

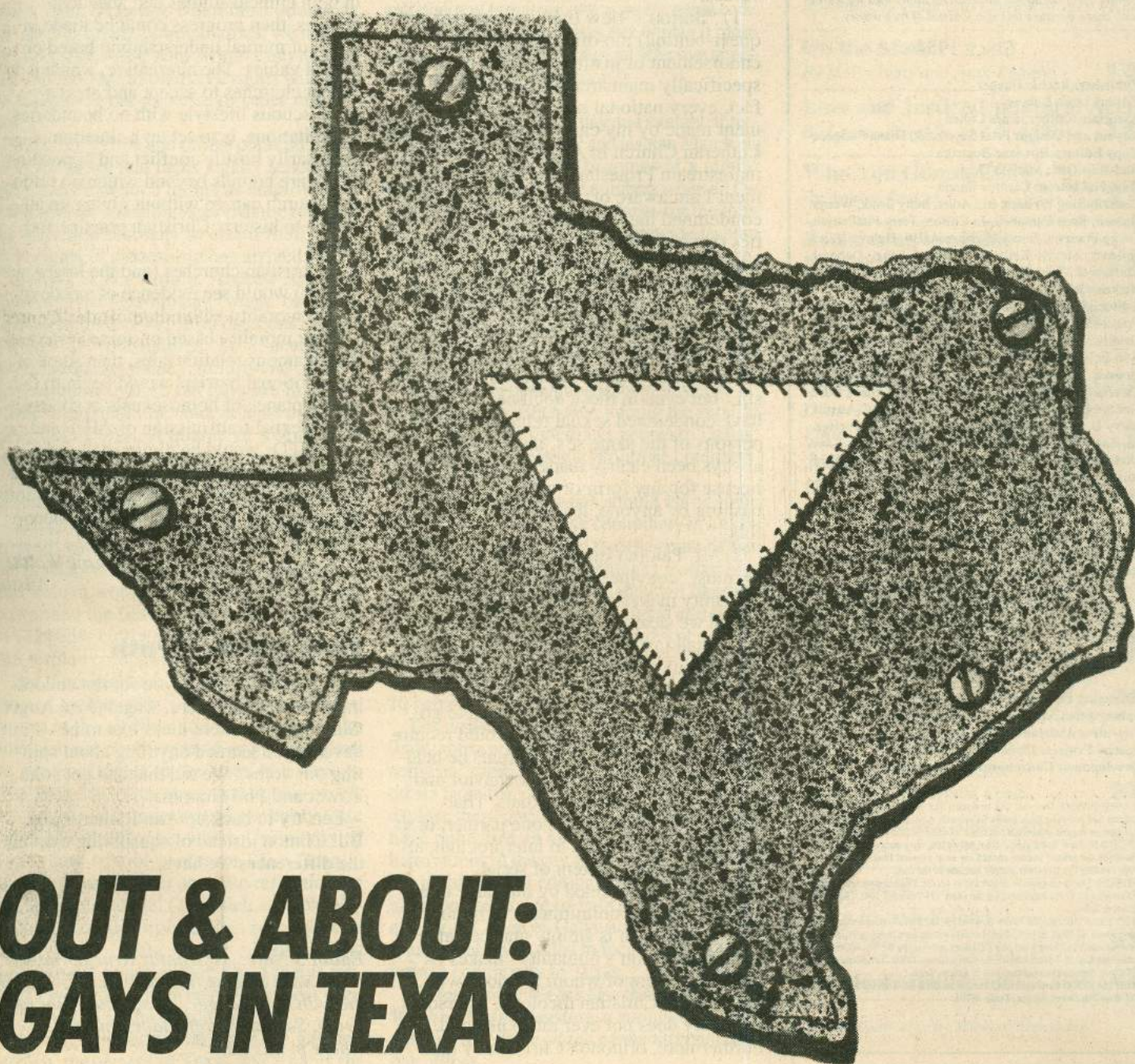
THE TEXAS Observer

A JOURNAL OF FREE VOICES

MAY 21, 1993 • \$1.75

**GOTTA
ELECT
KRUEGER**

Pg. 4



**OUT & ABOUT:
GAYS IN TEXAS**



A JOURNAL OF FREE VOICES

We will serve no group or party but will hew hard to the truth as we find it and the right as we see it. We are dedicated to the whole truth, to human values above all interests, to the rights of human-kind as the foundation of democracy; we will take orders from none but our own conscience, and never will we overlook or misrepresent the truth to serve the interests of the powerful or cater to the ignoble in the human spirit.

Writers are responsible for their own work, but not for anything they have not themselves written, and in publishing them we do not necessarily imply that we agree with them, because this is a journal of free voices.

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DIALOGUE

Common Ground

I appreciated Mr. Palomo's article on the loyalty of friends (See "The Betrayal of Friends," TO 4/23/93). I, too, would like to see more of the same. I, too, have questions about the positions taken by Senator Krueger, and am baffled by his performance to date. But as Mr. Palomo moved on his writing, moving toward a plea for more homosexual men and women to publicly declare their sexual orientation, I have to differ with his reading of circumstances and his understanding of Christian values.

1) "Barton's view (hate-mongering and queer-baiting) too often has the tacit endorsement of institutionalized religion, specifically mainstream Christianity." In fact, every national and synodical statement made by my church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (and every mainstream Protestant and Catholic statement I am aware of) has very specifically condemned the violence and social penalties that homosexuals have suffered. To single out any group for hatred is contrary to Christian values, and our churches have consistently condemned hatred directed toward homosexuals. Granted, there is some philosophical difficulty in the teaching about 'loving the sinner, but hating the sin,' but even in those documents which have condemned sexual relations between persons of the same sex, the case has always been clearly made that this is not license for any form of violence or gay-bashing by anyone, least of all church folk.

2) Mr. Palomo suggested that homosexuals must "convince ourselves that our humanity makes us good regardless of whom we sleep with." This is in the context of talking about fair rules. The fact is, Christianity and Christian churches have a hard time dealing with homosexuality, because we don't have many rules to go by, and the attempt to be fair would require at the minimum that homosexuals be held to at least the same level of behavior and accountability as heterosexuals. That means lifelong fidelity to one partner, or as our culture has chosen to interpret that, at least fidelity in a system of serial monogamy, sanctioned by marriage or at least long-term commitments of mutual sexual fidelity. It is simply unacceptable to say that a person's humanity "makes us good regardless of whom we sleep with." In orthodox Christian theology, a person's humanity does not ever make us good. Furthermore, orthodox Christianity (and

Judaism) has always placed a high value on limiting "whom we sleep with." For Christians, sexual fidelity is an absolute requirement for all human beings. Without fail, infidelity is condemned in heterosexuals as well as homosexuals. And here is where Mr. Palomo could perform a service to the homosexual community as well as open a communication link to orthodox Christians. If he, and more spokesmen for homosexuality, would appeal to the homosexual community for a standard of monogamous behavior, and unequivocally condemn homosexual promiscuity apparent in both clinical studies and anecdotal sources, then progress could be made in terms of mutual understanding based on shared values. The alternative, which is to expect churches to accept and bless a promiscuous lifestyle with no boundaries or limitations, is to set up a situation of necessarily hostile conflict and opposition. These are bounds beyond which no orthodox church can go without giving up all claims to historic Christian practice and values.

If Christian churches (and the larger public also) would see evidence of a code of sexual morality within homosexuality, and see that morality based on some system of monogamous relationships, then some of the emotional barriers would begin to fall to acceptance of homosexuals in society. Homosexual transmission of AIDS and other STDs would be diminished and a framework for sexual morality acceptable to all could be laid, at which time questions of intolerance and hatred could be more profitably discussed.

Wayne Walther
Austin

Turn Away Wrath

I am very ANGRY at you for not endorsing Bob Krueger. Sure, Angel [José Angel Gutiérrez] has more ideas like mine — but haven't you learned anything about splitting our votes? We did that and got John Tower and Phil Gramm.

Lets try to back up Ann Richards and Bill Clinton instead of squabbling over all the differences we have.

Louise B. Raggio
Dallas

Editor's Note: As Senator Krueger might reply, with a verse from King Lear, "Touch me with noble anger." Oh, would that he could. See the runoff endorsement elsewhere in this issue.

EDITORIALS

The Last Disenfranchised

We are the last disenfranchised minority in this country," Austin newspaper publisher Kay Longcope said of lesbian and gay Americans. This, it seems, is essential to understanding that the gay and lesbian movement is a civil rights movement, and no more a cultural movement than were the black and Mexican-American civil rights movements, both of which had cultural components and neither of which have yet fulfilled all of their goals. (And in an age when false dilemmas are used to divide political allies, we should be careful of those who would convince us that full gay and lesbian civil rights will only be realized at the expense of other minorities.)

What Longcope and others contend is that no other group that faces legally sanctioned exclusion from such things as employment, housing and education. And, that the moment for gays and lesbians to claim their complete rights of citizenship has arrived.

Writing in *The Nation*, Andrew Kopkind called it "The Gay Moment," when "out" gays "inhabit high- and mid-level positions in journalism and publishing, law, academia, medicine and psychiatry, the arts and creative professions . . . More out gays are in public office throughout the land, at least up to the sub-Cabinet level. A quarter of a century of gay and lesbian political action has produced, *inter alia*, the first pro-gay White House — despite distressing backsliding."

The gay political moment in Texas perhaps arrived with the election of Ann Richards, the first Governor to appoint openly gay men and lesbian women to positions of political power and the first gubernatorial candidate to so openly cultivate the support of the gay and lesbian community.

But Ann Richards, like Bill Clinton, was elected by less than a majority of all those voting in the election and her victory at the polls can not be interpreted as a referendum on gay civil rights in the state. If it were to vote yea or nay on most gay and lesbian issues, the Texas electorate would probably vote much like the House, which University of Texas law school professor Lino Graglia describes as the most accurate reflection of the Texas electorate. (To which, a black television journalist from Dallas responded at last year's John Henry Faulk First Amendment Seminar that: "And that is precisely why minorities have won most civil rights battles in the courts.")

Where, then, does that leave the gay and lesbian movement in Texas and what is the

course it should follow toward full political enfranchisement? What is the prospect of overturning the state's sodomy statute, either in the courts or in the Legislature, and thereby ending government's intrusion into the bedroom and the criminalization of acts of private intimacy between consenting adults? (How, for example, does the movement respond to the tactical move of Democratic Representative Warren Chisum, who last week extended the anti-sodomy provision of the state's penal code to heterosexuals rather than risk having it more easily challenged because of its selective application to the gay population?)

How do Texans, both gay and straight, interpret the April 25 gay and lesbian March on Washington, and what becomes of a public show of commitment and numbers when all the participants get onto the airplanes for the long ride home? What role can a statewide lesbian and gay newspaper play in building a movement and what progress have gay journalists made in mainstream journalism?

What particular difficulties does gay and lesbian life pose for young people in Texas? Or for gay parents in Texas?

And can a two-stepping lesbian stay at home in West Texas rather than joining the rural-to-urban migration that draws people to Dallas' Oak Lawn or Houston's Montrose communities?

Exploring these issues should be of some interest to the progressive community in Texas, which should understand that the entire debate about numbers and percentages is specious when applied to civil rights and civil liberties. It is worthwhile to take to the courts and streets in defense of the constitutional rights of one person or 10 people and should make little difference whether a minority represents 1 percent or 10 percent of the population.

The writers whose work is included in this issue, some professional journalists and some activists, some from the gay community and others from the straight community, set out to explore these questions. We don't presume to have published an all-inclusive nor comprehensive look at the gay and lesbian community, but in this special edition of *The Observer* we have, on the advice of Pat Gandy of Houston and Janet Cohen of Galveston, dedicated one issue of this publication to focus on the gay and lesbian community in Texas. — L.D.

Editors' Note: We are also thankful to Cicely Wynne for shepherding a number of these manuscripts through the community and into our offices.

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Cover illustration by Michael Alexander

Outcasts on Montrose

BY ALEXANDRA HARDY

Houston

IN A BROWN, SLIGHTLY FRAYED Brooks Brothers suit, Lujack roams the streets of Montrose. With briefcase in hand, the strikingly handsome 16-year-old cultivates a carefully planned image: that of a young man in demand. It's a hard image to live up to, for on most nights Lujack has no idea where he is going to sleep.

Lujack's grandparents gave him a choice: Give up your gay lifestyle or get out. For Lujack, denying his sexuality was worse than the prospect of having to survive on the streets. Worse than sleeping in a bathroom at LBJ Hospital for a month (which he did in the beginning) or selling his body for a place to sleep.

Lujack's not alone. According to Tracy Brown, director of the Houston Institute for the Protection of Youth (HIPY), between 30 and 50 percent of homeless runaway youths are gay. Many of them, like Lujack, are thrown out of their homes when their parents find out their sexual orientation.

With the prevalence of AIDS, throwing a child out into the streets almost ensures an early death. Of the hundreds of teenagers who have sought help from HIPY, an organization aimed at helping gay runaway teens and teenagers who are HIV-positive, an estimated 80 percent have had to work as prostitutes at some point. "Survival sex," as the organization calls it, often means a death sentence for these teens. The going rate for sex on the streets is \$40 with a condom or \$80 without. To a hungry teenager, the higher price is often worth the AIDS risk.

Most of the homeless gay teenagers fall into prostitution without really thinking about it. Lujack describes his first time: "I didn't know any of the clubs yet. I was hooking around there and I got picked up. [The john] was riding in a taxi and he was drunk."

The costumer struck his deal with Lujack and took the boy home with him. Once there, Lujack told him there were certain sexual acts he wouldn't perform. "I told him I wasn't for anal penetration and he said, 'Alright.' I told him I'm not going to suck him off and he said that was alright too." Lujack says he endured the man's advances "and waited the night out."

Lujack and others like him are never short of busy places to get picked up. Some of the

briskest business is conducted on the corner of Pacific and Hyde Park in Montrose and on a concrete slab on Avondale Street behind the club Numbers. For the discreet john looking for young flesh for sale, several area bars are notorious for letting underage hustlers in to hang around and look for customers. The older customers coming in to look for teenage prostitutes tend to have money to spend, so it is to the bars' advantage to let the teenagers in without checking ID.

There's nothing about the outside of QT's indicating this is the place to pick up teenage boys, no flashing signs or billboards to give away what goes on inside. Yet to some in the community, the gray building with yellow trim on lower Westheimer is known as a place where men can go to pick up underage hustlers.

QT's has the typical gay bar mirrored windows that allow customers to come and go discreetly. There's a circular bar in the middle of the place and mirrors on most of the walls.

On one Friday night QT's was filled with middle-aged men. One of them, who appeared to be in his 50s, approached us. He was eyeing 22-year-old Donnie, who had volunteered to go with me and Lane Lewis, assistant clinical director and vice president of HIPY, to see some of the clubs frequented by the "chicken hawks" and the kids they use for sex.

"Are you two married?" the older man asked, pointing to Donnie and me. Donnie looked at me nervously, laughing. "Is this your boyfriend?" the man pressed, not waiting for an answer to the first question.

Remembering similar situations in straight clubs, wanting whatever male friend I was with to claim me as his wife, I looked to Lane for the right answer. "No," he spoke for us, "they're not together." The man, obviously delighted to hear this, sat down and offered to buy our drinks.

Across the bar a man in his late 40s chatted with the bartender. He was wearing khaki pants, a white short-sleeved Oxford shirt and a wedding band on his left hand. He looked like he belonged at a PTA meeting in West University. Madonna's "Holiday" blared from the stereo and the place seemed to liven up as younger patrons started drifting in.

After a half-hour, the first young hustler of the night walked in. Dark-haired and cocaine-thin, the 20-ish man strolled around the bar, stopping a few times to smile at patrons who looked his way. No one seemed interested.

A few minutes later, a group of street kids, males and females, came in. Most of them headed for the pool table near the back wall. One of them, though, a fair-haired boy of about 15, headed for the bar, strolling around it like he owned the place. According to Lane, in every group there appears to be a star hustler and the blond kid appeared to be it.

He came up and put his hand on the man who was trying to pick up Donnie, tilting his head and smiling invitingly. The older man barely acknowledged him and continued his flirtation with Donnie. The young hustler, believing his territory was being invaded, twisted his smile into a look of scorn aimed at the other boy. We left the club shortly after that, walking as fast as possible. Lane feared the young hustler might try to follow us, using physical intimidation to keep us away from his turf.

Later that night, at KoKo's, a club on Fairview, the clean-cut married man from QT's appeared to have found what he was looking for in the young dark-haired hustler, whom he'd apparently missed at QT's earlier. The hustler seemed calmer now that he was on his way to making his nightly quota.

Although clubs like QT's make it more convenient for the hustlers and their customers, those familiar with the scene agree that if these clubs did not exist the young hustlers would find another place to sell themselves. Bob Neely, owner of QT's and KoKo's, feels his clubs have gotten an unfair amount of blame for the problem. "Years ago we had a tremendous problem [with teenage hustlers]," he says. "I was an easy target because I've got a gay club."

Neely sees the problem as having more to do with a lack of "police cooperation." The police, he claims, are more busy harassing innocent men than dealing with the neighborhood's crime problem. Police officers aren't sympathetic. They say they know what goes on in Neely's bars. A sergeant who spoke on the condition of anonymity identified QT's as one of the places where older men seek young prostitutes.

For his part, Neely says it's hard for any club owner to prevent an occasional minor from coming in. "I'm not going to say no minors have been here. I doubt any proprietor can say that." Guessing which of his patrons are hustling is a problem, he says. "If you stand at the door and turn away anyone who may or may not be a hustler or you don't think looks good, you won't be in business for long."

Alexandra Hardy is a freelance writer in Houston. This article originally appeared in the Houston Press.

Who wants to sell their body to a fat, bald-headed guy looking for a cheap thrill?" asks Lujack.

For Lujack hustling to get by is a "miserable job."

The gay teenagers, after living on the streets awhile, become very cold and heartless. They slowly alienate themselves from everyone else.

It doesn't take an observer long to see that Lujack is detached. The striking young man with aristocratic features — belying an impoverished upbringing in the near-Northeast side — relates the tragedies of his life as if he were talking about what he had for dinner. When asked how he feels about being rejected by his grandparents, he replies in a monotone, "I'm saddened." Lujack speaks very carefully and is extremely articulate. He is image-conscious, and embellishes his speech with a fake British accent. He tends to fall in and out of the accent.

Lujack's emotional barriers allow him to cope with a reality many of us find unthinkable — total rejection by the people who are supposed to love him most. The longer a teen has been on the streets the better he is at masking his pain. "Street smarts are my education," says Lujack. "This is the product you get."

Gay teenagers — at least, those who are condemned to the streets — become so jaded they begin to suspect that everyone wants them for one thing — their young bodies.

Mark Gatner is a counselor at HIPY and also volunteers at Q Patrol, a neighborhood watch organization that patrols Montrose looking for a gay bashers. He met Christopher, a street youth who has spent most of his teenage years in jail, during the winter when he and his partner were on Q Patrol. "It was cold and raining and we asked him where he was going to stay. He said under a bridge on Allen Parkway, so we invited him to come home with us. When we got home his first question was, 'What do I have to do?' I said, 'Go to the front bedroom and go to sleep.' He said, 'Well, are we going to do it in the morning then?' I said, 'There are no sexual favors you have to do here.' That really caught him off guard because evidently he's always had to do that for a place to stay."

Christopher never had much of a chance. When he was 7, he came home from school one day to the rented house he had shared with his mother and found her gone. He has only seen her sporadically since then. After his mother took off, Christopher was shuffled from one foster home to another. He is now 19 and serving time in the county jail for selling crack. It was his second conviction.

On a Saturday night in October, a distinguished-looking man in his 60s frantically rushed into Charlie's, a Montrose coffee shop popular with the gay community, looking for his son. The man's son, 17-year-old "Allen," wasn't at home,

and his father feared he was on the streets again. Lujack had called Allen's father earlier in the evening to warn him that his son had started hustling to pay for a friend's drug habit.

The father, who spoke only on the condition that he and his son remain anonymous, described Allen as a "brilliant, remarkable young man." A former clergyman, Allen's father left the church and married his wife when they were both in their 40s. They adopted Allen and, his father says, "he has been the center of our lives." They gave Allen everything, sending him to an exclusive private school where he excelled, even receiving a letter of commendation from the National Honor Society.

In the past year Allen has left home for days at a time without telling his parents where he was going. His parents have accepted his being gay and are now trying to deal with Allen's psychological problems, which include severe depression and difficulty concentrating. Allen's father says he told his son, "My love for you has not diminished. In fact it has probably increased."

Allen's father sees the issue of his son being gay as something that is "genetic. I would love it if he were straight and he would someday have a family. We could have grandchildren. I don't think [being gay is] a choice. This is a given."

Allen is one of the lucky ones, although apparently he is not aware of it. A young teenager watched as Allen's parents left to search for their son and commented, "I would love to have parents that cared for me that much."

John tried to be a good son. "I never used drugs," he says. "I never had trouble with the law. I tried to be honest with my mother. I never made Fs." Despite his attempts, he says that relentless abuse from his parents, both verbal and physical, left him with little choice but to run away.

John left his home in Waco five months ago in search of more stability in Houston. He auditioned at the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, was accepted and now attends the school. He has a part-time job as well. He describes himself as a "gay Christian." He is one of six who live at the HIPY house, a home for gay teens who are 17 or older.

"It was hell," John says of his home in Waco. "I was abused and cussed at. I didn't know if I was going to have a home one night or something to eat." John says he tried to use his hardships to his advantage. "Ever since I was little, I was told that I wasn't going to be anything, that I was the scum of the earth. Instead of taking that negatively, I tried to take it positively and use that toward something."

That something for John means finishing high school and trying to get into New York University or Berkeley so he can pursue a

career in acting and dance.

As hard as the streets are, many teens view it as a better option than the homes they leave behind. Being rejected by their parents, not surprisingly, leaves many teens confused and with little self-esteem.

Even for those like John who have a strong will to persevere, the constant assaults on their self-esteem begin to take their toll. When John lived in Waco he stored away so much internal anger that he would go to the banks of a nearby creek and beat crawfish to death with a bat.

A Houston police sergeant who regularly works the Montrose area has his own theories about the psychological forces at work on gay teens: "If you put a monkey in the closet long enough, it will grow into a gorilla." The sergeant, like others who have had to deal with kids firsthand, doesn't understand how their parents can abandon them. "To dump a 13-, 14- or 15-year-old on the streets is inexcusable," he says. What these kids need, says the officer, is "a stronger family unit. With all the hoopla in the election about it, it almost seems sacrilegious to talk about it."

The needs of gay teens aren't any different from the needs of anyone else, according to the officer. "We all need the same things, whether it's the bare necessities or someone to lean on. You need that, I need that, we all need that. If you can't get it at home, you're going to find some place to get it."

Like the father of Allen, the sergeant does not see the fact that teens are gay as a moral issue: "If they got both arms cut off, would they abandon them then?" An irony of our society, says the officer, is that "it's a little more accepted for a daughter to come home pregnant than this."

Brandy, a wholesome-looking, brown-haired 16-year-old, didn't get pregnant. To hear her describe her parents, though, they would have preferred a child born out of wedlock to a gay daughter. Last year, when she was 16, Brandy's father went through her journal. "He read that I was having thoughts," says Brandy, "and that me and my friend were experimenting. My mother freaked out. She's a holy roller."

Brandy, who is from the Channelview area, says her parents had her institutionalized. "One of the reasons," she says, was that "from the time I was about five until I was about 11, I was molested by my grandfather. I was dealing with that and they found out I was bisexual." Brandy stayed in the hospital for 30 days. "I came out and it didn't change me," she says. "My mother just insists I'm not lesbian."

Brandy, like a lot of other gay teens, has tried to deny what she is in order to make her parents happy. "I keep telling [my mother] that I tried to change it, but I can't. I tried to see myself only with men, but I just can't trust men like I can women," she says.

Brandy couldn't "change" so her mother gave the teen an ultimatum. "My mother

insists that if I live there at her house, then I'm not gay — that I cannot be gay."

Brandy is finishing her last year of high school. Since her parents kicked her out, she has been living with a friend. She hopes to go on to college to study psychology so that she can help runaways like herself.

Being a parent means saying to your child

"I'm going to love you no matter who are," says Mark Gartner. "The parents see this as a sign that my children are rejecting me, but it's not that."

John thinks that even though being gay sometimes means being abandoned, it is also the parent's loss because "you're losing someone you love."

If they could just see," says Brandy, "that we're really not bad people. I think gays, we're really not bad people. I think gays and lesbians are among the most caring people, because they've been put down so much that they know how to open their hearts. If parents could just sit down and realize that we're still the same people." □

Gay Father: Being There

BY JOHN DAVID MOSS

I GET UP AT SIX in the morning 'cause I've got to get the kids to school. I jump in my car. I fight the traffic. I go to work. I practice medicine all day. I get home in order to get supper on the table. Get their homework done. Spend a little time watching TV together. Get them in bed, leaving me an hour or an hour and a half of free time."

That's how Philip Baker, 44, describes a typical day with his two children. That doesn't include an active role in Gay Fathers of Austin, one of three such chapters in the state.

Baker is the father of Jesse, 12, and Caitlin, 9. They live in a middle-class neighborhood in the north-central part of the city.

"Being a gay parent is no different than being a straight parent," says Baker, whose wife was killed in an automobile accident five years ago. "If you have children ... you have to be prepared to dedicate the rest of your life to their well-being ... and that means being there — gay or straight."

In Austin, Dallas and Houston, where there are large and very active chapters, gay fatherhood is not an anomaly, says Baker, a physician's assistant with the city of Austin. Most gay men who are fathers conceived children in wedlock, realizing at the time that they were going against their true sexual orientation; for others, more time was necessary before they made that discovery and accepted it.

When a gay father first comes out, says Baker, he not only has to deal with his own homosexuality but the impact that acknowledgement will have on his children.

Gay Fathers of Austin was formed to provide a support group for just such men who may have nowhere else to turn. Ironically, says Baker now, that support group has worked all too well, with the group no longer as active as it once was.

"Everyone got stable," says Baker with a smile. "The kids knew, the wife knew, the fights were over. We keep the listing, but

we have no formal meetings." He and other members do meet, when asked, with parents just coming out.

Of the fathers involved with the group when he joined, Baker says that all have either received custody of their children or have regular visitation rights.

"It's hard to maintain a support group when everyone's life is great."

Yet the need of such a group remains, as new gay fathers come out and gay couples decide to have children. Legal and emotional needs of those families must be met.

In Travis County, "there is a gentleman's agreement that, basically, sexuality is not an issue," says Baker.

Though that may be the case legally, that's not necessarily the case emotionally. In some cases, said Baker, straight spouses may use the issue to get back at their partner or to gain full custody of children. In one example, a gay father was given a divorce decree mandating that his daughter not spend the night at his home. Nor could he nap in the same room as his lover when his daughter was visiting.

Others are not allowed to see their children unsupervised, or at all.

Most of these problems usually are worked out over time, as was the case of the stiff requirements of the father's divorce decree, Baker said. "In time, his wife agreed that these restrictions were unfair and they were removed."

Generally, said Baker, matters work out best if hostility is not an overriding factor in the divorce. "Most people wait [to divorce] 'til they're at each other's throats. If they split when they still love each other, still friends, then there is so much more to work with." Baker says that it also makes a big difference if the husband comes out to his wife, rather than being found out.

And what about the children? "To most children, being gay is just another piece of information. The most important thing to them is that you are 'Dad.'"

It also helps when children are told about a parent's homosexuality when they are young, rather than in their teens. Jesse was 6 or 7 when his dad told him he was gay and he was more

interested in getting a coke to drink." "I wasn't shocked or anything, but I didn't understand."

Jesse adds that things might have been different had his dad waited until now to tell him. "For six years I've known not to listen to everybody at school ... if I had not known and I started believing all these things they say, it wouldn't have worked. It would have taken a long time."

Caitlin is more interested in her homework, trophies, blueberry muffins and not cleaning out the cat's litter box, than she is about her father's sexuality. She did talk to her school counselor about her father, and her father did receive a concerned call from the school.

"My experience has been, so far, that people's reactions depend upon whether they know you or not," Baker said. "I've found that given a chance, lots of people are surprisingly tolerant."

"A lot aren't," Jesse interjects, explaining that, in school, there is a lot of homophobia. "I'm not going to come out and tell somebody because they don't know anything. They won't listen to anybody, they're really closed minded about it all, so I just don't talk about it at school."

He said it frustrates him when his peers exhibit prejudice in remarks or jokes about homosexuals. "It bothers me, but I don't say anything. I've gotten real close to getting in big fights over it." Jesse looks at his father shyly, and adds: "And I probably will before the year's over."

Baker believes the reason so many people have such negative images of gays is because they mostly see only the negative stereotypes. "Most straight people have never thought about gay issues. Why? Because it didn't touch their lives, because we were invisible. We kept ourselves invisible. I understand why we did that, but the bottom line is we have to take responsibility and come out of the closet."

Caitlin, asked whether her father's sexuality makes a difference to her, simply said: "Not at all."

Jesse had this advice to other children of gay parents: "Don't listen to the kids. If I'd listened to everybody at school, I'd hate him [his father], but I don't. I don't listen because they're wrong." □

John David Moss is an Austin freelance writer. This originally appeared in Texas Triangle.

Gay Parenting

BY DEBRA E. HUNT
AND CONNIE MOORE

GAY PEOPLE (both male and female) are engaging in the process of creating families more than ever before. There is even a new term for it: the "Gayby Boom." All across the country, gay men and lesbians are fighting to keep custody and visitation rights with children from previous marriages, or are starting families with "new children" through adoption, guardianships, conservatorships, foster parenting and insemination.

Being a parent isn't easy and being a gay parent can be twice as difficult. Gay parents have to deal not only with the typical day-to-day duties that children inspire and require, but also with the hurdles and barriers designed to keep them from being parents in the first place. They often find that they are victims of uninformed biases and opinions, which can affect the parent-child relationship.

The idea of gay parenting is unsettling to many people. And most who disagree with it seem to rely on myths about gay parenting to support their positions. But studies conducted in the last decade, including one published in *Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, have shown that children of gay parents are no more likely to have psychological problems or to suffer emotional or physical abuse than are children of heterosexual parents.

Many people argue that gay men and lesbians are not psychologically fit to rear children. Their thinking has not kept pace with the recognition by the psychiatric community that homosexuality is not a mental disorder. But studies also indicate that there is no such thing as a "homosexual personality" and that gay society is composed of personalities as diverse as those found among heterosexuals. Researchers have also learned that the lifestyles and parenting skills of gay parents are substantially similar to those of heterosexual parents.

A common concern in the heterosexual community is that children of gay parents will be raised to become homosexuals. This misconception, which stems from the belief that parents influence a child's sexual orientation, ignores the overwhelming evidence that most homosexuals were reared

by heterosexual parents. And, studies show that the incidence of gay and straight children is the same in both communities; a child reared by gay parents is just as likely to be heterosexual as a child raised by straight parents. As early as 1978 *Psychology Today* was making that argument, evident in the title of a feature article: "Children of Homosexuals Seem to Be Headed Straight."

Perhaps the most grotesquely inaccurate assumptions made by the general public is that gay parents are more likely to molest or otherwise abuse their children. There is simply no basis for this conclusion. Statistics show that 97 percent of child molestation cases involve heterosexual men, and 87 percent of the victims are girls. Pedophilia is almost exclusively a heterosexual offense. How ironic that a child is more protected from sexual abuse in a gay or lesbian household than in a heterosexual one.

A new stigma haunting gay parents, and gay males in particular, is the fear that children living in a gay household will contract HIV and develop AIDS. The only way to dispel this myth is, of course, with fact. HIV is not spread through casual contact (including hugging and kissing). So a child of an HIV-positive parent is at no great risk of contracting AIDS, and the increased incidence of HIV in the heterosexual community makes pointing an accusing finger at gay parents less reasonable.

Many people believe that children reared by gay parents will be subject to more harassment and ridicule by their peers than will the children of heterosexual parents. This is a myth so powerful that many gay parents use it as an excuse to keep their sexual orientation hidden from their children. Studies show, however, that the amount of harassment of children of gay parents is no more than what children normally undergo as they proceed through life, and that the child's ability to cope with any harassment is directly proportional to the amount of love and support given by the parent. A child who is raised to feel comfortable with a variety of lifestyles generally develops a strong sense of individuality and self-worth.

Once the myths are unraveled, gay parents can get about the business of parenting. How is it, then, that gay people become parents?

Like their heterosexual counterparts, lesbians and gay men create families. The most common methods are by adoption and through heterosexual experiences. Artificial insemination is increasingly popular among lesbians. Other ways include guardian-

ships, managing conservatorships, and foster parenting. All but insemination involve some legal proceeding.

Traditionally, the most explosive arena for gay parents is the custody dispute. Twenty years ago, very few gays and lesbians were asking for custody of their children, and even fewer were winning. Some would be awarded custody, only to have it restricted to times when a gay partner was not around. Since then, more and more gay parents are successfully gaining custody, often without restrictions. Courts in every state still consider the sexual orientation of the parents in deciding best interests of the child, but sexual orientation is no longer an absolute bar to custody; it is only a factor to be considered with all the others.

Gay men and women are legally considered to be single parents, and single parents typically fall to the bottom of adoption agency lists. Because gay and lesbian marriages are only a recent innovation in uncharted legal waters, an adoption creates a legal relationship between the child and only one gay parent. Unlike straight parents, the gay co-parent has no legal rights to custody or visitation under the law. However, the legal community has come to the rescue, inventing contracts for gay parents that set out the rights and responsibilities of each in the event the relationship ends. And a handful of gay joint-parent adoptions have been approved by courts.

Guardianships, managing conservatorships, and foster parenting are all variations on the custody/adoption theme. Each of these methods establishes a legal relationship with the child, in varying degrees of permanence. Guardianships and managing conservatorships are typically private efforts involving a child already living with a gay parent. Both guardianships and managing conservatorships can be temporary, or can last until the child turns age 18. With foster parenting, on the other hand, a state agency places a child with a gay parent. The foster parent relationship is usually temporary, although it can last for several years. In each of the three situations, only one gay parent will have the legal relationship with the child.

No matter what hurdles society creates, one fact is clear: Gay parenting exists, and it is gaining acceptance in both the legal community and in society as a whole. All parents have a tough job to perform. Gay men and lesbians deserve a chance to perform as parents without having to cope with unnecessary societal limitations.

Debra E. Hunt and Connie Moore are law partners serving the lesbian and gay community in Houston.

On the March

BY MOLLY IVINS

WELL, THE GAY FOLKS had a fine march in Washington, D.C., but I think they missed a couple of bets. Jack Gordon suggests that they should have stopped en route and had a ceremony thanking the feds for naming that fine new building right there on Pennsylvania Avenue after one of their own. That's the J. Edgar Hoover Building.

Speaking of whom, there was a great example of why we don't want to force gays to stay in the closet.

And I would have liked to see a banner reading "Ban Heterosexuals from the Military — Remember Tailhook." I trust you all took a look at the charming little report on that incident.

I suspect that finally ventilating all the myths and misconceptions about gays is a useful exercise, even for those who would prefer not to think about them. "I have nothing against gays," my mother is fond saying. "I just wish they'd stay in the closet." But we all know by now — or should — that that state of affairs was cruel and unjust and led to terrible abuses.

Of all the odd misperceptions current about homosexuality, perhaps the oddest is that it is a choice, that people choose to be homosexual. That strikes me as so patently silly. Did any of us who are straight choose to be heterosexual? When? Did we wake up one morning when we were 15 and say, "Gosh, I think I'll be a heterosexual?" For heaven's sakes, how can anyone believe that people choose to be homosexual? "I think it would be a lot of fun to called 'queer' and 'sissy' for the rest of my life, so I think I'll be gay."

Last time I checked, the experts were still leaning toward the view that homosexuality is multicausal (Isn't that a dandy word?). Most gay people I know believe they were literally born that way, that it's like being left-handed or brown-eyed. But in at least some cases, there is apparently some developmental influence as well.

The best description I ever heard of sexual orientation came from Dr. John Money of Johns Hopkins University, who used to draw it on horizontal scale going from one to 10, with one being completely homosexual and 10 being completely heterosexual. Money says that very few people are either one or 10

and about as few are at five (totally bisexual). Most of us fall into a clump ranging from about six to eight, while there's a smaller clump of homosexuals ranging from about four to two.

Because homosexuality occurs in many species of animals (stickleback fish always struck me as the strangest case) and because it has appeared in all human cultures throughout history, we must conclude that it is what statisticians call a "normal aberrant" (And isn't that a dandy phrase?).

I actually saw a letter to the editor last week declaring that homosexuality is a symptom of the decadence and decline of civilization and that it didn't exist among primitive people such as American Indians. *Au contraire*, as we say in Lubbock. Aside from the insult to Indians, there were indeed gay Indians before the white man came, and at least in the Plains tribes, they were regarded as sort of endearingly special.

Among the less charming counter-demonstrators at the Washington march was the group from Kansas carrying signs saying "God hates fags" and "Death to fags." It is true that the Old Testament contains an injunction against homosexuality; it's in the same list of laws given when the Hebrews were a wandering desert people and were forbidden to eat shellfish. I always thought Christians were supposed to be followers of Jesus Christ, and Jesus' injunctions to love one another — to love even the despised and the outcast — could scarcely be clearer. Hate is not a Christian value.

And, of course, there are the gay fundamentalists. We all know of scandals involving gay preachers, and if you wonder what

it's like to grow up gay in a religious environment that stigmatizes gays, I commend to you a truly funny book called *Strange Angel — The Gospel According to Benny Joe* by Ben Davis, who grew up near Dallas and would have become a fundamentalist preacher had it not been for his sexual orientation. The book's affectionate look at fundamentalist religion is worth the price for that alone (Corona Publishing, San Antonio).

As matter of law, I do not see that we have any choice but to seek to ensure that gays have full civil rights. They are citizens; they pay taxes; as Jesse Jackson said Sunday, no one gives them a break on April 15. They serve honorably in the military, ban or no ban; the Sixth Army's soldier of the year marched at the gay and lesbian march in Washington. [Editor's note: He is now being thrown out of the Army.]

It has been my observation that some gay people are absolutely wonderful human beings, and some are complete you-know-whats, and most are somewhere in between. Depressingly like heterosexuals. So I suggest we all grow up and get over our small-town prejudices. (I can never remember whether it was "Queers wear red on Friday" or "green on Thursday." Lord, didn't we grow up with some silly ideas?) In our fair land, no one can force us to be tolerant. But neither can prejudice be allowed to keep people out of jobs for which they are qualified.

I suppose some people will continue to feel entitled to hate gays. As the psychiatrists have been telling us for a long time, hating them seems to be a function of being afraid that you might be one yourself. □

Molly Ivins is a columnist for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram and a former Texas Observer editor.

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After the March

BY JUAN PALOMO

IN APRIL 1963, an all-Mexican-American slate of candidates ousted the Anglo city council incumbents in Crystal City with the help of the Teamsters Union and PASO, the Political Association of Spanish-language Organizations. It was the first time something like that had happened in the history of the state.

On the day they took office, Juan Cornejo, who had just been selected mayor by the council, looked around the room and said, "Now what do we do?"

I was reminded of that on the day after the great gay and lesbian March on Washington as I boarded an American Airlines jet bound for Dallas. The couple next to me may have been the only straight passengers on the plane and they looked bewildered and uneasy at the hooting and hollering throughout the plane, a carryover from the previous day's hubris.

Despite all the pride, the defiance, the celebration, the sense of solidarity and the giddiness at being able to be ourselves openly for an entire weekend, the march left many of us with an empty, questioning feeling.

We had emerged from our mass march up and down the yellow brick roads of Oz with a new or renewed sense of empowerment, but like Cornejo and his crew, many of us had no real idea what we could do with it.

There were a lot of unrealistic predictions and expectations. Some marchers were absolutely certain that the sight of a million homosexuals on the Mall would overnight change America's mind about us. For the moment, at least, they chose to ignore the dark reality of the Pat Robertsons and Jerry Falwells of the country, who, predictably, reacted to the weekend's events by holding up their Bibles even higher and screaming even louder.

Others were dead certain that Sam Nunn, Strom Thurmond and Colin Powell would be overwhelmed by the sheer numbers and change their minds about gays in the military.

Hey, one million people! You've convinced us— let those perverts into the showers with our boys!

The truth is that we could have packed every open space in the entire District of Columbia with five or 10 million gay men and lesbians and the short-term political landscape would not have changed much for us. It would have remained the same because, despite the advance billing, the march was

really no more and no less political than have been most of the gay pride marches that are held in cities across the country each year.

The *Houston Post's* lead story described the march as "a massive street party," and that's what it was. Yes, there was the rage of the AIDS activists, the sorrow of those who mourned the losses to the disease, the anger of those pushing for a lift of the ban on gays in the military, and the general frustration of most lesbians and gay men over the continued second-class citizenship they believe their country affords them.

The overwhelming emotion, though, was one of celebration, joy — and pride. That sense was expressed best by a hand-written sign held up by a marcher: "I'm in gay heaven!" For that weekend, at least, both meanings of the word gay applied.

There was a sense of euphoria, a feeling that despite all the obstacles there is no turning back for the gay rights movement. That feeling was reinforced by the positive — or at least neutral — coverage the march and related activities got in the press.

The coverage was impressive. My own newspaper ran numerous stories leading up to the march and had several stories on the march itself — in addition to a column by Deb Price, the lesbian Gannett News Service columnist. That was in stark contrast to the coverage it gave a similar march in 1987. I was in the Washington bureau that year but because I was still very much in the closet, I didn't dare suggest to my bureau chief that we cover the activities. This time, three of our four Washington bureau people were out there in the hot sun covering the march. I can't help wondering whether my being out of the closet had influenced the decision by my Washington colleagues to cover the march as thoroughly as they did. That thought reinforced my contention that individual acts of honesty about ourselves to those around us are more powerful than any march.

Most newspapers and TV stations did have the requisite picture or two of the cross-dressers and the bare-breasted women and the men in leather, but for the most part, the march was a massive display of the ordinariness of gay America.

Even the reporter for Pat Robertson's TV network was forced to concede that the odd folks at the march constituted a very small minority, that the majority of those there appeared to be very normal.

Although much of the reporting on gay and lesbian issues has improved, most jour-

nalists still found it hard to refrain from fixating on the flamboyant queens or the butch lesbians. Inevitably, the question came up at every news conference by a gay or lesbian leader: "How do you feel about those people sharing the spotlight with the mainstream gay community?"

My favorite response was that provided by David Mixner, the California businessman who raised millions of dollars for Bill Clinton's campaign. "I am not willing to tell another human being that I'm going to be intolerant of him in order that I can be free," he said.

The march may have fallen a bit short of the one million mark, but it will prove to be a decisive moment in the history of the movement and the country. As I said, in the short term, we can't expect much to change, but years from now, people will look back and understand that hundreds of thousands of gaymen and lesbians — and their friends — from all walks of life were willing to stand up proudly and defiantly in the face of fierce opposition to tell the world repeatedly, "We're here, we're queer — get used to it."

(There were many variations of that chant. The most popular was, "We're here, we're queer, we're wonderful — don't fuck with us." A group of Canadians had the best: "We're here, we're queer — we're cross-border shopping!")

The official slogan for the march was, "It's a simple matter of justice." But it is more than that — it is a simple matter of reality.

Every day more and more homosexuals are leaving the closet, dragging with them numerous family members, friends, and co-workers. Each one of those coming-outs will be a small victory, but together, they will create a big, unstoppable wave. To the extent that the march gives that final nudge to those on the verge of coming out, it will be a tremendous factor in the future of gay and lesbian America. Attitudes toward homosexuality are changing and they will change even more with each person who comes out of the closet.

The ban on gays in the military will be lifted. Not because of the march and not because of any of the testimony that is being presented at the hearings, but because Bill Clinton is, after all, a man of honor who truly believes that it is a question of human rights. He will keep his word to the gay community. Congress might vote to reinstate the ban but it won't be able to override a presidential veto.

It won't be a painless victory. There will be much consternation and the Bible-thumpers

Juan Palomo is a columnist with the *Houston Post*.

will not allow the debate to end. But after the dust settles, America will join the rest of the civilized world in getting used to the idea of gays and lesbians among them. And that is, after all, the real objective behind the push to lift the ban. If it can be demonstrated that

homosexuals will not bring about the downfall of the military — and it will be — all of the other barriers and excuses that society has thrown in front of us will begin to come down.

So, what *do* we do now?

Like Dorothy, most of us have simply

headed back to Kansas, to our ordinary lives in our ordinary communities in the real world. It may not be as exciting as marching in front of the White House with 999,999 other people, but if we do so openly and proudly, we can bring about real change. □

Love and Justice

BY LAURIE EISERLOH

RECENTLY A REPORTER asked if she and a camera crew could follow me and my partner at home while we worked in the garden, paid bills or cooked dinner. Although these “gays are people too” news stories seem slightly offensive to me, I felt the reporter had good intentions and I agreed to do the story. Nevertheless, I had some practical concerns. Mostly my concern was that someone in the viewing audience might see my home on TV and then, after a couple of beers, decide to come burn my house down. This may seem unlikely to you, but in six years as a lesbian activist, I have received numerous death threats, one bomb threat, and hundreds of hate-letters.

In writing this article, I have similar feelings because I will address issues which are important to the lesbian/gay rights movement, but rarely discussed outside of organizational meetings or the gay press. I hope that those of you who are filled with hatred and bigotry don't use this information to burn down the house.

Pride on Parade

One of the most common remarks I hear from straight people and also from apolitical gay and lesbian people is that lesbian and gay issues are trivial. Our issues deal only with what we “do in bed.” I am often asked: Why do “out” lesbian and gay people wear their sexuality so openly? Why do we talk about sex all the time? Why is this sexual issue so important? Why don't we just stay in the closet? And why do we have Lesbian and Gay Pride parades anyway?

Those of you who wish that some of us wouldn't wear our sexuality so openly should consider this: Most of us don't wear our sexuality openly. Most lesbian and gay peo-

ple live a quiet existence in the closet hoping that we won't be discovered and therefore fired from our jobs or ostracized by families, friends and neighbors. If you are a heterosexual, consider your own expressions of sexuality. The wedding ring on your finger and the photograph of your husband or wife on your desk are expressions of your heterosexuality. Most of the songs on the radio, popular films, books and television shows deal with heterosexual issues.

Are lesbian and gay issues trivial because they focus on only what we do in bed? Consider the implications of heterosexual identity and the privileges granted to heterosexuals. If you are married and your spouse has a job with health insurance benefits, it is likely that you are also covered by that policy. If you apply for a credit card, two copies are sent to you: one for you and one for your spouse. If you are injured in an accident, your partner is allowed into the emergency room to make important decisions. Lesbian and gay people are usually excluded from these important life-or-death decisions.

As for public displays of our sexuality, consider this: Walking down the street simply holding hands with a same-sex partner can lead to hate-inspired violence. In most cities in Texas — although not in Austin, which has a lesbian/gay civil rights ordinance — lesbian and gay people can be legally thrown out of a hotel or restaurant for even the most insignificant displays of affection.

Think about family relationships. Although some families are accepting of lesbian and gay children, most are not. We are often excluded or asked to not bring our life-partners to important family events, such as birthdays or Thanksgiving dinner.

If you are heterosexual, imagine having to stay in the closet. Imagine being forced to lie every time a co-worker asked you about weekend plans. Imagine maintaining two bedrooms so that visitors in your home would not get “the wrong impression.” Imagine a simple slip of the tongue leading to dismissal from your job, your church or your family.

Sodomites and Court Challenges

Sodomy statutes are the main legal obstacle to greater lesbian and gay rights. Although some state sodomy statutes also cover heterosexuals, the Texas sodomy statute, like most, applies only to lesbian and gay people. Currently 26 states have repealed their sodomy laws.

Persons are rarely prosecuted under the Texas sodomy statute; I know of only one case. Persons who are arrested while having sex in public places, whether homosexual or heterosexual, are charged with violating section 21.07 of the penal code, the public lewdness statute. The real effect of the state sodomy statute is to legitimize discrimination against lesbian and gay people in employment, housing, public accommodation, insurance, education and in public policy. For example Mica England, a highly qualified police recruit, was denied a job with the Dallas Police Department because she is a lesbian, and therefore, violates section 21.06 of the penal code.

Another blatant example of discrimination based on the state sodomy statute involves AIDS education. All AIDS educational materials paid for with state money must include a statement that “homosexuality is illegal in Texas.” As for public policy, legislators have been very hesitant to pass hate-crimes legislation protecting lesbian and gay people because homosexual behavior is illegal in Texas. This session Houston Senator Rodney Ellis' hate-crimes bill, which protects people on the basis of race, religion, national origin and sexual orientation, passed the Senate, but faced serious opposition in the House because of section 21.06.

In 1986 the United States Supreme Court, in *Bowers v. Hardwick*, came within one vote of granting privacy protection in a Georgia sodomy case. Later Justice Powell, who voted against Michael Hardwick's privacy right, stated that he felt that he had voted the wrong way in this case. The current Supreme Court never would uphold a case such as *Hardwick*, but in the meantime it remains the law.

Laurie Eiserloh, executive director of the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas, is a lawyer and one of three full-time lesbian/gay rights lobbyists working at the state level in the United States.

At the state level there have been three major challenges to the Texas sodomy statute: *Baker v. Wade*, which was ultimately unsuccessful and two recent cases *Morales v. State* and *England v. State*. The Third Court of Appeals in Austin has held, in both cases, that the state sodomy statute is unconstitutional under the privacy right granted by the Texas Constitution. Recently, the Texas Supreme Court has stated that it does not have jurisdiction in the *England* case because the city of Dallas failed to comply with the statutory prerequisites. The Texas Supreme Court has heard arguments in the *Morales* case and we are awaiting a final decision. *Morales* is sponsored by the Texas Human Rights Foundation, the statewide lesbian/gay legal action group.

Recent anti-abortion court decisions have led to an erosion in the so-called right to privacy. Because of this erosion, equal protection has become an appealing alternative legal theory in the protection of lesbian and gay people.

Equal protection under the United States Constitution requires that a class of individuals share a common immutable characteristic such as race or gender. Because there is some question about whether lesbian or gay identity is a choice, the courts have refused to find an common immutable characteristic. Although this is rarely discussed, I believe that Dr. Simon LeVay's studies concerning biological causes of gayness and other similar studies are a direct response to the erosion of the privacy right and the search for an immutable characteristic.

Legislative Issues

The most important lesbian/gay issue in the current state legislative session is the repeal of section 21.06. During the last session the Legislature mandated the repeal of the current state penal code and convened the Punishment and Standards Commission to write a new more efficient code. After months of efforts by the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby (LGRL) the anti-homosexual conduct statute was removed from the Punishment and Standards Commission report which was the basis for both Senate Bill 1067 and its companion House Bill 1235 — the revised Texas penal code.

When S.B. 1067 reached the Senate floor, Senator Jane Nelson, a conservative Republican from Flower Mound, put forth an amendment to place an anti-homosexual conduct statute back into the revised code. After strong opposition from Senator John Whitmire, who was the sponsor of the bill, as well as opposition from the Lieutenant Governor and others, Nelson's amendment was defeated 16 to 11.

An anti-homosexual conduct statute and a heterosexual sodomy statute were amended

into the House version of the revised code. Currently, we are fighting to have them removed.

In addition to major legislative challenges such as the repeal of the anti-homosexual conduct statute, the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby performs three major tasks. One is to attempt to kill bad legislation that could harm the lesbian/gay community or persons living with HIV or AIDS. For instance, during the last legislative session LGRL successfully blocked an attempt to criminalize HIV-positive health-care workers. Secondly, the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby works on legislation to improve the quality of life for lesbian and gay people and people living with AIDS and HIV in 1989. The reformation of the state's durable-power-of-attorney laws and the passage of the omnibus AIDS bill were both LGRL victories in 1989. Finally, LGRL works to educate legislators about the lesbian/gay community. Bills such as the same-sex marriage bill are meant to broaden the discussion at the state capitol concerning lesbian/gay rights. Another important educational bill is the state lesbian/gay civil rights bill which would protect lesbian and gay people in housing, employment and public accommodation. Currently the bill has 30 co-sponsors, although it is not expected to pass.

At the federal level, the main issues affecting our community are the national lesbian/gay civil rights bill, increased visibility of lesbian/gay issues in the Clinton Administration and the lifting of the ban on lesbian and gay people in the military. The military issue has become particularly important because changes in the military, such as racial desegregation in 1948, have traditionally been a harbinger for greater civil rights.

Community vs. Civil Rights

Identity politics are among the major issues facing us today as lesbian and gay people. By identity politics I am referring to how we wish to identify ourselves as a group and as individuals. Consider the numerous and diverse terms that we use to identify ourselves: lesbian, gay woman, gay man, gay men and lesbians, gay and lesbian people, queer, bisexual, sex radicals, homosexual and so on. Each of these terms has a specific implication and a specific history. For instance the term "lesbian" is associated with women who identify primarily with the feminist movement while the term "gay woman" is used by those who identify with the gay rights movement. The term homosexual is a 19th-century clinical term used to describe sexual pathology; nevertheless, this term is still often used in the press. The term "queer" is an insult which has been appro-

priated by some in order to describe the wide variety of sexual expressions that are possible outside of the narrow "gay" or "straight" categories.

Questions arise concerning the presentation of our so-called community to the media. Some individuals are outraged when direct action groups, such as Queer Nation and Act-Up, use tactics such as street theater, "die-ins" and "kiss-ins" to bring media attention to social oppression. At the same time some individuals are outraged when lesbian and gay organizations hold very exclusive fund raisers to collect money for political influence.

There are other identity issues as well. For instance, lesbian and gay people are the most diverse minority in this country. Do our organizations present our community as only white or only male? What about issues of class?

Having spent some time as a lesbian/gay rights organizer, I've concluded that it is important for our so-called community to focus more energy on the lesbian/gay rights movement and to focus less energy on trying to fashion a notion of community where no single community exists. In my job as a statewide organizer, I work with gay Republicans and with Queer Nation activists. I work with people who are very "out" and with people who are very "closeted." I work with people of all different races and of different classes. All of us serve an important function in our civil rights movement. But trying to form a community that will suit us all is an impossible task.

The Youth Movement

Lesbian/Gay Youth organizations are an important development in the history of our civil rights movement. In response to a federal study which found that lesbian and gay teenagers are at a higher risk for suicide, youth groups such as Out Youth Austin have formed. These organizations are important because they provide young people with self-esteem, a support network and adult role models. Like all other minorities, lesbian and gay people have not been treated well by the media. It is important for young people to understand that the self-destructive stereotypes portrayed in the media are not representative of lesbian and gay life.

Coming Out

For those of you who are considering coming out, I encourage you to do so. I know it is difficult. Coming out is an incremental and constant process. People decide to come out at all different ages and stages of their lives. All of us who have done it believed that we had too much to lose, but once you make those first steps you will find that you have everything to gain. If you are

thinking about coming out and need a support group, call the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby, 512-474-5475 in Austin and we will refer you to someone in your area.

State Representative Glen Maxey once told me about an elderly woman he met while

campaigning who said to him, "If you are honest with me about being gay, then I know I can trust you." Lesbian and gay pride is about honesty. It is about confronting and challenging bigotry within one's self and within society. Lesbian and gay pride is

about self-actualization and social change. On a recent trip to Builders Square, I saw a young woman wearing an OutYouth T-shirt. Her shirt said "There will only be one you forever and for all time. Fearlessly be yourself." □

The Legislature, the Courts and Other Unnatural Acts

BY RICK BROWN

WHEN WARREN CHISUM, the state representative from Pampa, on May 6 successfully goaded the Texas House into voting to criminalize all acts of anal sex — whether homosexual or not, in private or otherwise — some Texans said a prayer and looked hopefully to the state Supreme Court for relief.

Out of the battered Texas Constitution the court is carving an emerging right to privacy that remains the best hope for achieving equal rights for homosexuals and keeping conservatives like Chisum out of our bedrooms.

The nine justices have already identified a "zone of privacy" they agreed the state Constitution implies in Sections 6, 8, 9, 10, 19 and 25 of the Texas Bill of Rights.

That innovation came in a unanimous 1987 decision, *Texas State Employees Union v. Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation*, a case dealing with the use of polygraph tests for employee screening.

In *TSEU v. TDMHMR*, the court found justification for breaking the "zone of privacy" only when "reasonably warranted for the achievement of compelling government objectives that can be achieved by no less intrusive, more reasonable means."

Now, with a civil suit brought by five homosexuals against the state of Texas, justices are being asked to extend that zone to sexual acts committed in private between two consenting adults of the same sex.

One of the plaintiffs in the case, Austin attorney Tom Doyal, says the court's still-pending decision could hold major implications for future state privacy suits, including those dealing with abortion.

"With the (U.S.) Supreme Court continuing to chip at (abortion protections offered by) *Roe v. Wade*," he said, a state constitutional challenge to keep abortion safe and legal on privacy grounds could become the sole

recourse pro-abortion forces have.

Meanwhile, conservative forces are working on the legislative front with such amendments as Chisum's to criminalize sodomy in all cases. Chisum had offered the amendment, he said, to protect public health, since engaging in anal sex is one of the primary ways of contacting the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, but such an all-encompassing ban on sodomy wasn't even discussed when the Senate voted on its version of the bill.

Both versions have the aim of streamlining the state penal code, which has become an arcane affair since its last revision in the 1970s.

The most disturbing aspect of the process to lesbians and gay men is that the House version still contains a provision they have worked hard to eliminate: Section 21.06, which sets out criminal sanctions for sodomy committed between members of the same sex.

The law is the primary excuse in Texas for officially sanctioned discrimination against homosexuals, who feel its sting when applying for jobs, seeking health care or housing and appealing for custody of children.

Further, it is the question of 21.06's constitutionality that Supreme Court justices are deliberating in the suit brought by Doyal and four others with the assistance of the Texas Human Rights Foundation.

Senators friendly to the cause had the luxury of debating a bill that did not include the offending statute, and they were able to beat back an attempt by conservative forces to retain 21.06.

In the more conservative House, members were forced to debate a version of the legislation in which 21.06 had been re-attached in committee.

Representative Glen Maxey, the Austin Democrat who is the Legislature's only openly gay member, sent up an amendment during floor debate to strike the statute, but diplomatically withdrew it. Maxey said he didn't want to force on members a vote they could

find embarrassing.

That could prove to be a savvy strategy, especially after the grumbling heard when Chisum called for a record vote on his all-encompassing sodomy amendment. The conservative didn't make many friends for his cause with such ham-handed tactics, said Laurie Eiserloh, director of the Lesbian and Gay Rights Lobby of Texas.

Still, the legislative fate of 21.06 now lies in the hands of House and Senate conferees yet to be named at this writing. While the Senate is on record as opposed to the sodomy prohibition, the resolve of Senate conferees is uncertain in the face of pressure to reach a compromise on the penal code.

That's why lesbians and gay men are still looking to the nine Texas Supreme Court justices to finally rid state law of this offensive passage.

One hopeful indication of the justices' pending decision came May 5.

On that day, the court let stand on a technical point a lower court ruling that 21.06 is unconstitutional.

The case stems from accusations by lesbian Mica England that the Dallas Police Department rejected her employment application because of her sexual orientation.

The Third Court of Appeals in Austin found in her favor, but the Dallas city attorney's office failed to petition for a re-hearing before asking the state's high court to overturn the ruling. Because of the procedural infraction, high court justices ruled they had no jurisdiction in the case, said England's attorney, Ed Tuddenham.

That places all the more importance on the other 21.06 case before justices, *Morales, et al v. the State of Texas*, which could decide the sodomy question once and for all. [Editor's Note: Morales refers to a plaintiff, not the Texas Attorney General.]

Doyal, a former legal director of the Texas Human Rights Foundation, said the state civil rights case had its genesis in the 1986 U.S.

Rick Brown is a freelance writer in Austin.

Supreme Court's *Bowers v. Hardwick* decision, in which the federal justices found no particular protections for homosexuality in the U.S. Constitution.

The 5-4 decision is the low-water mark of the gay and lesbian equal rights movement. Justice Lewis Powell, one of the concurring justices, said after retiring that *Bowers v. Hardwick* is the one case in which he wished he had voted the other way and reversed the decision.

Prior to the *Bowers* decision, a U.S. district judge in Texas had already ruled Section 21.06 of the state Penal Code unconstitutional in *Baker v. Wade*, the THRF's first legal attack on the law.

Even though then-Attorney General Jim Mattox had decided not to appeal the ruling, the decision still wound up before the Fifth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in New Orleans through a twisted course of events.

The suit named every prosecutor in Texas among its defendants, so Potter County District Attorney Danny Hill of Amarillo took it upon himself to file the appeal, even if Mattox wouldn't.

In an unprecedented move, the federal appeals court gave Hill standing to argue the case not just on his own behalf, but representing the state of Texas as well.

Circuit Judge Alvin B. Rubin wrote in dissent that the panel was "determined to uphold the constitutionality of a Texas statute whatever obstacles bar the way," and the majority opinion "tramples every procedural rule it considers."

And that was how *Baker v. Wade* ended up before the Fifth Circuit Court, allowing the panel to invoke *Bowers v. Hardwick* to let the Texas sodomy law stand.

"It left a bitter taste in our mouths in '86, and we were left hanging our heads, wondering what to do next," recalls Doyal. What became the next step was finding five new plaintiffs, filing suit in state district court and pursuing the case to the highest levels.

Tuddenham says that he and Patrick Wiseman, his law partner and lead plaintiff's attorney in the *Morales* case, are hopeful of a positive result. In light of action in the *Mica England* case, they see three main alternatives:

First, justices could rule the law unconstitutional on privacy grounds, expanding the "zone of privacy" created in the *TSEU* case, Tuddenham said.

Second, they could dismiss the case for lack of jurisdiction because of a problem with the "standing" of the plaintiffs, none of whom has ever been arrested for committing acts of sodomy. Since they have undergone no specific harm, their case is groundless and should be dismissed, goes this line of argument, although plaintiffs of course argue that the sodomy law harms all homosexuals.

Tuddenham said even if this is the final result, gay men and lesbians have won a vic-

tory because the court would be letting the state Third Court of Appeals ruling in the *England* case stand.

Lastly, the court could overturn the appeals court and uphold the law, a result that Tuddenham says is very unlikely in light of the *England* decision.

Such an eventuality would leave prosecutors in a confused state as to whether the law

is constitutional or not, he said. Arguably, sodomy could be illegal everywhere in Texas but notoriously conservative Dallas County, he said with a laugh.

But whatever the outcome, the twisted court history and Byzantine legislative maneuvering gives credence to the notion that rights are never given freely but must be seized with much hard work. □

Who You Gonna Call?

BY ANNISE PARKER

SOME YEARS AGO, in the sanctity of our home, my companion and I were awakened after midnight by screams from our front yard. We finally realized it was an obscenity-laced tirade about our sexual orientation, punctuated by death threats. She briefly considered shooting the man. I wanted to call the police. We finally decided neither course was likely to result in a positive outcome. So we endured it. That isn't the response I'd have today, but it still wouldn't be an unusual response for many gays and lesbians. Who do you turn to for help if you consider the police to be people from whom you also need protection?

I've spent nearly a decade mediating between Houston's gay and lesbian community and the Houston Police Department, under three different police chiefs. As a community leader, I have organized and participated in many "damage control" meetings in the wake of a crisis. As a concerned citizen, I've spent hours bridge-building through such groups as the Police Advisory Committee, and doing such simple things as lunching with officers who work in my neighborhood. One consistent theme is that lesbians and gays often fear the police as much as we fear the criminals. Another is that to the police, we are criminals.

It sometimes seems that police officers forget they are public servants whose job it is to protect us — not protect society from us. And gay men and women often forget we are citizens with rights guaranteed under law with a responsibility to protect those rights. Both sides want the police to act like the

professionals they are, but perhaps we need to agree on what that means. As often happens in life, a crisis may finally bring things into focus. Houston has had two recent crises.

In July 1991, as they walked from a Montrose gay bar to their cars, banker Paul Broussard and two friends were brutally attacked by two carloads of suburban teenagers. The attack appeared to be a planned stalking of prey that began hours before, when the young men loaded their vehicles with nail-studded boards and a knife. It ended with Broussard dead and his companions injured.

On the following day, Houston papers reported the murder in tiny stories in the police/courts sections. It wasn't officially categorized as a hate crime; at the time the Houston Police Department had no such designation. In this city inured to lurid headlines, the story might have ended there. But word quickly filtered back to the gay community. In typical fashion we acted to warn and protect ourselves. Local reporters who regularly talk to lesbian and gay leaders also became interested. They began to press homicide for details and dig on their own. The murder became a media event, setting off a wave of press conferences, meetings, and a protest march. Paul Broussard became a *cause celebre* to a community that finally decided it had endured enough.

Despite the predictions of a suspicious gay and lesbian community, Broussard's suspected assailants were caught relatively quickly; one has been convicted of murder and sentenced to 45 years in prison, three others were convicted of attempted murder and were sentenced to 15 years each and six others are awaiting trial on assault charges. The entire event became a catalyst for change. The police reclassified the crime as a "hate crime" and were forced to speed up compliance with the federal Hate Crimes Statistics Act, designed to create a national registry for such crimes. The local chapter of Queer Nation,

Annise Parker has been a Houston gay and lesbian community activist for nearly 15 years. She has chaired the citywide Houston Police Advisory Committee and in 1991, she ran for Houston City Council. She is co-owner of Inklings, a lesbian/gay/feminist book store.

with police cooperation, began a security foot patrol around Montrose bars. And the Houston Police Department began a highly publicized sting operation.

Operation "Vice-Versa" might have been designed to mollify an outraged, highly political community. Undercover police officers posing as gay men placed themselves as bait in the heart of the gay and lesbian community. What they uncovered shocked the nation and finally brought Houston police face to face with a horrifying reality: Gays and lesbians are regularly physically and verbally assaulted, almost with impunity. And we rarely report it.

Extensive media coverage of the operation and numerous arrests did nothing to discourage other bashers from trolling for victims; in fact, they seemed almost attracted by the publicity. But this time we felt someone was listening, that perhaps the police could be partners in our battle against hate crimes. Then this rapprochement ran headlong into the Republican National Convention.

Houston's second crisis occurred on August 17, 1992. A march organized by ACT-UP, an AIDS direct-action group, stepped off from Hermann Park early on a Monday evening and as darkness fell wound its way to Astrodome Gate 4. Inside the Dome the Republicans were broadcasting some of the most virulent gay-baiting of the presidential campaign. Outside, some protesters turned to civil disobedience. The police responded with swinging batons in a crushing show of force. The melee gave Houston an international black eye, with gays attesting to police brutality and police accusing them of instigating it.

In the past, mass actions involving gays and the Houston police were mainly police raids on gay bars. We considered the wholesale arrests for public intoxication or public lewdness (usually dismissed) an assault on our community. Then, the raids would be met with weary resignation or abject terror, depending on how closeted you were, and afterwards with polite protests to the police chief and local politicians.

The game has changed. Now, large-scale contact between gays and police almost always occurs in the context of civil disobedience or public protests about AIDS. There's a different attitude on the part of gays and lesbians who have seen so many friends die. It is easy to understand why some persons with AIDS feel they have nothing to lose in confrontation. You don't fear public exposure when you may be facing death. Police no longer invade our businesses, but they see us as invading the streets. And many officers now seem afraid.

When old rules don't work you create new ones. Houston is struggling to do just that. Not in a posture of oppressed and oppressor, but as equals trying to reach an accommodation.

Police interact with people in crisis. They

see the uglier side of life. They see even the best of people behaving at their worst. They can become so used to dealing with "bad guys" that they can't switch gears. They also exist in a quasi-military structure that demands extreme loyalty and views all others as outsiders. Many come from a military background, making them especially predisposed to anti-gay rhetoric.

Regardless of police behavior, many citizens probably would describe their interactions with police as negative because of the nature of that interaction. They may have been the victims of a crime, such as robbery or assault. Perhaps they were involved in a domestic dispute, received a traffic ticket, or were arrested. Aggravating what begins as a tense situation, many gays and lesbians have difficulty dealing with authority figures. This is not surprising when virtually all the major social institutions condemn or discriminate against them.

In addition, gays and lesbians can be repeatedly victimized by the criminal justice system in a scenario that is slowly changing, but is still too common: You are robbed or assaulted by a casual acquaintance. The investigating officer refuses to accept the charges, implying you invited the offense. It could end there, but you press the issue. Then the district attorney treats you similarly. You realize the issue could be publicized. You refuse to press charges. They wonder why they wasted their time.

The most fundamental improvements in police departments have occurred through the simplest and most direct means — changing their racial, ethnic and gender composition. It is difficult to effectively police a community you neither know nor understand. Officers learn and change through interaction with their peers, and minority communities see that they are represented in the structure. This will work with the gay and lesbian community as well.

Some large cities have already accepted this. Police departments in San Diego, San Francisco and New York, among others, recruit and hire openly lesbian and gay officers. Many other departments, such as Houston's, ignore gays on the force if they don't make waves. Dallas used the misdemeanor sodomy law to bar Mica England from the force, but that policy is under court review.

But even hiring us, or having a policy of benign neglect, isn't enough. Departmental policies must classify anti-gay humor or remarks, along with racist and sexist comments made by officers, as unacceptable and punishable. Even an enlightened hiring policy, not supported by clear conduct guidelines, can lead to situations where officers "voluntarily" resign to escape harassment. Those attitudes can carry over into interactions with citizens.

Appointment of a police liaison to the lesbian and gay community can solve many problems, even in departments with openly gay and

lesbian officers. Clear, easily accessible Internal Affairs Division complaint procedures help both police and citizens resolve problems before they explode across the front page.

Many departments conduct formal sensitivity training sessions to acquaint officers with African-American, Hispanic and Asian-American concerns. In 1992 the Houston Police Department began giving all cadet classes half-day sessions on lesbian and gay issues. I'm a member of the teaching team, which includes mental health professionals, police officers and gays and lesbians. I believe the most important lessons we impart are that gays and lesbians are people with the same concerns as other citizens. That we often have greater need of police protection, and we are less likely to ask for it.

The gay and lesbian community also has the responsibility to improve relations with the police. We need to meet with and invite officers to our meetings and events. We must educate ourselves about the need to report every crime. When we plan demonstrations, parades or other events that require the presence of police, we need to know the legal requirements and set up clear lines of authority and communication. If we are not treated professionally by an officer, we need to know how to make a complaint, and we need to follow through with it.

Of course, to truly deal with the homophobia of the police — as well as the homophobia of gay men and women that leads us to oppress ourselves — we must make fundamental changes in the way our society views sexual orientation. Repeal of the Texas sodomy law that criminalizes gay sexual conduct would remove one of the underpinnings of discrimination in hiring, and remove an impediment to lesbians and gays being hired by police departments.

I am encouraged by the changes in the Houston Police Department over the years. But just as Houston is an interesting mix of the cosmopolitan and the conservative, so, too, does the department display some stubborn atavism. Someday, though, I believe the Houston Police Department will be able to claim that it serves and protects all of Houston's citizens equally. ☐

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Coming Out at the News

BY JOE CUTBIRTH

AT 38, FRANK TREJO isn't your average revolutionary. Quiet and well-mannered, he's a good listener with charm and a sense of humor that puts anyone at ease.

Trejo is a reporter for the *Dallas Morning News*, a paper with five Pulitzer prizes and conservative credentials above reproach. He's a founding member of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and has received numerous awards for his work.

He's also gay. And three months ago, top editors at the *News* decided to capitalize on that unique blend of experience and talent.

Since March, Trejo has been the only openly gay reporter assigned to a lesbian/gay beat at a major Texas daily.

In an era when newspapers are taking pains to diversify their staffs and open their pages to groups they long have ignored, lesbian/gay issues are making their way to story lists, budget meetings and eventually the newspapers, with increasing frequency.

"I'm not trying to do something because it is important for the lesbian/gay community," Trejo said. "I am trying to do something that is important for my paper."

The key is that Trejo is openly gay.

That's because "coming out" is the experience that defines who most lesbians and gay people are. No matter how hard our liberal friends and loved ones try to understand what being lesbian or gay is like, they can never know the fear and horror that comes from years of hiding the most personal and inner part of yourself or the humiliation and self-loathing that act sows.

Neither can they know the exhilaration of finally saying, "Here I am world, all of me."

It's the common thread lesbians and gay men share. Otherwise, the lesbian and gay experience is as unique as the millions of lesbian and gay people — Anglo, African-American, male, female, Jewish, Protestant, rich or poor, urban or rural — living in this country.

Cutbirth is a reporter for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram Austin bureau. He also is a founder and state co-chair of the Texas Chapter of the National Lesbian Gay Journalist Association.

For most lesbians and gay men, coming out is a process similar to peeling onions: It happens one layer at a time.

Trejo, like many others, doesn't remember an exact moment his personal and professional lives merged. "I can't point to a precise time or place; it sort of happened with old age I guess," Trejo said. "I realized it doesn't matter if people know or don't know."

His decision to live as an openly gay man was spurred by personal tragedy. A year ago, Trejo's younger brother died of AIDS. "I think a lot of it had to do with the fact that I watched my brother die a very painful and terrible death," he said, "and I came to the realization to do with the fact that it did not get as much attention as it should have because of who was affected."

Any entry-level editor can smell a breaking story and send a reporter to cover it that day, but it takes a real pro to recognize a long-term story in its infancy, find the right reporter for it and commit to covering it to fruition.

That's what the *News* has done with Trejo. The story is the lesbian/gay civil rights movement.

When editors first approached him with the idea, Trejo was unsure whether he was the right person to cover lesbian/gay issues. An inner voice told him to take the chance, and slowly his anxiety has subsided.

"Because I am who I am, I am able to bring a different perspective that somebody else might not," he said. "I might recognize the importance of things more easily than someone else might. I think it is true with lesbian/gay issues."

Many lesbians and gay men believe the 1990s will be the decade when they finally realize the same social and economic opportunity offered to non-lesbian and non-gay people.

Signs to encourage that are everywhere.

Two years ago, Travis County voters rejected the politics of race and innuendo and elected Glen Maxey, an openly gay Anglo man, to the Legislature from a predominantly Hispanic district.

Governor Ann Richards has made unprecedented strides in naming open lesbians and gay men to government offices, including Dallas

attorney Jerry Birdwell to a state judgeship and San Antonio attorney Martha Fitzwater to the Texas Funeral Service Commission.

Texas trial and appellate courts have overturned the state's century-old sodomy law. A final ruling is expected from the Texas Supreme Court soon.

While gains continue at a steady pace in traditionally conservative Texas, they are happening at rocket speed in other parts of the country. Lesbian/gay activists say backlashes like the Colorado hate referendum prove the legitimacy of the movement and serve only to bolster their resolve "never to go back (into the closet)."

Trejo covered immigration for the *News* for several years, and he sees some interesting parallels in his new assignment, such as the way people assume he has an agenda to advance.

"I don't see myself as an advocate; in fact I totally reject that role," Trejo said. "There are advocacy groups that do promote certain positions and causes and that is what they should do. I see my role as to include coverage — good or bad — of these populations in my newspaper."

The work has been challenging.

Last month, the paper sent him to cover the March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Equal Rights. A week later, he flew to San Francisco to interview Jose Zuniga, a decorated soldier who drew national attention when he came out at the march.

Dallas readers have had mixed reactions to the increased focus on lesbian/gay issues at the *News*.

"I think people are not used to seeing portrayals and depictions and coverage of lesbians/gay issues that is not negative ... and when it isn't bad and there is more of the other side of issues, they don't know how to take it," Trejo said.

"They think because we (newspapers as an institution) are covering lesbian/gay issues we are biased, but the way I see it we are biased if we don't cover it," he added. "By ignoring a population that is out there that is active and vocal ... it shows a certain amount of bias, and that has been exhibited by the media for many years."

In one case a reader called to complain that lesbian/gay issues are all Trejo covers.

He checked his by-line count in the News computer system and found that of 500 bylines he has had at the paper, 25 of the stories have contained the word "gay."

"The negative reaction on the part of readers monthly is from the fact that these stories are in the paper," Trejo said. "For a long time our paper — well it is conservative — but it was even more conservative but that has started to change. It has changed considerably in the last five or 10 years, and some of the readers are uneasy with that change."

Five years ago, a job like Trejo's was unthinkable. Being openly gay was — and at

many news organizations still is — considered an impediment to success.

The hundreds — and there are hundreds — of lesbians and gay men who work for the six major Texas dailies watched in horror in 1991 when *Houston Post* columnist Juan Palomo, a former Washington press corps reporter, was fired and his column censored over the issue of whether he could come out in print.

It was a black day for Texas journalism. It told us that to succeed we had to hide, we had to lie, and worst of all, we had to reserve at least part of our creative energy for self preservation rather than spend it on our work.

Consider the irony: an industry dedicated to truth — where accuracy and credibility are held above all else — telling its front-line people they have to lie about — or at least deny — a part of themselves so crucial to their being.

No more. Television remains a celluloid closet, but at most of the state's major dailies, and at a handful of small and medium-size papers such as the *Big Spring Herald* and *Beaumont Enterprise* those days are gone, or at least ending.

They are ending, too, at some of the state's most conservative institutions. Like the *Dallas Morning News*. □

A Gay & Lesbian Weekly

BY LOUIS DUBOSE

ONE YEAR ago Kay Longcope, who had just been "bought out" after 22 years at the *Boston Globe*, was working her way through the leadership of Austin's lesbian and gay community, trying to describe the newspaper she and her companion, Barbara Wohlgemuth, envisioned.

"I wanted to publish a newspaper that would incorporate every aspect of gay and lesbian life and would also reach gay-friendly readers across the state. A newspaper of record for gay and lesbian communities in Texas," Longcope said. But no one seemed to quite understand what she and Wohlgemuth envisioned. Most people she talked to, Longcope said, envisioned a newsletter and didn't think a newspaper could be supported by the lesbian and gay communities.

Four months later, on October 15, the first issue of the *Texas Triangle* was printed on the presses of the *Austin American-Statesman*. Under the *Triangle's* flag was a subhead identifying it as "The Lesbian and Gay News Weekly of Austin."

The 30-page tabloid included 22 ads, most from non-profit advocacy organizations from the gay community or from gay businesses. A two-thirds-page ad from Whole Foods must have been the single largest source of revenue, beyond the not-too-deep pockets of Longcope and Wohlgemuth, the publisher/editor and business manager.

Two of the front-page stories, both about the Karen Umminger-Sara Strandtman wedding that brought out the best and worst of Austin and finally made it to the Phil Donahue show, were written by Longcope.

The *Triangle* wasn't a coming-out, it was a coming together of the gay and lesbian community, which provided it with the sort of talent rarely available in small start-up ventures like Longcope and Wohlgemuth were

attempting. Todd Camp of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* was the *Triangle's* editorial columnist and Joe Cutbirth of the *Star-Telegram's* capitol bureau one of its contributing writers. The editorial staff included Rick Antoine, who had won a Pulitzer Prize at the *Ft. Wayne News/Sentinel* in Indiana and former *Newsweek* reporter Zsa Zsa Gershick. Columnist Ellen Hobbs, whose first lead offered gays and lesbian voters one choice in the election — "Vote Democrat" — had written a column for Texas A&M's daily *Battalion*.

VOL. 1 NO 1 included a two-page photo spread featuring an Austin gay pride event, four wire service stories, a classified page that solicited more journalists to write for the *Triangle*, a calendar, and, perhaps as a measure of reassurance, a preview of the following week's issue. It also included some 20 staff-written stories, most of which were very long. "In May, we had given ourselves four months to get our first issue out," Longcope said. At 10,000 copies for free bookstore and restaurant distribution, they had met their deadline.

Thirty issues later, the page count is down by two, ads are up from an initial 15 percent to 50 percent, which means fewer and tighter stories, the *Triangle* circulates in 22 Texas cities and towns, and "The Lesbian and Gay of Weekly of Austin" has evolved through "The Lesbian and Gay Weekly from Austin" into "The Lesbian and Gay Weekly." Ads are more diverse but gay and lesbian businesses still fill much of the ad space. (The *Triangle* accepts no 900 ads.) And, for the first time, Longcope said, the *Triangle* has made a profit.

What was the secret? According to Longcope, the *Triangle* is succeeding because it is fulfilling a need in the community. "The

lesbian/gay community has matured," Longcope said. "And with that maturity it has become a lot more outward looking. For so many years, the gay and lesbian presence has been very inward looking and most of the gay and lesbian press is still inward directed." Longcope's editing is an important part of the mix, also, and tends toward the very mainstream, giving the paper an almost gray quality compared to, say, the livelier but not-so-tightly-edited *Austin Chronicle*.

Longcope contends that Texas is now a far better place for gays and lesbians. After studying journalism at the University of Texas, Longcope left Texas for New York. "I never thought I'd come back here. I had my job at the *Globe* and my house at the Cape. But then Ann Richards was elected Governor. I don't think I could have moved back to this state if she were not Governor. ... Her election shows how a place can change over time. Voters' perception of women has changed."

Longcope, now 54, who was born in Midland and graduated from high school in Brownwood. She said she recognizes that change has come far slower to small-town and rural Texas. She is convinced that the *Triangle* can be an agent of change there, and a means of informing gay and lesbian teens who face considerable isolation in rural communities, that they are neither alone nor abnormal.

"Our circulation is up to 15,000 and we are in places like Tyler, the Valley, Waco, Temple, Lubbock, Amarillo, El Paso," she said.

Asked for a critique of the paper he prints, *American-Statesman* publisher Roger Kintzel admitted he hasn't read it. Asked what he thought about the *Triangle's* 50 percent-plus ad hole, Kintzel's response suggested he might take a look. "Fifty percent in six months. That's fast. That's exceptional." □

Reclaiming the Bible

BY RALPH C. LASHER

CHRISTIANITY IS a religion based on the ministry and teachings of Jesus, whose life was clearly one of love, healing and forgiveness. He summarized his own teaching: "Love the Lord, your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind ... Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:37-40). Christ's message was inclusive: "For God so loved the world that God gave the one and only Son, that whoever believes on him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16).

Yet we all know that atrocities have been cloaked in Bible verses and committed in Christ's name. Several examples include:

- The Crusades, in which men, women and children were slaughtered in Jesus' name;
- The Inquisition, which tortured and murdered and called itself "Holy";
- The enslavement of people throughout the world by "Christians";
- The burning of witches in the name of the church.

Today, another injustice, cloaked in Bible verse, is being committed against people for whom Christ lived and died. It is the oppression, bashing and sometimes even murder of gays and lesbians. Those who seek to justify their homophobia and the behavior it encourages cite several Biblical passages, which they claim condemn gays and lesbians. Most often they quote from the King James Version. I was raised on the King James and can recite large portions of it. I love its poetry and beautiful language. But I don't use it or recommend it for study. For study, I prefer the New International Version.

Before it was written, the Bible circulated in oral form, some parts of it for several hundred years. The Old Testament was first written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. The King James, written in 1611 when James I was king of England, is not the oldest English translation of the Bible, which was first translated into English 229 years earlier in 1382, by a man named Wycliffe.

Rev. Ralph Lasher, who holds a master's degree in divinity, was an Episcopal priest who was asked to resign from the church 35 years ago after he announced he was gay. He is executive director of Houston's Montrose Clinic and serves as a volunteer member of the clergy staff of the Metropolitan Community Church of the Resurrection, where he teaches a course in "Homosexuality and the Bible."

Modern Biblical scholars generally do not regard the King James as the most accurate English translation. They cite its numerous misspellings; the use of a variety of English words to translate the same Hebrew or Greek word; the overuse of terms derived from the Latin, which resulted in inaccurate translations; and the obscurity of Elizabethan English to today's speakers of English. In addition, more accurate Hebrew and Greek versions of the Bible have been discovered since the mid-19th century. But perhaps because of its longevity and poetry, the King James is still the best known and most used, though more and more churches today also use the newer, more accurate translations.

Accuracy becomes an issue, for example, when the King James uses the word "homosexual," although there is no such word in the original languages. Respected English translations such as the Revised Standard Version (1952), the New International Version (1978), and the New Revised Standard Version (completed about a year ago) speak of "male cult prostitutes," which is not the same as "homosexuals."

The Sodom Story

People who use Scripture to condemn gays and lesbians usually begin with the Sodom and Gomorrah story (Genesis 13-19). The word Sodom has given birth to the word "sodomy," which as a legal term usually refers to sexual activities between two males.

But the Sodom story could more accurately be called the story of Lot. Whatever else it is, it is not a condemnation of a loving relationship between men, or even of consensual sex between men. Lot, a good Hebrew, invited two men traveling through his town to spend the night in his house. In those days, there was no Holiday Inn, and it was customary for good Hebrews to be hospitable to Hebrew travelers.

Shortly after he had taken the two strangers into his house a mob of men began banging on Lot's door, demanding that he send the two guests out so they could be raped — so the mob could "know" them. The Hebrew word for "know" is a euphemism for sexual intercourse. Rape of a man was a custom usually reserved for prisoners captured in battle. It was an extreme humiliation since it treated a man like a woman, and women were considered inferior.

Lot, a good Hebrew, had a different suggestion. He told the mob they shouldn't rape

his male guests because as his guests they were under his "protection." Instead, Lot suggested they rape his two virgin daughters.

Lot and his family were allowed to escape from the city before it was destroyed. Scripture contains two explanations for the sin of Sodom, neither of which refers to anything having to do with sex between two males (Ezekiel 16:48-58 and Luke 10:8-12). Scripture says the sin of Sodom was failure to meet the needs of the poor, and the worship of false gods. To complete the story, Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt. Then Lot and his two daughters had sexual intercourse, and both daughters became pregnant. The story is one of rape of men and women, violence and incest. It has nothing to do with same-gender love and clearly does not condemn gays and lesbians.

Levitical Holiness Code

The Levitical Holiness Code comprises a large part of the Book of Leviticus and specifies what a Jew had to know in order to live a righteous life. In the heart of this codification of laws are two verses, both of which say the same thing:

"Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman. It is detestable." (Leviticus 18:22)

"If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable." (Leviticus 20:13)

It is these verses that the Religious Right quote as "proof" that homosexuality is an "abomination" and is "detestable" to God.

The Hebrew word variously translated as "abomination" or "detestable" is the same word and simply means ritually unclean. In the context of the Holiness Code it referred to practices associated with idol worship, that is persons who worshipped a god other than the Hebrew god. The practice condemned in the two cited passages of Leviticus is male prostitution in the temple. Pagan cults often had male and female prostitutes working, so to speak, as members of the temple staff. It was this practice, rather than loving relationships between persons of the same gender, that the Holiness Code condemned.

Yet those who claim "God's Law" condemns gays and lesbians never claim that the hundreds of other provisions of the Holiness Code also apply to today's Christians.

Other provisions of the Holiness Code forbid such things as: eating shrimp, clams, craw-

fish, lobster and oysters; drinking milk while eating a roast beef sandwich or putting butter on the bread used to make that sandwich; men shaving or cutting their hair; planting tomatoes and carrots in the same garden; and women talking in the temple or attending religious services during their menstrual periods. How can one say that two verses of Leviticus are "God's Law," while completely ignoring hundreds of other provisions of "God's Law"? And even if the Hebrew Law condemns homosexuality — and it does not — both Jesus and Paul say that Christians are not bound by the law of the Old Testament, but by the new law of love described in the New Testament.

The New Testament

The most important thing to note about homosexuality in the New Testament is that the

main authors — Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Jesus — never once mentioned it. Why then does the Religious Right talk and act as if homosexuality is their single most important concern? Bigotry. John Spong, a prominent contemporary Episcopalian bishop and theologian, attributes it to fear and insecurity.

The absence of discussion of homosexuality in the New Testament leaves the Religious Right two passages in the writings of the Apostle Paul to condemn homosexuality. The first is from Paul's letter to the Romans (written from Corinth) and the other from his letter to the people in Corinth. Rome and Corinth were both appropriate targets of someone like Paul, who was concerned about morality, especially sexual morality. Both cities were centers of pagan worship.

For more than a half a century several Biblical scholars have tried to establish that Paul himself was gay, that his "thorn in the

flesh" was a gay orientation. This may or may not have been true, but in any case Paul didn't approve of any sexual relations. Convinced that the end of the world with the return of Jesus was imminent, he believed that marriage and reproduction were unnecessary. For Paul, the only excuse for marriage was a man's inability to control his sex drive and remain celibate.

Though Paul was essentially opposed to all sexual activity, the passages from Romans and Corinthians are not condemnations of loving relationships between persons of the same gender. The first reference, Romans 1:26-27, speaks of women exchanging "natural relations for unnatural ones" and says that "men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another..." These references follow a condemnation (Romans 1:18-23) of persons who don't worship the one God whose Son Jesus had called Paul as an apostle. Paul harshly condemned (Romans 1:23) idol worshippers who worshipped images of Gods "made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles." The references in verses 26 and 27 appear in the context of idol worship, probably referring to male and female prostitution in the pagan temples and have nothing to say about loving, committed gay relationships.

The second reference is I Corinthians 6:9-10, which equally condemns idol worshippers, drunks, slanderers, swindlers, thieves, the greedy and people whom Paul, in Greek, calls *malakos* and *arsenokoitai*. These words have been translated in many different ways and scholars can't agree on what Paul meant. *Malakos* has been translated variously as "people who wear clothes of soft cloth" (like rich people) or "effeminate persons," "masturbators" or "homosexuals." Based on other usage of this word the latter translation is the least likely to be accurate. *Arsenokoitai* is a word, possibly invented by Paul, combining two Greek words for "bed" and "males." An early Greek church leader, John Chrysostom, used this word to mean anal intercourse. Chrysostom assigned different penances for anal intercourse, depending on with whom it was done: one's wife, a woman not one's wife, another man and so on. But because Paul, in Chapter Six is most concerned with male prostitutes, the most likely meaning of the word is male prostitutes.

It is regrettable the Religious Right and others who oppress gays and lesbians have taken the Bible captive and are using it to further their private agenda. But it's been done before. People of the same mindset wrote a book in the U.S. in 1904 called *The Negro a Beast*. These Bible bigots tried to use Bible quotations to prove that African Americans aren't human and, therefore, don't have souls. Not surprisingly, they arrived at the conclusion that African Americans couldn't have eternal life. Gays and lesbians were simply next

A Church without Hellfire

IN MID-FEBRUARY 1993, the Metropolitan Community Church of Dallas moved into its new home, the Cathedral of Hope, a \$3 million church financed by bonds sold throughout the local gay and lesbian community. (When financial planning for the Cathedral began some years ago, the prospect of getting a bank loan for a major homosexual religious center in Dallas appeared unlikely, and so the congregation turned successfully to this means of fundraising.)

Only two years after the founding of the Metropolitan Community Church as a denomination, Dallas' Metropolitan Community Church began with a group of 12 worshippers in 1970. By the mid-1970's, services in Dallas were attracting as many as 75 people, a huge turnout for that time. This church of lesbians, gay men and their families is now the world's largest of its kind, with more than 1,000 congregants overflowing the Cathedral of Hope on Sunday mornings. The church's fulltime staff numbers 16, and its budget runs to over \$1 million for 1994.

Like the other 250 or so MCCs across the U.S., the Cathedral of Hope's theology is trinitarian, in line with basic, orthodox Christianity, but allows members intellectual leeway on questions such as the virgin birth of Christ, according to Associate Pastor Paul Tucker. The church also ordains women; ministry in the MCC has been open to females from the church's beginning. The MCC's two sacraments are baptism, which is administered after attendance at membership classes, and communion, which is celebrated weekly in conjunction with Sunday public worship.

The success of the Metropolitan Community Church within Dallas's gay and lesbian community stems directly from its spirit of tolerance and compassion, extended within a group which has often experienced rejection from religious institutions. The communion table at the Cathedral of Hope is open to all believers, whether they are church members or not: "Being refused communion has happened to a lot of us," comments Tucker. Besides its regular worship services, the church offers dozens of programs and forms of assistance to anyone who is interested, from lay ministry training courses to extensive practical help for people with AIDS and their primary caregivers, emergency financial help to any person in need, counseling for couples, 12-step groups and opportunities to explore spiritual issues through workshops and conferences with visiting luminaries.

Underlying all the works and liturgies of the Dallas MCC is the message that it's okay to be one of God's creations, both gay and Christian. Hellfire and damnation are conspicuous by their absence from Cathedral of Hope sermons. MCC ministers stress the love of God and compassion for one's fellow beings, rather than the image of the vengeful Sky-God, in Gore Vidal's terminology. By necessity, the Metropolitan Community Church has faced the damage done to its members by the ecclesiastical thuggery of large segments of organized Christianity. Its message of spiritual healing deserves a hearing from the more massive, older denominations from which its membership comes.

— M.O.

in line, the last group of "different" human beings that could be slandered in public.

The Bible does not condemn homosexuality. Numerous books examine this subject in great detail. I recommend: *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (winner of the 1981 American Book Award) by John Boswell; *Jonathan Loved David* by Tom Horner; *Living in Sin?* and *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalists* by Bishop John Spong; and *Don't Be Afraid Anymore* by Rev. Troy Perry.

Scientific/medical professionals long ago dismissed the view that homosexuality is a sickness. The same disciplines are in the process of destroying the myth that homosexuality is a matter of choice. Researchers have

clearly established the fact that gays and lesbians have always constituted a substantial portion of the people on our planet.

But bigotry is based on fear and insecurity rather than reason. I find consolation, however, in the history of the church. God has always raised up persons within the church to purge the church of inquisitors. The purging already may be underway as clergy and lay persons force denomination after denomination to re-examine long-standing beliefs about lesbians and gays. In the past 30 to 40 years, more and more Biblical scholars and theologians are recognizing that Scripture doesn't condemn gays and lesbians. The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, a world-

wide Christian church with an outreach to the gay/lesbian community, is determined to be admitted to the National Council of Churches of Christ in America. And in the secular world, political leaders are questioning anti-gay and lesbian policies. Courts are calling for an end to the unconstitutional discrimination against gay and lesbian citizens.

One by one, those who oppress lesbians and gays in the name of God are being stripped of their respectability. As this is happening, more and more gays and lesbians are understanding that our sexuality is God's gift to us. The Bible does not condemn that gift. □

BOOKS & THE CULTURE

Get Used to It

BY DAVID REED

THE CULTURE OF DESIRE:

Paradox and Perversity in Gay Lives Today.

By Frank Browning

229-plus pages. New York:

Crown Publishers. \$20.

HOW COULD I IGNORE this book? On its cover were two shirtless gay-boys locking eyes with me. I picked it up, and it fell open to page 47, and leaping off the page were the words "I HATE STRAIGHTS" — the title of an unsigned manifesto that surfaced in June 1990. I scanned the bibliography. All the important names were there: Michel Foucault, Andrew Holleran, John Rechy, Edmund White, Allan Berube, Jonathan Katz, Jeffrey Weeks...

I took the book home with me. On every page, I was brought face to face with conflicts and puzzles which made me uneasy. I had usually dealt with conflicts by losing myself in my work as a gay activist. Now I was seeing on paper the very paradoxes I had for years been avoiding and exploiting.

In this book, Frank Browning, whose day job is reporting for National Public Radio, has reflected on his own experience as a gay

adolescent and adult. He compares his own experiences with those of others and, using Foucault's ideas about power, analyzes the collected data. Browning accurately describes his book as "a journey of internal and external witnessing, an examination of the culture gay men have constructed and a monologue about my own relationship to it."

Without the slightest trace of sensationalism, Browning's confessional style allows him to explore ground guaranteed to make us gay politicians, er, nervous. He begins with a detailed examination of "queer rage" and the styles expressing "queer rage." Here is Browning contrasting the aggressive subversiveness of the contemporary ACT-UP clone with the hyper-masculinity of the the Castro-clone of the golden age:

Unlike *Gay is Good* — the implicit message of the Castro clones who showed themselves to be butcher than the butchiest straight boys — Queer snatches the body back from the conventional image makers. Where Calvin Klein models took every Hollywood stereotype of the matinee idol and pushed it to the edge of pornographic display, Queer stylists take the secret of the macho model and turn it public: Even if he looks like Steve Reeves, he probably gets fucked at least as often as the silly queen. Being queer, they say, is about refusing to be imprisoned

by heterosexual conventions about what is male and female, about how a male and female should look, about how to sculpt, display, and dress a body. A queer body is a body whose plasticity, use, and presentation are controlled by its inhabitant — not responding exaggeratedly to the cultural and commercial styles of some moral, respectable majority. If the "gay body" was a body of compensation (for everything it had been denied in adolescence), the "queer body" is the body of subversion (of all the roles and behaviors it wants to sabotage).

Finally after recounting several conversations with gray-suited gay men, Browning reaches the conclusion (accurate, in my view) that "queer rage" is universally felt and understood by gay men — even by those who are sometimes offended by its expression. To read this observation in a thoughtful and analytical book was exhilarating. Browning had given me leave to say, "My straight friends are just going to have to get used to a little queer rage."

The element of dangerous play on the boundaries of convention leads Browning to an examination of the oxymoronic phrase "safe sex." Sex is *never* safe. Yet Browning's is not (as gay-speak would put it) a "sex-negative message." Drawing on Sigmund Freud and Georges Batailles (as mediated by

David Reed is a writer who lives in Ft. Worth, where he is also Treasurer of the Tarrant County Lesbian/Gay Alliance, which probably won't officially approve of anything Reed says here.

Leo Bresani), Browning raises the question, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" This question becomes a nexus for observations about sex in the park, sadomasochism, bath-house orgies and jerk-off clubs. This is not the usual setup for a somber meditation on the classlessness of nakedness and The Mystical Experience — breaking sexual boundaries to touch the infinite through the internal. This is not exactly the Song of Solomon:

The pursuit and recovery of the sacred and the ecstatic in contemporary life is a journey separate from the path to equity, democracy, and justice. It promises only a quality of knowing unavailable to the Rousseauistic mind of social contracts. The impulse toward the ecstatic speaks only to remind us that the permanent human condition is exposure, and it reveals that the new activist demand for sexual "safe space" is little more than a silly oxymoron. On the one hand, "safe space" denies the darkness and violence humans face in nature, and on the other it concocts a language of banal, "redemptive" sexual management that would suppress the inherently transgressive nature of desire. Fearful of facing the terror squarely, we invent a new "radical" mythos, complete with its own system of privilege and taboo. We actively contrive to inoculate ourselves from one another, struggling to deny that in the messiness of human affairs the only genuinely safe space exists in an urn of ashes. We forget the simplest, plainest truth: To be alive is to be at risk.

Nowhere can sex be altogether safe, because sex is, for most of us, our primary, residual, atavistic connection to the realm of animal existence.

But then, life on the boundaries is everyday life for gay men. A major theme in recent gay fiction has been the larger familial structures gay men find. Sometimes these include quirky and forgiving relationships with biological relatives. Sometimes gay extended families are composed of former lovers, their lovers and their "fag hag" friends, along with assorted pets and stuffed animals. Browning introduces us to these odd assailants of the Victorian nuclear family. A family of gay lovers, dying off in the AIDS epidemic, proves that loyalty is not necessarily a property of blood. A gay Cuban-American couple demonstrate that cultural loyalty can overcome their own fear of assault in macho Cuban Miami. What we gays have discovered is that families are the people who are there for each other; or as Barbara Bush would trill it, "However you define family, that's what we mean by family."

Browning also examines ways in which gay culture appropriates prevailing cultural values even when they are least admirable, e.g. racism, uncritical patriotism. Even these values get pressed into the service of gay community spirit. Racist elitism is deployed for the advancement of the Hotlanta River Expo, and patriotism props up the Mr. Hotlanta pageant, held annually in Atlanta, Georgia.

Browning's last two chapters deal with the interaction of the internal and external forces that shape the gay culture. On the one hand, gay culture is produced from within by gay politicians and image makers, then sold to gays nationwide as an export of New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. On the other hand, the gay ghettos of America's large cities are a bulwark against an oppressive prevailing culture.

The traditional authorities of religion, law and medicine use gay bodies as a battleground in the struggle for power and prestige. (Is gay life a sin to be denounced, a crime to be punished or an illness to be cured?) The very word "homosexual" was concocted as a way for psychologists to pry custody of sex out of the hands of jurists. This historic power struggle was repeated in stop-action fast motion in the development and implementation of military policies during World War II. Browning describes this development briefly:

The war came at a time when Americans were finally relinquishing the dream of bucolic community life, when the promise of the modern city defined the future. It also came at a time when psychotherapy had finally moved beyond the intelligentsia and was taking its place as a generally

applied tool of human management. At the outset of the war, military psychiatrists argued forcefully that the homosexual was not a criminal but simply a type of human being incapable of controlling his condition. It followed that since homosexuality could not be stopped, homosexuals should either be excluded or "managed." It was a turning point in America's reconceptualization of homosexuality. Though the sodomy laws did not disappear, the new mental-health movement transplanted homosexuals from the jail cell to the psychiatrist's couch and opened up the first broad discourse over what homosexuality is. Whether or not doctors could "cure" homosexuality mattered less than that they saw it as a *condition*, a state of being that described vast numbers of human beings.

Odd distortions of gay image-play are attempts at subversion of authority structures to create room for life. Browning points to an aphorism by Oscar Wilde as a crystallization of this style: "What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion." Wilde's witticism sheds light on the private lives and public lifestyles of many other gay men — E. M. Forster, Andre Gide, Jean Genet, Joe Orton and Michel Foucault, to name a famous few.

I like Browning's *The Culture of Desire* as much for what it doesn't do as for what it does. It does not develop a single, unified narrative line. It doesn't argue a consistent and tight thesis. It doesn't structure itself into neat syllogisms illustrated by interesting anecdotes.

The Culture of Desire drops in on brief, often banal, moments. It describes interesting, ordinary people. It connects what it discovers in fresh ways. It provokes thought and reflection. It excites, and it frightens. And in the end, it encourages me because it helps me see that my activism (with all my self-indulgence, grandstanding and demagoguery) is exactly right and good and proper because it is necessary for my own and others' well-being.

Browning shows that there is such a thing as gay culture, even if that culture is very young, artificial and Protean. Gay culture is transmitted to novices by example, personal instruction, writing, and artistic expressions; and it is based on sexual desire. So, you see, Michael Swift's 1979 satirical essay is exactly right: "We will seduce your sons!" We will subvert traditional family values. We will flout authority and flaunt our sexuality. We will be good role models for the youth of our nation. And we will make the world a more authentically human place to live.

A word to the wise: Get used to it. □



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AIDS: Science and Reality

BY MARY O'GRADY

DRAGON WITHIN THE GATES:
The Once and Future AIDS Epidemic
By Stephen C. Joseph, M.D.
272 pages. New York:
Carroll & Graf. \$20.95

AS REAL AS IT GETS:
The Life of a Hospital at the Center
of the AIDS Epidemic
By Carol Pogash
255 pages. New York:
Birch Lane Press. \$18.95.

DRAGON WITHIN THE GATES begins with an intelligent, readable explanation of the origin and biology of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, or HIV. The author, Dr. Stephen Joseph, a Health Commissioner for New York City from 1986 to 1990, is a public health doctor who writes about the AIDS epidemic in terms of sound classical epidemiology.

Joseph advocates the confidential reporting of AIDS cases to public health authorities, as well as aggressive contact tracing and partner notification, still used by city and county health departments in cases of other communicable diseases. He says that HIV testing must become routine in all health care settings. Only by these means, he argues, can we begin to protect the uninfected and to get realistic data on the spread of the HIV epidemic.

He provides a lucid account of the history of the AIDS epidemic in New York City, as well as an ironclad explanation, in evolutionary terms, of why HIV is relatively difficult to transmit and highly unlikely to mutate into a virus communicable by casual contact. Joseph's writing on the scientific aspects of HIV disease is altogether excellent, as well as accessible to the general reader, and much of what he says is incontestable.

Unfortunately, the strategies of classical epidemiology break down in the face of an illness as stigmatized and politicized as AIDS. In a recent radio interview, Joseph said that the politics of fluoridation of public water supplies, and of mandatory childhood vaccination, resulted in dilemmas similar to those surrounding HIV testing and case reporting. In his book, he mentions tuberculosis and cancer as diseases considered shameful in 19th-

century America. The stigma of tuberculosis and cancer are things of the past, and opposition to fluoridation and vaccination has largely disappeared. So Joseph infers that the hysteria surrounding HIV disease will likewise die down with the passing of time, and therefore he defends his traditional, authoritarian approach to the epidemic. He fails to consider that neither water fluoridation nor vaccination nor TB nor cancer had any connection to the explosive subjects of sex and drugs, and hence the controversies surrounding them were of a different order of magnitude.

To his credit, Joseph's many unpleasant public and private experiences with AIDS activists do not alter his approach to the problem, and in his arguments and his account of his experience of experiences as health commissioner he remains an unemotional scientist. At the same time, his fundamental detachment means that he has no grasp of the stigma that has surrounded AIDS from the beginning. But Stephen Joseph obviously lives in a scholarly, gentlemanly, and above all, financially stable world, where a diagnosis will not, cannot lead directly and immediately to rejection, ostracism, homelessness and solitary death.

As Real As It Gets depicts a far different world: San Francisco General Hospital. (The title comes from the slogan on T-shirts worn by San Francisco General emergency room personnel.) Carol Pogash's book begins with 24-year-old nurse "Jane Doe" sticking herself in the finger with a patient's used hypodermic needle. Jane Doe was infected by this accidental exposure to a stranger's blood. Her story, complemented with the sad dramas that unfold as her family and friends learn her HIV status, and her long, hard fight to win compensation for her occupational exposure to the virus, is the thread that ties together a series of accounts of human experiences at the epicenter of the AIDS epidemic.

In July of 1981, Dr. Paul Volberding opened a tiny oncology clinic at San Francisco General. On his first day, he saw a wizened, dying 22-year-old with a rare cancer most common among elderly Mediterranean males: Kaposi's sarcoma. He treated this man for his cancer, and the man, homeless and friendless, took to hanging around the clinic. Through this first patient the staff was introduced to the practice of self-taught social work. By the time of his death from an atypical pneumonia that autumn, the young man with the

unlikely diagnosis had been followed by a string of fellow sufferers, all too young to bear the marks of Kaposi's sarcoma.

From Hong Kong, San Francisco General drew Dr. Hin-Wing Yeung. He wanted to test, on AIDS patients, the Chinese herbal medicine which was to become known as Compound Q. With only three known HIV-positive people in Hong Kong in 1986, he correctly assumed that San Francisco was a more likely location for a trial. At the General, researchers Michael McGrath and Gifford Leong became interested in the Hong Kong doctor's vials of homemade white powder. Pogash explains the basic mechanics of the Compound Q trial that San Francisco General conducted for the Food and Drug Administration from the viewpoint of registered nurse Vince DeGenova, himself HIV-positive, who was responsible for recruiting patients for the experiments. She also writes of the rumors and hopes the drug inspired, until its years of trials yielded no good results. (Before long, as word of the drug's promise spread, and DeGenova's own health deteriorated, he found himself inundated with pathetic letters, offers of bribes, and the odd foreigner arriving direct from the airport to his doorstep, all pleading for enrollment in the trial.) Pogash also reports the unorthodox trial of Compound Q organized by the AIDS activists of Project Inform, who quickly became disgusted at the glacial pace of the FDA official investigation.

The book describes the development of the world's first hospital ward designated for AIDS patients: Unit 5A at San Francisco General. To segregate patients with a disease universally feared but not readily transmissible flew in the face of accepted nursing practice, but by 1983, the sorrowful anecdotes could no longer be ignored: the dying AIDS patient refused Last Rites by a self-righteous priest, the sick men lying in soaked bed linen, dirty meal trays lying on dirty floors, the placards screaming CONTAMINATED AREA on AIDS patients' doors. (San Francisco General was at that time one of a tiny handful of institutions with any experience at all dealing with HIV. Similar antediluvian standards of care continue in 1993 for HIV-infected patients unfortunate enough to land in facilities that have not made conscious efforts at staff education about the disease.)

5A was created specifically to provide humane care to those who had been denied it elsewhere in the hospital. Before it opened

Austin writer Mary O'Grady is better known as The Observer's "Bad Bills Girl."

its founder, nurse Cliff Morrison, took the then-revolutionary step of asking his patients how the hospital was failing to care for them. The ward that resulted from his long discussions remains a sterling example, not just of AIDS care, but of the triumph of the patients' rights movement, which gained tremendous momentum from the assertive contributions of well-educated, middle-class HIV patients who demanded some say in their treatment and care.

A realistic work, *As Real As It Gets* tells of hysteria and terror as well as heroism and creativity. Pogash traces the growth of knowledge about HIV transmission, honestly depicting the fears and ambivalence of a medical profession no longer accustomed to the notion of an ailment both contagious and fatal. (As she says, health workers' occupational exposures to Hepatitis B, with their attendant fatalities, tend to be a matter of massive denial throughout the entire health care system.) The author relates the professional history of Dr. Lorraine Day, an orthopedic surgeon formerly on staff at San Francisco General. Dr. Day's concern about accidental HIV infection prompted her to give up the practice of medicine. She is currently traveling the country, asserting, with no evidence whatever, that

HIV is transmissible by casual contact, and that the Centers for Disease Control are engaged in a conspiracy to dupe the American public.

These two books deserve to be read in quick succession. *As Real As It Gets* tells the human story of the emergence of HIV disease, but strictly scientific aspects of the epidemic are

beyond its scope. *Dragon Within the Gates* provides the information necessary to think intelligently about AIDS and the issues that surround it; however, author Joseph's rational arguments need accompanying reminders that the figures he writes about represent human beings whose lives remain unimaginably precarious. □

Continued from pg. 32

kicking and beating hapless teenagers for no good reason? The *Dallas Morning News* addressed the potential for police brutality in a story last month on the treatment of 96 Dallas-area teenagers who were arrested on charges of underage drinking at a home in rural Kaufman County. But according to the *Dallas Observer*, a weekly which chronicles the foibles of Dallas' Only Daily, a 12-inch story that quoted unidentified parents complaining that their children told them officers had "used excessive force in making the arrests, verbally abused them and made threats to intimidate them" failed to note that the son of *News* publisher and editor Burl Osborne was among the offended youngsters. Two days later, the *News* reported

that 18 Dallas-area parents, including publisher Osborne, had sued the Kaufman County sheriff's office in federal court for alleged civil-rights violations in disrupting what the plaintiffs alleged was a group of "well-behaved teenagers." Sheriff Robert Harris told the *Dallas Observer* 30 cops from his office and other area law enforcement agencies responded to a call that someone had been shot and found the kids loudly partying. A search found no guns, but 365 cans, 19 bottles and two kegs of beer and 12 other bottles of liquor (none of which was mentioned in the *News* story), but he said nobody abused the kids. All of which caused the *Observer* to wonder "where was that 'Just say no' attitude that Park Cities parents — and the *Morning News* — often preach?" □

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WORK for single-payer National Health Care. Join GRAY PANTHERS, intergenerational advocates against ageism and for progressive policies promoting social and economic justice. \$20 individual, \$35 family. 3710 Cedar, Austin, Texas 78705. (512) 458-3738.

TEXAS AIDS NETWORK — dedicated to improving HIV/AIDS policy and funding in Texas. Individual membership \$25, P.O. Box 2395, Austin, TX 78768, (512) 447-8887.

LESBIAN/GAY DEMOCRATS of Texas — Our Voice in the Party. Membership \$15, P.O. Box 190933, Dallas, 75219.

SICK OF KILLING? Join the Amnesty International Campaign Against the Death Penalty. Call: Austin (512) 469-0966, Houston (713) 852-7860, Dallas (214) 739-5151, San Antonio (512) 622-3618, El Paso (915) 592-3925.

WORK FOR OPEN, responsible government in Texas. Join Common Cause/Texas, 316 West 12th #317, Austin, Texas 78701 (512) 474-2374.

TEXAS TENANTS' UNION. Membership \$18/year, \$10/six months, \$30 or more/sponsor. Receive handbook on tenants' rights, newsletter, and more. 5405 East Grand, Dallas, TX 75223.

CENTRAL TEXAS CHAPTER of the ACLU invites you to our noon Forum, the last

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Friday of every month, at Wyatt's, Hancock Center, Austin. For information call (512) 459-5829.

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BOOKLETS

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PHOTOGRAPHY — Reality is us. 20 years for the *Texas Observer* and he will take a few for you. Alan Pogue, 1701 Guadalupe, Austin, Texas 78701, (512) 478-8387.

MARY NELL MATHIS, CPA, 19 years

experience in tax, litigation support, and other analyses. 400 West 15th, #304, Austin, 78701, (512) 476-6986.

YELLOW DREAM MACHINE, computer bulletin board system. Telephone (512) 451-3222. Disability-based subject matter.

ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING. Design, expert witness, forensic investigation, product liability, electrical injury, electrical fires. W.T. Cronenwett, Ph.D, 2566 Cypress Avenue, Norman, Oklahoma 73072, (405) 329-0095.

PARTNERS OF INCEST SURVIVORS, groups for the male partner, \$15/session. John Young, LPC, LMFT, CSW-ACP, Austin 467-8632.

STEPFAMILIES/Austin, free support group for stepfamily couples, John, 467-8632.

IMAGO RELATIONSHIP THERAPY: Where once there was love, there can be love again. John Young, LPC, LMFT, CSW-ACP, Austin 467-8632.

EMPLOYMENT

SEEKING OFFICE MANAGER, American Friends Service Committee. At least one year experience with computerized accounting, desktop publishing and database management. Parttime, includes benefits. Deadline June 1. Contact: AFSC, 227 Congress Ave., #200, Austin, Texas 78701.

Born to be a Bubba But My Name's Lucille

WHEN IN THE COURSE of human events it becomes evident that you're gay and all alone in West Texas, what is there to do but jump in that old Ford pick-up, kick her in high and point her head toward Houston via Dallas and Austin?

What? Leave Lubbock and West Texas? Leave those beautiful sandstorms, rolling tumbleweeds, the Church of Christ and Southern Baptists? Not on your life! You see, I'm really happy here. Happy working in the oil patch with "the Ringtailed Redneck Bubba." You know, the last of the REAL men of Texas. They're the folks who have been known to say when the word QUEER comes up; "I'll tell you one damn thing, I druther have my son on drugs than QUEER" (it really happened); or, "If my son or daughter was gay I'd put a gun to his head and Momma would pull the trigger," (believe it or not). Yep, we still dodge bullets out here in the West, only the shots you hear nowadays are the letters to the editor in our own *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, and the comments of a few REAL MEN who still think "they all oughta be hung with a short rope and fed to the coyotes."

I can't ever recall not being gay, despite the fact that I didn't come out until 1975. Prior to that time, the only occasion I had to hear the word gay was in reference to a friend of mine from a small town south of here. And hell, that was her first name! Don't get me wrong. We knew about lesbians and gay men. They were called Lesbans, Queers and Fairies. The word homosexual came up once, hidden away in our high school health class textbook ... which, of course, we read at home. That one word in that one paragraph put me on the hunt for more. I trekked to the town library where I just knew they would have all kinds of stuff on the topic. I mean, any library that has a whole book on how to get cotton out of a medicine bottle ought to have something on H-O-M-O-S-E-X-U-A-L. WRONG! The closest thing I found were books on the Gay Twenties and

Homogenized Milk. I tried not to think about it, and joined the Rodeo Team. I stayed in the saddle and held my own 'til I left my small home town and moved to the city, where I found people just like me. Needless to say, my first experience at a gay gathering place was like being a kid in a candy store. I had finally come home. For the first time in my life all the pieces fit nicely.

West Texas is small in population but large in acreage, and for as many years as I can remember Lubbock has been called the melting pot of the South Plains. Nearly everyone else who lives here has moved in from some surrounding small town, and yes, as a result, it's true, everyone does know everyone else. Many of us still feel the need to be somewhat in the closet when it comes to jobs and/or family. That's a battle I've fought with myself for my entire gay life. However, I'm no fool. I realize I'm probably not kidding anyone! I'm a rotund 200 pounds-plus and not the most feminine thing to hit the plains. I suspect that my appearance, interest and spouse of eight years are dyed-in-the-wool giveaways. You just don't see women in their forties with roommates every day unless they're nuns, and in some instances even that has been questioned.

I was raised Church of Christ, just like the majority of folks out here on the plains. Yes, it is the *numero uno* choice of religion out here. And yes, members of the Church of Christ do believe that they're the only ones going to heaven. How boring! Can you imagine heaven without Ross Perot, Jimmy Carter or Governor Ann Richards?

Metropolitan Community Church of Lubbock or "that gay church on 34th," as its often called by our fellow citizens, was begun in 1980, and it seems they have always been there, whatever the crisis. The congregation has been extremely supportive of the quest for lesbian/gay rights. They were also the first group to assist in opening a food bank for our people living with AIDS, by overseeing it and operating it out of the parsonage garage. I have a great respect for this Lubbock church and its people. They have grown to a fairly large membership.

I remember so well when Lubbock and this gay community had its first AIDS case.

A young man by the name of Paul. He was first hospitalized at University Medical Center, and no one was allowed in to see him without masks, gloves and gowns. His own mother would not go in without the full regalia. Then came the MCC pastors, Rickie and Susan, who marched right past the cart of armor and proceeded in, sans isolation garb, to the amazement of many, including mom. It was the first time in a long time that Paul had been touched by a human hand without latex on it. I still to this day tend to get a lump in my throat when I think about that.

Living in West Texas and being gay are not naturally compatible; however, things are loosening up somewhat. I guess we can thank AIDS for that. Its hard to believe that something so tragic could build cultural bridges, but stranger things have happened. Religious organizations, the city, schools, county and health organizations are beginning to bond with the gay-founded AIDS organization, South Plains AIDS Resource Center, to help ensure quality of life for our people with AIDS.

West Texas gays have looked to our Southern brothers and sisters for role models and as freedom seekers. The Dallas Gay Alliance has been exceptionally willing to take us by the hand, and with love and understanding, showed us what we needed to be doing. Thus, the Lubbock Lesbian/Gay Alliance was born in 1983, and our first AIDS organization, Shanti of the Plains, in 1985-86. We will always be indebted to DGA for their help and overwhelming support. With their assistance and guidance we have been able to stand on our own, joined together with a purpose. That purpose being freedom and the will to live. Odd how these two things coupled can bring out the activist in all of us, gay or straight.

Being gay in West Texas is not the easiest thing to do. However, it's a lot easier these days, thanks to the ones before us who paved the way. The ones who, through their quest for freedom and a way of life, created a safe haven and sense of belonging for every small town man or woman. Here is where we have found the true sense of home, family and unconditional love. □

Life in West Texas for gays and lesbians may be getting better, but "Lucille" still requested that her identity not be revealed.

POLITICAL INTELLIGENCE

✓ **CIVIL RIGHTS** — FOR US. That was the message of the Baptist Ministers Association of Houston and Vicinity shortly before the May 1 election when Rev. J.J. Roberson announced the endorsement of Sen. Bob Krueger, but with a complaint about Krueger's support for gay rights. "Be it understood that we are anti-gay rights," Roberson was quoted in the April 28 *Houston Post*. "We do not believe in more support of gays in any measure. Yet we support — endorse — Senator Krueger for other issues. Like the Lord, I hate the sin but I love the sinner ... but we want him to know it's not our bag."

Roberson said he also would support Gaynelle Griffin Jones of Houston, an African-American woman and former state appeals judge who Krueger said he will suggest for U.S. Attorney in the Southern District. Roberson said he did not like Jones' perceived support of gay rights, after Jones said she supported constitutional rights for all people. [Krueger also has recommended Leodoro Martinez of Cotulla, LaSalle County Judge, as U.S. Marshal for the Southern District.]

In an article in the Boston *Phoenix*, Liz Galst reported that on April 22, when Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Los Angeles, was supposed to chair a Congressional Black Caucus hearing on "Homophobia in the Black Community," she and an aide to Rep. Craig Washington, D-Houston, were the only caucus members who showed up. Waters said many African-American clergy members are mongering hate; in at least one case she knows of, Waters added, the gay-bashing preacher was a homosexual. "I have sat in church with gay men and lesbians while the ministers bash and bash and bash," Waters was quoted. "At some point, when somebody slaps you and slaps you and slaps you, you have to turn away or slap back."

✓ **BRUTAL FACTS**. A University of Florida sociologist who surveyed major national and regional newspapers for more than two years found a nationwide pattern of violent assaults by white police officers against minorities. Joe Feagin, a sociology professor, and researcher Kim Lersch used the NEXIS service to search publications from January 1990 to May 1992 and found 130 reports of police brutality. African Americans

or Latinos were the victims of 97 percent of the brutality cases and white police officers were involved in 93 percent of the assaults, *In These Times* magazine reported. The university researchers sought to compare their data with that collected by the Justice Department in its review of brutality charges logged with federal agencies over six years, a review ordered in March 1991 by then-Attorney General Dick Thornburgh during the initial outrage over the videotaped beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles, but Lersch reported that the Justice Department refused to make the information available.

✓ **REAL PEOPLE NOT ALLOWED.**

Approximately 20 people representing the Wellness Council, a group seeking recognition of holistic medicine, congregated in the lobby in front of the Texas House on April 29 during the floor debate on the Texas Board of Medical Examiners. They were seeking a conference with a legislator until a Capitol police officer told the group they were blocking the passageway and ordered them to move. Approximately 40 lobbyists, many of whom have been more or less camped in the lobby since mid-January, watched the eviction of the amateurs. Apparently you need a suit and a cellular phone to block the door all day.

✓ **PICKING UP THE REALITY CHECK.**

Some 1,800 lobbyists reported being paid at least \$34.6 million — and as much as \$124 million — to influence state officials during the first three months of this year, according to a Texas Ethics Commission study. The figures vary because state law requires lobbyists to report their salary range, not exact amounts, explained Laylan Copelin of the *Austin American-Statesman*, who reported on the study. Lobbyists spent \$895,000 on entertaining legislators, staff, state executives and other lobbyists, with \$660,000 going toward events, such as receptions. More than \$2.4 million was spent on mass media, such as TV and newspaper advertisements over the fight to deregulate the telephone industry. But Louis Bacarisse, a lobbyist who as an aide to Lieut. Gov. Bob Bullock helped write the reporting rules two years ago, told the *Statesman* the report was

"worthless" because many of the registered lobbyists are corporate executives who do little actual lobbying but report their entire salary. He estimated there are 200 full-time lobbyists.

✓ **SETTLEMENT PROCEEDS.** The Texas House on an 82-52 vote approved a proposed settlement of the federal voting rights lawsuit designed to increase the number of elected minority judges. The House resolution endorsed the plan that calls for election of judges in nine urban counties from single-member subdistricts. U.S. District Judge Lucius Bunton of Midland has ruled at-large elections violate the Voting Rights Act and the full Fifth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals has scheduled a May 24 hearing on the appeal.

✓ **BULLETS STILL KILL.** For the second straight year, more Texans died from bullets than from motor vehicle accidents, the Texas Department of Health reported. In 1991, the study found, there were 3,692 deaths associated with guns compared with 3,180 deaths related to motor vehicles. Although motor vehicles remain the leading killer of Texans under age 20, deaths from firearms steadily increased from 1987 to 1991, the latest year for which statistics have been analyzed.

✓ **MAKING THE PLEDGE.** Although reformers have criticized the use of pledge cards by incumbent Texas House speakers as undemocratic, Rep. Tom Uher, speaker pro tem, said he has collected more than 80 cards from House members — more than the majority in the 150-member body — pledging support to re-elect House Speaker Pete Laney. Laney, a reform-minded Hale Center Democrat, said he tried to discourage the collection of signatures, at least until after the legislative session, but Uher, a Bay City Democrat, told the *Austin American-Statesman* he undertook the project so the issue would be put to rest and legislators could concentrate on the business at hand.

✓ **NEWS BUST.** Gun-wielding cops

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