 games will be televised over the season so have a party, get your friends together and cheer your favorite teams. Two new expansion teams, Miami and Indiana, were added this year. This season look for Tulane guard Grace Daley and La. Tech's Betty Lennox with the Minnesota Lynx.

June 4 @ 11 a.m.: New York @ Washington. NBC  
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June 9 @ 6 p.m.: Sacramento @ New York. Lifetime  
June 11 @ 2 p.m.: Los Angeles @ Sacramento. NBC  
June 12 @ 7 p.m.: Utah @ Houston. ESPN  
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June 19 @ 6 p.m.: Detroit @ Washington. ESPN

## Dykes To Watch Out For by Alison Bechdel



We make lots of decisions together.  
But some choices I make for me.  
That's why I use PROPECIA.

PROPECIA is the first and only FDA-approved pill proven to treat male pattern hair loss on the vertex (top of the head) and anterior mid-scalp area in men.

## THE NUMBERS

The fact is, for most men, PROPECIA works. The results of 2 years of testing speak for themselves.\*

- 5 out of 6 men kept the amount of hair they had (vs. 28% with a sugar pill).
- 2 out of 3 men grew back some of their lost hair (vs. 7% with a sugar pill).

Most men reported an increase in the amount of hair, a decrease in hair loss, and improvement in appearance. And the vast majority of men on PROPECIA were rated as improved by doctors (80% vs. 47% with a sugar pill).

\*Based on vertex studies at 2 years of men 18 to 41 with mild to moderate hair loss. There is not evidence that PROPECIA works for receding hairlines at the temples.

## THE MOST COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

Clinical tests showed PROPECIA was very well tolerated. Only a very small number of men had some sexual side effects, with each occurring in less than 2% of men. They included less desire for sex, difficulty in achieving an erection, and a decrease in the amount of semen. When the men who had these side effects stopped taking PROPECIA, the side effects went away.

## IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION YOU SHOULD KNOW

PROPECIA is for men only. Women who are or may potentially be pregnant must not use PROPECIA because of the risk that the active ingredient may cause a specific kind of birth defect. (See accompanying Patient Product Information for details.) Likewise, they should avoid handling the tablets when they're crushed or broken. PROPECIA tablets are coated and will prevent contact with the active ingredient during normal handling.

## WHEN YOU COULD SEE RESULTS

Take PROPECIA daily and you could see results in as little as three months. If you stop taking it, however, your results will gradually go away over twelve months. And if it hasn't worked in twelve months, it is unlikely to be of benefit.

For more information, call 1-888-637-2548 or visit our website at [www.propecia.com/info](http://www.propecia.com/info).

PROPECIA is available by prescription only, so the best thing to do is talk to your doctor.

Know the facts. Many men do, which is probably why over 30,000 prescriptions for PROPECIA are filled each week.\*\*

Please read the next page for additional information about PROPECIA.

\*\*Weekly prescription data, 01/08/99 to 01/21/00, from IMS Health National Prescription Audit, Plan 7™.

**Propecia**  
(finasteride)  
Helping make hair loss history



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# Propecia® (Finasteride) Tablets

**Patient Information about PROPECIA®**  
(Pro-pee-sha)  
Generic name: finasteride (fin-AS-tur-eyed)

## PROPECIA® is for use by MEN ONLY.

Please read this leaflet before you start taking PROPECIA. Also, read the information included with PROPECIA each time you renew your prescription, just in case anything has changed. Remember, this leaflet does not take the place of careful discussions with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss PROPECIA when you start taking your medication and at regular checkups.

## What is PROPECIA used for?

PROPECIA is used for the treatment of male pattern hair loss on the vertex and the anterior mid-scalp area. PROPECIA is for use by **MEN ONLY** and should **NOT** be used by women or children.

## What is male pattern hair loss?

Male pattern hair loss is a common condition in which men experience thinning of the hair on the scalp. Often, this results in a receding hairline and/or balding on the top of the head. These changes typically begin gradually in men in their 20s. Doctors believe male pattern hair loss is due to heredity and is dependent on hormonal effects. Doctors refer to this type of hair loss as androgenetic alopecia.

## Results of clinical studies:

For 12 months, doctors studied over 1800 men aged 18 to 41 with mild to moderate amounts of ongoing hair loss. All men, whether receiving PROPECIA or placebo (a pill containing no medication) were given a medicated shampoo (Nioxin® 1.0g/100ml Shampoo). Of these men, approximately 1200 with hair loss at the top of the head were studied for an additional 12 months. In general, men who took PROPECIA maintained or increased the number of visible scalp hairs and noticed improvement in their hair in the first year, with the effect maintained in the second year. Hair counts in men who did not take PROPECIA continued to decrease.

In one study, patients were questioned on the growth of body hair. PROPECIA did not appear to affect hair in places other than the scalp.

## Will PROPECIA work for me?

For most men, PROPECIA increases the number of scalp hairs, helping to fill in thin or balding areas of the scalp. Men taking PROPECIA noted a slowing of hair loss during two years of use. Although results will vary, generally you will not be able to grow back all of the hair you have lost. There is not sufficient evidence that PROPECIA works in the treatment of receding hairline in the temporal area on both sides of the head.

Male pattern hair loss occurs gradually over time. On average, healthy hair grows only about half an inch each month. Therefore, it will take time to see any effect.

You may need to take PROPECIA daily for three months or more before you see a benefit from taking PROPECIA. PROPECIA can only work over the long term if you continue taking it. If the drug has not worked for you in twelve months, further treatment is unlikely to be of benefit. If you stop taking PROPECIA, you will likely lose the hair you have gained within 12 months of stopping treatment. You should discuss this with your doctor.

## How should I take PROPECIA?

Follow your doctor's instructions.

- Take one tablet by mouth each day.
- You may take PROPECIA with or without food.
- If you forget to take PROPECIA, do **not** take an extra tablet. Just take the next tablet as usual.

PROPECIA will **not** work faster or better if you take it more than once a day.

## Who should NOT take PROPECIA?

- PROPECIA is for the treatment of male pattern hair loss in **MEN ONLY** and should not be taken by women or children.
- Anyone allergic to any of the ingredients.

## A warning about PROPECIA and pregnancy.

- Women who are or may potentially be pregnant—**must not use PROPECIA**
- should not handle crushed or broken tablets of PROPECIA.

If a woman who is pregnant with a male baby absorbs the active ingredient in PROPECIA, either by swallowing or through the skin, it may cause abnormalities of a male baby's sex organs. If a woman who is pregnant comes into contact with the active ingredient in PROPECIA, a doctor should be consulted. PROPECIA tablets are coated and will prevent contact with the active ingredient during normal handling, provided that the tablets are not broken or crushed.

## What are the possible side effects of PROPECIA?

Like all prescription products, PROPECIA may cause side effects. In clinical studies, side effects from PROPECIA were uncommon and did not affect most men. A small number of men experienced certain sexual side effects. These men reported one or more of the following: less desire for sex; difficulty in achieving an erection; and, a decrease in the amount of semen. Each of these side effects occurred in less than 2% of men. These side effects went away in men who stopped taking PROPECIA. They also disappeared in most men who continued taking PROPECIA.

In general use, the following have been reported infrequently: allergic reactions including rash, itching, hives and swelling of the lips and face; problems with ejaculation; breast tenderness and enlargement; and testicular pain.

Tell your doctor promptly about these or any other unusual side effects.

- PROPECIA can affect a blood test called PSA (Prostate-Specific Antigen) for the screening of prostate cancer. If you have a PSA test done, you should tell your doctor that you are taking PROPECIA.

## Storage and handling.

Keep PROPECIA in the original container and keep the container closed. Store it in a dry place at room temperature. PROPECIA tablets are coated and will prevent contact with the active ingredient during normal handling, provided that the tablets are not broken or crushed.

Do not give your PROPECIA tablets to anyone else. It has been prescribed only for you. Keep PROPECIA and all medications out of the reach of children.

THIS LEAFLET PROVIDES A SUMMARY OF INFORMATION ABOUT PROPECIA. IF AFTER READING THIS LEAFLET YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR ARE NOT SURE ABOUT ANYTHING, ASK YOUR DOCTOR.

1-800-830-7375, Monday through Friday, 8:30 A.M. TO 7:00 P.M. (ET).

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# time out



## Sizzling summer stages perfect for chilling out

In her first New Orleans appearance in 20 years, Ellen DeGeneres returns to her roots—on stage and off

by ROBERTS BATSON

Is the heat getting you down? Here's the answer: Grab your honey and head for a show. New Orleans stages are unusually active for this time of year, holding over three popular hits and adding eight new offerings. There's quite a delectable menu from which to choose: Russian Ballet! Ellen DeGeneres! Spider Woman! Desperate Convicts! A Funny Nun! N'awlins Tongues! Irish Dancing! Track Lighting! Mack the Knife! Lunt and Fontanne! And for dessert, Becky Allen as Anne Rice!

If you can't find something on that list to tickle your fancy, there must be something wrong with you. That, or—to risk redundancy—you're just not gay.

On June 2, there are no less than four openings. The most extraordinary event that night is the one-performance only **BALLET RUSSES GALA CELEBRATION** at

the Orpheum Theatre. It will feature some of the world's most distinguished ballet stars, recreating the ballets that were first presented between 1909 and 1962 by Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes and by its offshoot dance companies.

The unprecedented Gala is part of the four-day New Orleans International Ballet Conference. On the schedule are ballet master classes conducted by top teachers, a reunion of surviving Ballet Russe dancers, lectures, films, panels, and an exhibition at the New Orleans Museum of Art.

Also on June 2, curtains will go up simultaneously at Le Petit Theatre, Southern Repertory Theatre, and Le Chat Noir Cabaret.

Le Petit has **THE KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN**, the Kander and Ebb musical about the rela-



Ellen enjoys  
New Orleans' Gay Fest in 1979.

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IMPACT NEWS • JUNE 2/2000

### pistol pete & popgun paul son of a gun



## Local Boys Do Good

The Rise of Superfags  
Pistol Pete and Popgun Paul

by MARGARET COBLE

New Orleans troubadours Pistol Pete (Sturman) and Popgun Paul (Cowgill) have been strumming their hearts out together for six years now, fine-tuning their unique cabaret-cum-vaudeville stage act as well as their musical, vocal and songwriting skills. Often labeled "the gay Everly Brothers," or even the "Indigo Boys," the country-blues duo with a do-it-yourself queer punk/glam rock attitude has struck a chord with a surprisingly wide audience.

With three recordings and last summer's four-and-a-half-month cross-country tour now under their belts—not to mention countless nights charming crowds in New Orleans' competitive underground music scene—all their hard work and determination are starting to pay off. The result is their smart new set titled **SON OF A GUN**.

A week before the release party for "Son of a Gun," Sturman and Cowgill—who are not and have never been boyfriends, they want you to know—sit in the courtyard of El Matador, the Decatur Street hangout formerly known as The Mint, reminiscing about how this very bar brought them together shortly after they met in 1993.

Their musical lives had, as Sturman puts it, "dove-tailed in and out of each other's for a while." Sturman, a New Jersey-by-way-of-North Carolina transplant, was a punk-folk singer-songwriter with a master's degree in English. Cowgill, the son of a West Virginia Pentecostal minister, was a gospel-blues street musician who had recently moved here from Baton Rouge.

Both then-regulars at Checkpoint Charlie's Sunday night Open Mike, they cemented their friendship during a talent show competition across the street at The Mint. The winner of each week's competition was chosen by audience applause and won \$500. Cowgill remembers Sturman calling him to come to The Mint to applaud for him so he could win. Not surprisingly, Sturman won. The next week, Cowgill entered, Sturman returned the applause, and Cowgill won.

"It took me years to ever make that much again."

➤ Continued on page 25

➤ Continued on page 25



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## Eating Out

RESTAURANT  
REVIEW

by THE FOOD CRITIC

### A French lunch at Zoë Bistrot

Continuing the new-hotel-restaurant trend, we donned minimal attire and maximum attitude and strutted down to ZOE in the W Hotel on Poydras. The city's been all a-flutter over hotel where Randé Gerber (AKA "Mr. Cindy Crawford") has just opened his **WHISKEY BLUE BAR**. The lobby is decidedly whimsical, rather like wandering through Alice's Wonderland. In theory, it's an awful mishmash of different colored furniture that looks like a chiropractor's delight, mushroom-like white sculptures, weird greenery, lots of candles—*très chic*, but, hey, *chic* happens. One nice touch was the bookcase with books covered in different colored brown and manila wrappers. It's oddly surreal and very restful: Quiet books.

At first Zoe's color scheme seems a bit jarring with aubergine walls and carpeting and lime green chairs, but then you realize it works. The tables' silver plinths, bowls filled with different colored fruit, and silver net napkin rings lend the room some sparkle.

We were the first ones there and the service was somewhat laconic. Our youthful waiter had a decidedly world-weary air about him, and the bartender, madly keen on holding glasses up to the light and polishing them, was strangely disinclined to fill them with any liquid, so our initial cocktails (Zoe champagne cocktail *pour moi* and a Martini Normande for Michael) took their time in coming. In proper French fashion, drinking is taken seriously here: aperitifs (including the odious Lillet and Pastis), specialty cocktails, or the terrific wine list, (heavy on French—*naturellement*), whites set out under the headings Citrique, Aromatique and Grande, and reds under Finesse, Noir, Sauvage and Grande.

The menu is divided into hors d'oeuvres, salads and sandwiches, entrees, separate garnitures (veggies) and a bar featuring oysters, calamari, poached lobster, assorted fruits de mer, and osters and beluga caviar for those days when you've an extra \$75 to spend on an appetizer. All your favorite French foodstuffs are here: escargots bourignonne, foie gras terrine, onion soup, even brandade, which is a famous fish dish (traditionally cod) pounded with olive oil, garlic, milk and cream, and usually garnished with black truffles.

I opted for a shrimp cocktail, which came in a tall glass prepared like a *ceviche*, with bite-sized shrimp, avocado and tiny slivers of onion. The cocktail sauce (not one of my favorite things) was deliciously limey. Michael ordered the warm onion tart, which was beautifully presented with layers of phyllo covered with the sweetest onion slices, sun-dried tomatoes and olives. It was accompanied by an herbed cheese tapenade. We then shared a country frisee, with Roquefort, and a poached egg topped with *lardons* (diced bits of bacon).

Very rich, so we were glad we shared it.

We had a hard job of choosing entrees. There is a *croque monsieur*, a lobster club (there's even a lobster shepherd's pie), steak tartare, mussels (with the ubiquitous frites), quiche, pasta, even a burger. I opted for the French Breast of Chicken, the fat liberally rubbed with course salt (it's very important to keep the skin on while you cook it—sorry Weight Watchers!), the meat tender and perfectly cooked. Although it came with a soup of spinach and some yummy potatoes, I had a side order of sautéed spinach topped with a roasted slice of lemon. Heavenly! Michael chose shrimp crepes with tomato, mushroom and a pommery sauce. He liked the sauce but thought there was a bit of stinging on the shrimp.

Then came the dessert! I was intrigued by the French Poodle Meringue, which was an absolutely adorable facsimile of a Limoges box, the stand hard chocolate shortbread covered with a terrine of dark chocolate mousse, a layer of cream, topped off with a pink meringue poodle, replete with pom pom and bow! His *creme brûlée* (spiked with lemon verbenne) was equally as clever. What we took to be a wooden spatula stuck in the topping turned out to be a sugar-wafer spoon.

Prices are surprisingly reasonable (provided you stay away from the caviar). Lunch: appetizers range from \$7-\$10; entrees have nothing over \$17 (for steak). Dinner appetizers will run you from \$6-\$14 (for steak tartare), entrees \$16-\$42 (for a side of beef for two—not bad). They have a very civilized cheese plate with fruits and nutmeats, and one special daily. Drinks will swell the bill rather disconcertingly though.

I had no idea going in what Zoe would be like. But far from being tiresomely trendy, as I feared, it's fresh and fun. *Allez! Amusez!* And leave your attitude at home—you really won't need it.

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## Out in Print

by GREG HERREN

BOOK  
REVIEWS

### Bad news for Savannah

When Gore Vidal published "Myra Breckinridge" back in the 1960s, the *NY* Times review of it opened with the line: "Has literary decency fallen so low?" Vidal, obviously, had the last laugh: The book is still in print and was recently chosen as one of the Top 100 GLBT Novels of the 20th Century.

One has to wonder what that reviewer would think of "Midnight in Savannah."

The book's title is an obvious reference to John Berendt's huge-selling "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil," also set in Savannah. The cover itself is a parody of Berendt's book. The back cover even carries the blurb: "This is the gay 'Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil'!" Funny, I thought the original was gay enough. Gay writer, gay characters, gay themes.

Another blurb proclaims Darwin Porter as the "greatest American gay writer." Considering that the competition includes Edmund White, Gore Vidal, Truman Capote, Andrew Holleran, Michael Cunningham and Mark Merlis, among countless others, that is quite an incredible claim.

Unfortunately, the adage of judging books by their covers comes to mind. It was with enormous trepidation that I opened the cover and began to read. The book already appeared to be a rip-off trying to cash in on Berendt's success; the cover blurbs about its greatness set off more alarms.

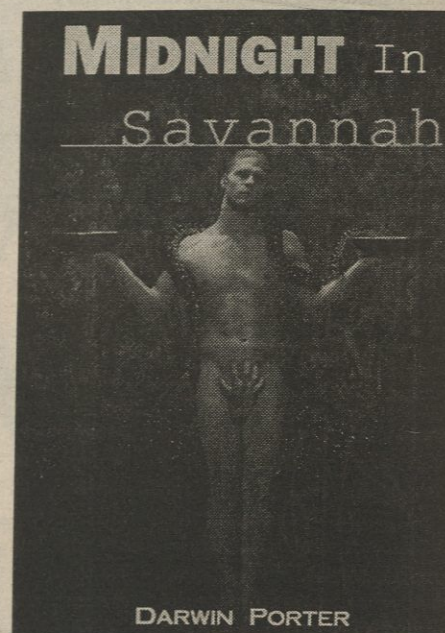
Justifiably so.

Trying to find something positive to say about this book is like searching for a needle in the proverbial haystack. What can you say about a novel whose plot makes absolutely no sense? The only purpose, it appears, of the plot is to move the reader along from sex scene to sex scene, which occur almost every third page. The dialogue is staggeringly bad; porn films are more realistic.

After the first few chapters, when the initial shock had worn off, I started enjoying it from a camp perspective. The book is so bad, I reasoned, it had to be written this way on purpose as a joke. Hey, I love "Mommie Dearest" and even own a video copy of "Showgirls." Viewing it from this perspective enabled me to thoroughly enjoy the next 100 pages or so. But after this novelty wore off, it merely became tiresome and insulting to my intelligence.

Lest anyone think that I am a prude, easily offended by sex scenes, rest assured, I am not. I enjoy good erotic writing just as much as the next person (if you want to read some good erotic writing, pick up anything by Pat Califia or the new Alyson anthology, "Rough Stuff"), but there is nothing of even mildly erotic interest in this book. The sex scenes are all the same. One after another. Mindless. Boring. Everyone knows that "sex sells," but come on, at least make it interesting.

The characters are one dimensional and flat. It soon becomes obvious that all of the



characters are motivated solely by the next available opportunity to have sex with one of the many well-endowed characters who populate Savannah. Maybe there's something in the water that enables the men to grow penises in excess of 10 inches. It's pretty sad when you can begin to identify whether a character is a villain or a hero by the size of his penis and his physical appearance. The villains all, naturally, have small penises and are old and/or ugly. Their primary motivating force in the trite villainy they commit is the attempt to turn one of the beautiful, well-hung heroes into their love slaves. And, of course, all of these studs are bisexual, willing to please men or women at the drop of their pants. The women are so grateful for this largesse that they don't mind sharing their men with other men.

And, apparently, no store in Savannah sells condoms.

Don't worry, though; Porter is an equal opportunity offender. There is something in here to offend almost everyone. Whether it's his use of the "N word," his depiction of blacks as illiterate morons, women as sex-hungry sluts, gay men as manipulative monsters willing to have sex with anyone, or male-to-female transgendered persons as bitchy, conniving, back-stabbing monsters, everyone can find something here with which to take offense.

After putting this book down with a combination sigh of relief and revulsion, the only thing I could think was that I hope John Berendt (or the city of Savannah) has a good lawyer.

The rain forest is perishing for this?

**Midnight in Savannah**  
by Darwin Porter  
Georgia Literary Association, \$22.95

## "Quote unquote"

compiled by REX WOCKNER



"She's Jerry Falwell's prom date!"

—Actor Nathan Lane on anti-gay radio host Dr. Laura Schlessinger, at the Millennium March on Washington Equality Rocks concert

"The Millennium March on Washington was attended by 125,000 people, a dramatic plunge in participation compared to the 1993 and 1987 national marches. The low turnout helped to confirm criticisms aimed at the closed-door organizing process of this event."

—From a May 1 press release from the anti-MMOW Ad Hoc Committee For An Open Process

"This [quote above] should be from the 'Ad Hoc Committee of Snotty Process Control Queens.'"

—Reader Mike Friedman in an e-mail to this column

"When did George Michael become a hero in the struggle for gay rights? Until he got arrested with his pants down in a public toilet, George Michael was an insipid closet case, occasionally taunted by that insipid out-of-the-closet-case Boy George. But there he was, at the Equality Rocks concert and the march, blathering about gay rights."

—Gay journalist Dan Savage writing in Seattle's *The Stranger*



Nothing is wrong with those who oppose Dr. Laura's views running a boycott campaign. It's the American way. If the Southern Baptists can do it against Disney, gays have every right to do it against Dr. Laura. What's downright dangerous about this particular campaign is its effort to demonize and suppress the speech of those who have a principled disagreement with the gay-rights agenda.

—Rod Dreher, in a column in the *New York Post*

"There is neither heterosexual nor homosexual. There are people who are predominantly attracted to members of their own sex in every age and every culture."

—Right Rev Richard Harries, Bishop of Oxford, one of the most senior bishops in the Anglican Church

"Perhaps Dr. Laura did say that homosexuality is a 'biological error.' Isn't it? All creatures have a drive to reproduce. That is the usual course of nature. If the sex drive is diverted from its natural object onto something else, precluding the possibility of procreation, that suggests an error. To a Darwinian even more than to a Bible believer, homosexuality must seem to be maladaptive."

—Syndicated columnist Mona Charen

"I see those [anti-gay] picketers and I think, you know, if I weren't a loving, nonviolent, spiritual person, I would really go over there and grab those signs and smash them over their heads and shove them up their asses."

—Actress Ellen DeGeneres at the Millennium March on Washington, April 30



"As far as I know, all the Spice Girls are straight; two are married or have been married, with babies, and it's something that we've often talked about because we all are friends. Some members of the band have had certain experiences or whatever ... But, you know, I'm not really one of those people."

—Spice Girl Melanie C in *Girlfriends*, June 2000

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Dr. Sexton's family is posting a reward of **\$30,000** to anyone providing information leading to the arrest and conviction of David's murderer.

The individual responsible was wounded in the act and may have sought medical attention around those dates. Police say the wounds are likely to have been severe.

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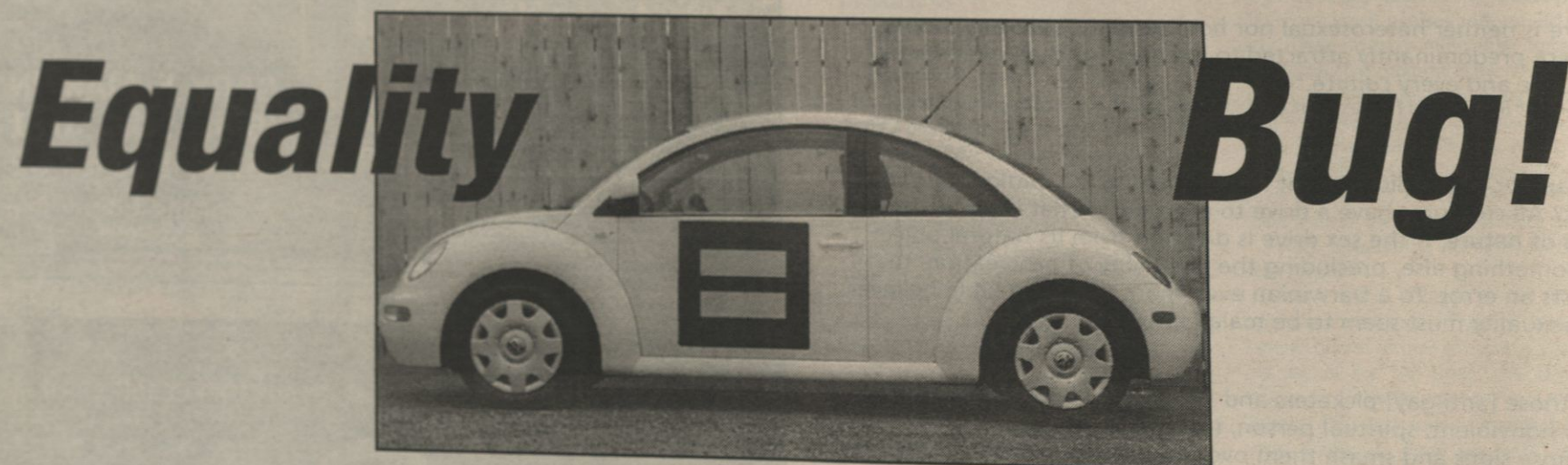
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## On Stage

by JULIA HOUSTON

THEATRE REVIEWS

### Trinity troupe triumphs



How good a time can  
you have watching  
people dance around  
before it stops being  
"serious art"?

May 13th, at the Mahalia Jackson Theatre, the Trinity Dance Company did its best to make its concert-minded audience loosen up and enjoy themselves. The band, featuring Stone on drums, Christopher Layer on pipes, and Mike Kirkpatrick on guitar, exhorted the somewhat shy crowd with hoots and hollers. The dancers waved their arms and got everyone to clap along. Young student dancers from local schools jigged their way on and off the stage while their friends up in the balcony cheered.

All of which might have been more annoying than exhilarating, except that the quality of the dancing was consistently impressive and, at some points, inspired. The company, almost all women, tapped out seemingly impossible rhythms in "jig shoes," then, up on point, ebbed and flowed together in interweaving circles as complex as a letter in the Book of Kells. The company's two male dancers were a strong counterpoint, performing with maximum energy and minimum flash.

The secret to this blend of first-rate artistry and foot-stomping fun may be that Irish dance is at its best when the tempo, style, and attitudes of the performance are all upbeat. An Irish jig isn't really about drunken looniness, but about determina-

tion, the triumph of a willful culture despite harsh times and harsh masters, and a celebration of life and life's motion. A good Irish step-dancer must at least appear to be having a good time herself, or the movements become robotic repetition.

Indeed, the only lull of the evening was the program's most "serious" piece, "The Mollies," which tells the story of Irish immigrant exploitation and persecution. In this work, the women dressed as downtrodden, angry men, stark images of Irish-American poverty were projected on the backdrop, and the music grew slow and mournful. The piece, obviously intended to show the range of Irish dance, was instead a slow-moving bummer in the middle of the party: strident instead of powerful, long instead of involving. Fortunately, it ended with the invocation of a contemporary Irish song, and the dancers (and audience) were allowed to return to their previous elation.

For the most part, the company stuck with competitive numbers like "Just Shannon" and "Celt Thunder," which helped start the whole Irish dance craze in America back in the 1980s. Instrumental solos, including a sweet song and a truly wild one-man drum number, rested the audience's ears and the dancers' feet before the company came back on to urge us to cheer and clap once more.

For more about what's coming up on stages around the city, turn to Roberts Batson's preview on page 15

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## Mental Check

ADVICE

by MINDY MILAM, BCSW

### Partner's death leaves void, grief

Dear Mindy,

My partner died last year, and I'm lost. I don't have any motivation, I cry a lot, and I don't know what to do. People tell me to get on with my life, but I can't. What's wrong with me?

Very Sad

Dear Very Sad,

I'm sorry about your loss. From what you describe, you are in a grieving process, which applies to all kinds of losses, not just those resulting from death. Other losses include break ups, loss of your job, and the loss of your health. People have common reactions during the grieving process, which I will review.

**Shock:** Even if you prepare yourself for someone's death, you will probably feel shocked when it actually happens.

**Disbelief:** You may have trouble accepting the reality of the loss and may question if a mistake has been made. This disbelief can be even stronger when someone dies and you do not have an opportunity to view their body after they have died.

**Sadness:** You probably will feel sad about your loss, including grieving about everything that you will never experience. You also may feel sad for the deceased and what they will miss out on. Many people are surprised at the depth of their sadness. In early stages of grieving, the sadness never seems to go away. Nearly anything can serve as a trigger: a song, someone wearing a shirt like one your partner had, cologne, even a full moon. When triggers occur, you might cry unexpectedly and feel like you can't stop. This is a normal part of the grieving process.

**Anger:** You may feel angry at the deceased, at yourself if you acted in ways you regret, at systems or institutions, health care workers, God, the universe, your friends whose lives haven't been turned upside down and who you feel don't really understand the depth of your sadness, at other couples you see together.

**Fear and anxiety:** You may feel fear, which is related to something specific, or anxiety, which is a state of extreme apprehension that can't be directly related to any thing or event. Physical symptoms of anxiety include loss of appetite, digestive problems, nightmares, poor concentration, poor memory, trouble sleeping, and heart palpitations. These symptoms might occur occasionally or on a regular basis. You might feel as if you are constantly worried and can't settle down. All of these feelings are normal. Something happened which was out of your control, so you probably feel more powerless and

vulnerable. You may not understand the strength of the reactions you are having and may be afraid that you are going crazy or that you will never return to your "pre-loss" functioning.

**Despair:** Loss may lead you to question the purpose and value of life and to wonder if the suffering is worth it. You may face your own mortality and your fears about your future. You may feel

Humans respond to sadness by crying. If you don't cry, your feelings will come out in other ways, perhaps through headaches or anxiety attacks.

tired and hopeless and wonder if and how you will keep on living.

**Confusion:** After a significant loss, you will be changed. Your way of being in the world has been altered, and now you must find a new way of being. When someone important to us dies, we lose part of how we define ourselves, so we must find a new identity. Our priorities might change, with less focus on money and status and more focus on living consciously and connecting with others.

#### Surviving grief

**Identify and use your support systems.** These could be friends, family, co-workers, or your church community. Call people to come be with you when you need it. Allow yourself to have your feelings—then release them. Humans respond to sadness by crying. If you don't let yourself cry, your feelings will come out in other ways, perhaps through headaches or anxiety attacks.

**Keep a journal.** Many people find it helpful to keep a journal. Write about anything, without worrying about spelling or grammar, and use this as a place to release your feelings. You can write letters to the deceased to tell them whatever you need to, or "to" friends expressing how you feel about their support (but don't mail it!); about the triggers and how you felt/responded, and so on. Later, your journal can provide you with a map of how you healed from your grief.

**Try to maintain a balance between being with other people and being alone.** Isolation is not good, but neither is being so busy with others that you never have time to be alone and have your feelings.

**Take care of your physical needs.** Eat and sleep properly. Read about how to deal with grief. If needed, consult a therapist.

I'll end with a quote from the book "Tuesdays with Morrie": "Death ends a life, but not a relationship."

# Out in the Community

## NOW SHOWING

THEATRE CALENDAR Key

\*\*\*\* Don't miss it, \*\*\* Commendable, \*\* yes and no, \* Uh-oh

#### HOLD-OVER HITS

**LATE NIGHT CATECHISM**—Le Petit Theatre, 616 St. Peter St., 522-2081. Open-end engagement. Now in its 10th hilarious month, the Director's Studio offers Amanda Hebert in this hit one-woman show. Great fun. \*\*\*\*

**THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLENNIUM**—True Brew Theatre, 200 Julia St., 524-8440. Through June 18. This original revue satirizes New Orleans personalities and institutions. Top-notch entertainment. \*\*\*\*

**KURT WEILL, NEW ORLEANS STYLE**—Le Chat Noir, 715 St. Charles Ave., 581-5812. Thursdays, June 8 and 22 only. An original cabaret show by musician Harry Mayronne Jr. \*\*\*

#### NEW ON STAGE

**BALLET RUSSES GALA CELEBRATION**—Orpheum Theatre, 129 University Place, 522-5555. June 2 only. This "once in a lifetime" performance is a part of The New Orleans International Ballet Conference.

**THE CELESTIALS**—Southern Repertory Theatre, 3rd Floor Canal Place, 861-8163. June 2-18. The premiere of a comedy about America's legendary acting couple, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, is set in their summer home in Wisconsin where they are hosting Helen Hayes and Noel Coward.

**THE DESPERATE HOURS**—Ethiopian Theatre, 1724 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd., 897-3229. June 9-25. The classic thriller of stage and film is here revised to include an interracial cast.

**ELLEN DEGENERES IN CONCERT**—Saenger Theatre, 143 N. Rampart St., 522-5555. June 13 only.

**KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN**—Le Petit Theatre, 616 St. Peter St., 522-2081. June 2-19. The Kander and Ebb musical based on the film and the novel of the same name closes Le Petit's season.

**NATIVE TONGUES 3**—Le Chat Noir, 715 St. Charles Ave., 581-5812. June 2-July 9. Following his highly-successful first two productions of New Orleans-themed monologues, Carl Walker now offers a third edition.

**RIVERDANCE**—Saenger Theatre, 143 N. Rampart Street, 522-5555. June 7-11.

**STEEL MAGNOLIAS**—Carlone's Dinner Theatre, 100 N. Labarre Road, Metairie, 832-8070. June 9-July 16. An all-star revival of Robert Harling's play.

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By ROB CLEMENZ

Lifelong New Orleanian Denise Gaudin recalls it as one of those "fun and frolic days in the Vieux Carre." Her friend Chris Gajour helped create the costume. She was Doris Day from "Pillow Talk," dressed in an outfit from Thrift City on Carrollton Avenue. "Chris helped me hot-glue the phone to my pillow as well as get my hair just right," she says. "My boyfriend, Cameron, was away, back home in Wisconsin, and I was out with friends looking for someone to fill Rock Hudson's shoes." Brian Rody from Chicago also recalls the moment: "It was my first visit to New Orleans. I was with my boyfriend, RJ, who grew up in Louisiana. I didn't know Denise, but when we ran into each other near Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop she asked if we could have our picture taken together because she said I looked like Rock Hudson. It turned out that RJ knew many of Denise's friends and family, and vice versa. It was so much fun visiting—I truly love New Orleans and had one of the most memorable times of my life." The ending: Denise and Cameron married and now live near Thrift City, and Brian works in the hospitality industry in Chicago and visits our city—and RJ—as often as possible.

#### Diva by Diva

For their traditional June concert, New Orleans Gay Men's Chorus has commissioned a new two-act musical revue, "Diva by Diva." The performance will be at the UNO Performing Arts Center Theater on June 17 at 8 p.m. and June 18 at 3 p.m. Call 245-8884 for ticket information.

#### Picnic in the Park

Lazfest is an all-American celebration held at Cabrini Park in the French Quarter on July 4th, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. The day offers food, games, music, a silent auction, and a dunk tank. This is a way to share with the individuals, families and groups who support Project Lazarus throughout the year. A \$10 donation entitles you to unlimited food, soft drinks and beer.

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## New Orleans' HOP Clinic in trouble

> Continued from page 1

lar for every two federal Ryan White Title II dollars. The state will receive \$15 million this year, but only \$2.5 million is earmarked to match it, meaning another \$5 million is needed. Otherwise, Ryan White funds for future years could be jeopardized, Twilbeck said.

Twilbeck said he has had difficulty getting state and hospital officials to provide information about what changes can be expected—perhaps because no changes are finalized. However, officials have said HOP clinic is in danger of closure or downsizing.

"The impact of the closure of the HIV/AIDS outpatient clinic in New Orleans could be devastating," Twilbeck said.

Twilbeck said he is most troubled that the proposed cuts will have the greatest affect on indigents who already have few places to which to turn.

"We're living in a time when we're supposed to have economic prosperity, and when people can't get health care, that's pretty bad," he said.

There already are repercussions from the budget problems.

The HOP clinic began cutting costs several weeks ago. New policies, which were put into effect without warning, require patients to prove poverty to be eligible for treatment and medications from the hospital's pharmacy. Medications for some side effects of HIV medications—like nausea, high blood pressure and pain—are more difficult for patients to get.

Countless privately insured patients can no longer fill prescriptions at the clinic and could face financial disaster. Many policies require patients to fully pay for their prescriptions, which often can exceed \$1,500 a month, before being reimbursed according to the policy's limits.

The results could be life-threatening should a patient be denied certain drugs or encounter delays due to budget cutbacks and new paperwork requirements, Twilbeck said.

"We're talking about people's lives here, not dollars and cents," a frustrated Twilbeck said. "What's happening is absolutely unbelievable—and scary."

Community social services providers in New Orleans held a rally May 31 to protest proposed budget cuts to the Medical Center of New Orleans and other metropolitan medical facilities. Twilbeck said providers hoped a public demonstration will entice legislators to take health-care services out of harm's way in the budget battle.

### 'Major patient impact'

The Health Care Services Division of the Louisiana State University Health Science Center is some \$34 million short of the state funds needed for the fiscal year that starts July 1, said division spokesperson Don Buchanan.

The division runs the state's nine charity hospitals, including the Medical Center of Louisiana at New Orleans, which provides the bulk of the city's HIV/AIDS services. The charity hospital system provides \$11 million in HIV/AIDS care and immune system therapy programs to thousands of patients without insurance, he said.

The \$34 million loss could trigger a \$328

million ripple-effect loss, LSU's chief executive officer told the Senate Finance Committee May 26. The cut would immediately mean a loss in federal matching funds, increasing the \$34-million loss to \$115.9 million.

Decisions have not been made as to how cuts will be handled, but the system will strive to make choices that will have the least negative impact on patient care, Buchanan said. He added that hospital closures and other services cuts may be inevitable.

### Bigger problems

The loss of \$30-million-plus, however, is only the beginning of the story. Louisiana's budget has a number of problems that remain to be worked out.

Overall, \$347 million of the \$6.19 billion in state funds in the budget bill is unfunded or "below the line." Funds that are below the line are budgeted but have no source of revenue to support them.

Nine percent of the hospital system's budget is unfunded. That amounts to \$67 million of the \$757 million remaining in its budget, according to Jennifer Steele, a budget analyst for the Louisiana House of Representatives.

But even that \$757 million is less than the system had at the beginning of the budget process.

The charity hospital system began the legislative process to produce a budget with \$786 million. The governor cut hospital funding by \$45 million, eliminating 976 jobs in the system. During the process, however, \$16 million and 359 positions were restored, bringing the budget to \$757 million.

The Senate may be inclined to vote to restore the \$29 million difference between where the hospital system's budget began and where it is now, Steele said, but that \$29 million will join the \$67 million as unfunded—unless specified taxes are raised.

If additional revenues are not generated, the hospital might not get the unfunded money even though it is in the budget, Steele said.

Currently, only the House has acted on the budget bill. Senate action is expected, then the governor's signature is required.

Steele said it is possible for the state to begin its fiscal year on July 1 without a finalized budget.

"The bottom line, of course, is that HIV/AIDS care is not explicitly in trouble. However, it may be in jeopardy if hospital funding is not restored and administrators have to make tough choices about which services to sustain and which to cut back to make ends meet," Steele said.

At press time, the budget bill was in the Senate finance committee.

—Melinda Shelton contributed to this story

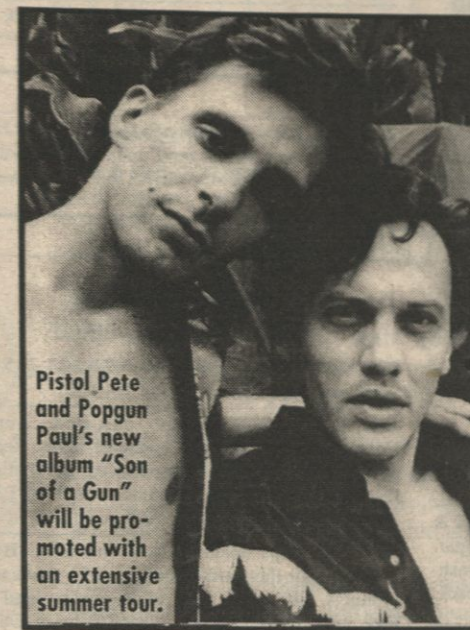
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## Pistol Pete & Poppun Paul



Pistol Pete and Poppun Paul's new album "Son of a Gun" will be promoted with an extensive summer tour.

> Continued from page 15

playing music," Sturman laughs. Neither ended up winning the \$1,000 grand prize a few weeks later, but the experience eventually led to them joining forces in 1994.

At first, the duo had no confidence in their ability as musicians. Sturman's act was very comedic, full of cheap one-liners and go-for-the-gut comedy. His singing style was influenced by 1980s queercore. "I didn't even try to sing in a pleasant

manner," Sturman admits. "I sang in a very tortured manner. I learned you could be entertaining without sounding good, per se. I think we sort of started from that."

Cowgill, on the other hand, was all about harmony. "When I met Pete, he was writing country songs," Cowgill says. "So it was really quite natural for me to layer my harmonies over top of his voice. As we did that, his voice started to blossom and became prettier. So then we started writing songs for those harmonies."

In 1995, the pair took their first stab at recording with the cassette *THE RISE OF SUPERFAG*.

The duo recorded live at the Mermaid Lounge on that July 4, and 200 copies were made to sell to their audiences, Cowgill says. Crowd-pleasers like "Jesus Loves The Little Faeries" and "Fun To Be Fem" captured their essence, but overall, they admit, the cassette was not a technical masterpiece.

Time passed, and though the pair wanted to record a CD, they didn't really know how to go about it. A friend finally told them to just do it to get 12-14 songs into circulation, Sturman says.

"So FINE RED WINE, our second album in 1998, was executed like that," Cowgill continues, completing Sturman's thoughts, executing the same synergy they display on stage. "We picked 14

songs, rehearsed the hell out of them, and went in and recorded it."

"Fine Red Wine" sounded much more polished, full of folksy cabaret material with a decidedly queer sense of humor. Not only did it get them attention here at home, but it also made the rounds of the national queer music underground. No doubt bolstered by their 30-city, 50-show tour last summer, the duo racked up press kudos in Minneapolis, Montana, Vermont, Syracuse, Chicago, and New York.

The tour, which included memorable gigs at New York's famed CBGB's Gallery and San Francisco's Gay Pride, amongst many others, was an enormous success. "We were amazingly surprised by how well it went," Sturman says. "There's something that happens when you're playing a lot of gigs in a short time; something else begins to take over, and you realize what you're capable of."

Also in this post-"Fine Red Wine" period, when they weren't on the road, the duo occasionally performed with additional band members. "That really changed our sound a lot," Cowgill says. "Once we played with a rhythm section, our whole world changed! We no longer had to carry the rhythm. It gave us more flexibility as musicians and vocalists."

That discovery led to the fuller sound of "Son of a Gun," which employs the help of bassist Sneaky Pete, drummer Matt Swiler, vocalist Myshkin, and producer Mike West on various stringed instruments. Some of the country-folk ballads from the "Fine Red Wine" period have remained—most notably "Wearing

An Angel's Wings" and "Evolution of Love"—but the majority of the record is a more energetic mixture of southern-flavored rhythm and blues ("Sign Me Up (I'm Ready)," "Whuttyername," "History of Heartbreak," and "Workin' For a Lovin' stand-out). The occasional cabaret tune (the exceptional "M'sieur") and banjo-picking hillbilly country ditty ("He's My Daddy") add to the variety.

"Pete's songwriting style has developed, and our musical collaboration has evolved, too," Cowgill asserts. "Everything's just better, and it's more listenable."

Indeed, "Son of a Gun" is their most enjoyable recording to date and seems to most aptly capture the breadth of their live act.

Now that the CD is out, their focus has returned to touring. They've got about 20 gigs already booked, and are looking to expand upon that for another summer out on the road.

"What feels exciting to me now," Sturman concludes, "is that I feel the scent of almost anything can happen right now. We don't have any scenarios of salvation from what we do; we're not looking for an angel like a record company to come and rescue us. All I want to do is quit my day job!"

**INFO** Contact Pistol Pete and Poppun Paul at (504) 944-2475 or their web-site: <http://welcome.to/pete&paul>

## Sizzling summer stages

> Continued from page 15

tionship between two prisoners in a Latin American jail, a political radical named Valentin and a gay window dresser, Molina. To escape the brutalities of prison life, Molina spins fantasy tales about the Spider Woman, an exotic film creation.

Jack Jackson portrays Valentin and Russell Hodgkinson appears as Molina. Le Petit tells us that Molina is "arguably" Hodgkinson's "most challenging role to date" and that his performance "will surprise and delight." Hmm.

Karen Hebert will be seen as the Spider Woman, a role created on Broadway by Chita Rivera. She also choreographs, and Derek Franklin and Sonny Borey direct.

Both Southern Rep and Le Chat Noir have world premieres on June 2; *THE CELESTIALS* opens at Southern Rep. Its subtitle, *ALFRED LUNT AND LYNN FONTANNE—THEIR LOVE FOR EACH OTHER AND THE STAGE*, tells playwright Robert Kornfeld's intent.

Or does it?

Will it accurately portray Lunt and Fontanne's relationship? Although both were gay, they no doubt loved each other greatly. Add Noel Coward and Helen Hayes to this merry little house party in the Wisconsin countryside, and we have a VERY interesting

set of possibilities. Let's hope that "The Celestials" won't be another chapter in the long, sad conspiracy to obliterate our gay heritage.

Closer to home is Director Carl Walker's third edition of his "Native Tongues" series at Le Chat Noir. Like the previous two, *NATIVE TONGUES 3* consists of monologues written by local writers. This one offers contributions by Sheila Bosworth, Patty Friedman, Frank Gagnard, Kevin Allman, Shelly Gillon, Eric Overmyer and John Dufresne.

The second week in June brings *RIVERDANCE* to the Saenger Theatre, *STEEL MAGNOLIAS* to Carline's Dinner Theatre, and *THE DESPERATE HOURS* to The Ethiopian Theatre.

"Riverdance"—for anyone who has been suffering television deprivation for the last few years and has somehow escaped it—is a high energy musical revue of Irish songs and dances. The show, which focuses on the evolution of Irish dance, had its premiere in Dublin in February 1995—and hasn't stopped since. The Saenger engagement, however, will be for only one week, June 7-11.

"Steel Magnolias," Robert Harling's play and film, is the now-familiar story of a group of women very much like the ones Harling grew up with in Natchitoches, La. The



Three-time Big Easy Award-winner Karen Hebert takes the title role in "Kiss of the Spider Woman," the season closer at Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carre. The Tony award-winning musical opens June 2.

Carline's production is directed by Perry Martin and features a bountiful array of talent, including Charlotte Schully, Janet Shea, and Shirl Ciutat. Those who know the film but not the play may be surprised to see that the men are never seen on stage, a device that more successfully defines the story and focuses the action on the relationships of the women.

The Ethiopian Theatre's "The Desperate Hours" presents a new twist on the classic thriller by revising the script to include an

interracial cast. Jay Roberts directs and Anthony Bean, Gwendolyn Foxworth, Eric Gable and Charles Bosworth lead the cast.

If all this entertainment weren't enough to sate the appetite, June 13 brings us *ELLEN DEGENERES* at the Saenger. This is her first New Orleans performance since she left here almost 20 years ago. Ellen got some of her earliest opportunities to perform in New Orleans gay and lesbian bars and was the emcee of the 1981 Mr. and Miss Gay Pride Contest at Charlene's.

To all of the above excitement, add three very popular long-running hits to the theatrical menu: *LATE NIGHT CATECHISM* at Le Petit, *THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLENNIUM* at the True Brew and *KURT WEILL, NEW ORLEANS STYLE* at Le Chat Noir.

So don't sweat in summer's heat. There's plenty of cool entertainment to go 'round.

### Critics' fraternity grows

The New Orleans theatrical world welcomes back a member to the fraternity of theatre critics, longtime *Times-Picayune* writer and playwright David Cuthbert. In fact, Cuthbert is not new to the corps of dramaturgy; he reviewed plays for the T-P some years ago.

We are a unique bunch. All of us (Cuthbert, Al Shea, Dalt Wonk, Ed Reil, George Patterson and yours truly) come to our tasks with hands-on experience in the theatre as writers, performers and directors. Cuthbert brings both craft and heart to his new assignment, and we are all the better for it.



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# My Stars!

by CHARLENE LICHTENSTEIN

## June 2-15

Life is full of surprises as Saturn and Jupiter conjunct. These two movers and shakers can make our best efforts victorious or roadkill. Keep your sunny-side up, compadre, and strike while the planets are hot; when everything clicks, this type of magic doesn't come around too often.

**ARIES (MARCH 21—APRIL 20)** Rainbow Rambos may feel quite content and self-satisfied with their current financial position, but the Saturn/Jupiter transit has a way of upending all best laid plans—for the better! The planets pour on the opportunity. Are you ready to lick it up?

**TAURUS (APRIL 21—MAY 21)** Hunker in the shadows no more cousin; Jupiter conjuncts Saturn, pumps up self-confidence, hands you a personal victory or three and brings an adoring world to your door. Thank goodness gay Bulls never let all this adulation go to their heads.

**GEMINI (MAY 22—JUNE 21)** Your closet blasts open and good thing, too! Meet that perfect lover through volunteer work; physical connection is sparked with a soulful connection. But if Saturn has any say, you'll be the one in the stirrups and saddle. Giddyup!

**CANCER (JUNE 22—JULY 23)** Pink Crabs have trouble concentrating on just one project, especially when pals fill your time with delightful diversions. Don't be surprised if you become overloaded with too much of a good thing. Hmm. Can there be too much of a good thing??

**LEO (JULY 24—AUGUST 23)** If proud Lions have been feeling like a pair of ragged paws toiling for little recognition and reward, worry no more. You haven't wasted your time and struggled for nothing all these months. Grab the crown and show 'em how royal you can be.

**VIRGO (AUGUST 24—SEPTEMBER 23)** Anything having to do with expansive, exotic pursuits has a way of solidifying your basic philosophy of life. Grab all the colors of the rainbow and broadcast your message farther than you ever thought possible. As your agent, I'll take the usual 15%.

**LIBRA (SEPTEMBER 24—OCTOBER 23)** Queer Libras may have been feeling repressed recently with stern Saturn casting a cold pall on your hottest urges. Worry no more, sweets; Jupiter/Saturn conjunct has lovers knocking down the door. Don't let Jealous Janes rain on your pride parade.

**SCORPIO (OCTOBER 24—NOVEMBER 22)** Scheme for revenge no more, gay Scorp; the Saturn/Jupiter conjunction enables you and your partner to see eye-to-eye. All it will take is open communication and a bit of patience. So much has been swept under the rug that the rug is three feet off the ground.

**SAGITTARIUS (NOVEMBER 23—DECEMBER 22)** Even the most menial task will have a profitable payoff when Saturn meets Jupiter. And how about a clear, sensible look at exercise and diet? Job gains are in the stars now and you'll want to celebrate in those tight, designer peekaboos to a select audience.

**CAPRICORN (DECEMBER 23—JANUARY 20)** Queer Caps should pursue any creative, artistic enterprise with as mucho gusto as possible during the Saturn/Jupiter conjunction. It revitalizes your outlook and may even lead to a fine, new romance. Must be that nude ballet ...

**AQUARIUS (JANUARY 21—FEBRUARY 19)** Aqueerians feel like the sanitation workers of the zodiac as they haul ancestral garbage out of their closets and dump it where it belongs. All your personal struggles have not been in vain; prepare for a true sense of personal pride.

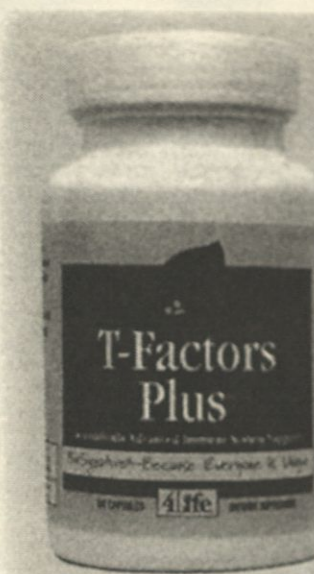
**PISCES (FEBRUARY 20—MARCH 20)** Your mind can go into overdrive with a barrage of great ideas that you simply have to tell the world. Mean what you say and say what you mean. Also listen carefully and discerningly; you're susceptible to crackpot ideas. Pat Buchanan should be avoided!

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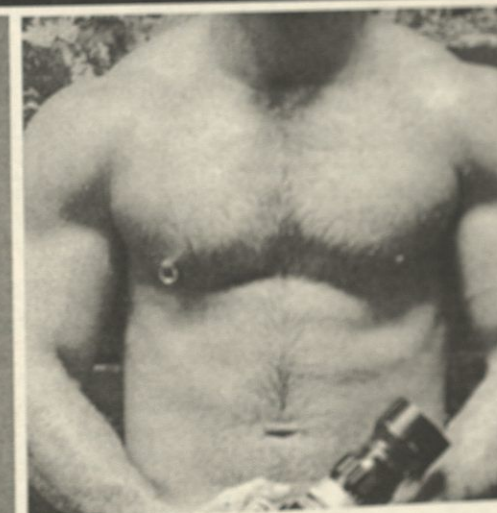
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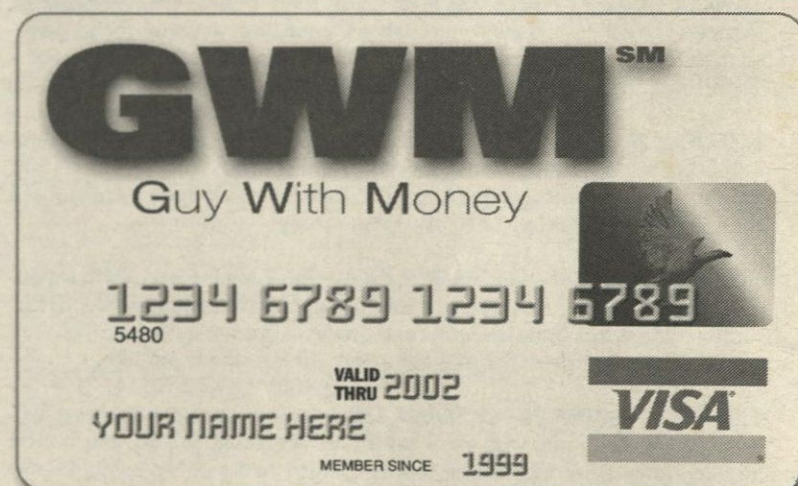


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