

## Community Mourns Loss of Michael Gaitz

by Deborah Moncrief Bell

Houston and the GLBT community in particular lost a true gem on Monday, January 31 due to the sudden death of Michael A. Gaitz. He was a prominent attorney and the owner of Michael's Outpost Bar (The Outpost) and had been the publisher/owner of the Montrose GEM newspaper for a number of years.

Born in San Antonio on January 13, 1953, Gaitz had just celebrated his 58th birthday. He was with a family member when he collapsed and a call to 911 was made. His close family members were able to gather and be with him when he passed peacefully from this life.

A family statement summed up the sentiment of his family and friends by saying, "Michael touched all our lives and soul and his presence is a gift for which we will always be thankful."

He was a graduate of St. Thomas High School, The University of St. Thomas, and South Texas College of Law.

He is remembered as a kind and decent man who served as a mentor to many people, as well as helping individuals on a personal level. He had been a volunteer for the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard, active in Executive and Professional Association of Houston (EPAH) and the Texas Gay Rodeo Association (TGRA). He sponsored various Montrose Softball League teams over the years.

The Outpost has been home to numerous fund-raisers for community organizations and charities. A celebration of his life will be held there on Saturday, February 12th starting at 8:00pm. Everyone is welcome to come in that evening to raise a glass in his honor and to share their own "Michael" stories".

Michael's passion for justice and fairness extended beyond his practice of law. He did good work in the world, but he was camera shy, so



this painting of *Lady Justice* by Chad Awalt is used here in his honor.

Michael Gaitz served for three years as the president of TGRA. During that time the organization raised more than \$105,000 that helped such organizations as the Bering Community Service Foundation, Omega House, the Gay & Lesbian switchboard, PWA Holiday Charities, Q-Patrol and AssistHers.

He also offered his legal expertise to help numerous community organizations. A quiet man who worked behind the scenes, Michael Gaitz will be greatly missed, by family, friends and employees.

### Houston National Freedom to Marry Week

The Foundation for Family and Marriage Equality would invites you to join us for 1 or all 3 events scheduled in Houston for National Freedom to Marry Week (Panel Discussion, Texas' Big Gay Wedding Celebration, and Downtown March and Demonstration) culminating on Valentine's Day, Feb. 14th..

Our goals are to:

- 1) recognize and celebrate the love and commitment of LGBT couples in Texas (and the U.S.); and
- 2) highlight the 1138 federal marriage rights that are denied to Texas LGBT families as well as even to those that can marry legally in other states such as Massachusetts, Connecticut, Iowa, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

~ see *Freedom to Marry* on Page 6

## Queer Legislative Priorities in the Texas

by Daniel Williams

The Texas Legislature meets for 140 days every other year, 140 days to accomplish all of the business of the State for 2 years, that's it. This legislative session began on January 11th, so we are currently almost a fourth of the way through the process.

Several bills have been filed this session which, if passed, would significantly improve the lives of LGBT Texans, including:

\* SB 245 by Sen. Wendy Davis which would create a comprehensive anti-bullying program for Texas public schools

\* HB 172 by Rep. Marc Veasey which would require a study on how to improve the Texas Hate Crimes Act

~ See *Legislative* on Page 5



Top row, L-R: Cristan Williams, Chris Kerr, Jack Valinski  
Bottom row, L-r: Jolanda Jones, Josephine Tittsworth, Andrea Moore

### Meeting with Covenant House gains positive results

Changes are being made at the Covenant House-Houston. New 100% GLBT-affirming inclusive policies are in place, training is underway, a SAFE Zone is being established and zero-tolerance bullying standards are in place.

Transgender Center Director Cristan Williams has worked for over a year documenting the out right hostility, abuse and neglect of trans-youth who sought shelter at the Catholic run facility.

The meeting took place in the offices of Jolanda Jones, City Councilmember, who has worked with the Trans community and other activists to make this happen.

A special Valentine from Chris inside!

See Page 9



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 Friend on Facebook*  
*Follow the happenings of  
 the Houston GLBT  
 Community Online!*



*Follow us on Twitter*



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 AND BEYOND**

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**Schedule for 2011**  
*Deadline 12pm Fridays prior to print date*

ISSUE #	Print DATE	DUE ON
151*	02/11	02/04
152	02/25	02/18
153	03/11	03/04
154	03/25	03/18
155	04/08	04/01
156	04/22	04/15
157	05/06	04/29
158	05/20	05/13
159*	06/03	05/27
160*	06/17	06/10

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**montrosegem@yahoo.com**  
**713.523.2828**

**BEELINES**

by Deborah Moncrief Bell

My plans for this column in this issue have changed over the course of the week. I had been working on a piece about saying goodbye to the television series "The L Word". I'll save that for another issue. A much more important and profound goodbye took its place.

The sudden and unexpected death of Michael Gaitz, the behind the scenes publisher of the Montrose GEM has been a real blow for me personally. I had known Michael less than a year. We met when he was looking for a new editor for the paper. Having been the editor of the Houston Voice at one time, and for "umpteen" years a radio journalist and community activist, I was thrilled to be hired to once again work in the Houston community I so love.

I was still grieving the death of my Mother, who had passed the previous July. I was blessed to have been her primary care giver the last three weeks of her life. I was staying in her home in another part of the state and had not been able to find any work. I had thought I would probably settle there, sharing a house with my younger sister. But, then I saw a message on one of the community yahoo groups about a job opening for Editor of a GLBT community newspaper, I had to apply.

I sent in my resume, was given an interview, was hired and returned to Houston. Little did I know that when I gained a job I also would gain a friend.

Michael not only was a friend, but a good friend at that. We took to one another from the start, maybe because we were both Capricorns, We got along famously. Sure, we talked business, but I found I could talk to him about anything. He soon learned to trust me to do what he had hired me to do and rarely had anything to say about what should or should not be done with regards to producing the paper. He was my boss, but he treated me as a peer. That sense of mutual respect is crucial in true friendships.

He was someone who gained my respect rapidly. That is not something I give easily. He and I did not socialize away from work except every now and then I would stop by The Outpost when he was there. He always

had a ready smile and a ready hug. We would talk shop but also share stories. I remember we laughed a lot together and I always felt good about having spent time with him.

The last time I saw Michael was a few days before his 58th birthday. I ran into him at the bar prior to my attending a meeting of the Aaron Scheerhorn Foundation formation meeting. Since my birthday was a few days following his, we had a drink together.

The sudden news of his untimely death came to me via the an email message, after someone had seen a posting on Facebook and they wrote to me asking me if it was true that he had passed. I was out of town and no one had been able to contact me yet. Of course, I had to verify it and the only way I could at the time was to call the Outpost. I then got the confirmation of the stark reality of the truth.

Email and Facebook are the ways we hear about these things most often these days. That seems so impersonal, but is just the way of the world in these times. I was so stunned. Of course, talking with his family made it that much more real. Suddenly, I had to plan to travel back to Houston and attend the visitation and then the services the following day. I still was in that denial stage of grief, hoping against hope, that somehow, it just was not true.

The services were held on the worst day of winter we had so far this year. His mother related that the weather was the same as it had been the day he was born. There were delays due to the weather and traffic problems, and the service took place later in the day than originally planned. So, the family took everyone over to a nearby restaurant where they had originally planned to gather after the services. His close knit family, friends, and employees shared a meal and stories. I learned that he had a very a nice family. That was logical because men like Michael are not created in a vacuum.

Saying goodbye to my dear friend has been very hard. While I am glad that his family intends to continue the GEM, it is an understatement to say it won't be the same without him.

*That's the buzz from me this week!*

## COMMUNITY NEWS & RESOURCES

### Community Online

[www.houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org](http://www.houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org)

[www.montrosecounselingcenter.org](http://www.montrosecounselingcenter.org)

[www.legacycommunityhealth.org](http://www.legacycommunityhealth.org)

Houston GLBT Political Caucus  
[www.thecaucus.org](http://www.thecaucus.org)

Fort Bend LGBT Political Caucus:  
[FBLGBT\\_Political\\_caucus@yahoo.com](mailto:FBLGBT_Political_caucus@yahoo.com)

Out In Houston  
[www.outinhouston.com](http://www.outinhouston.com)

[www.PFLAGHouston.org](http://www.PFLAGHouston.org)  
HelpLine Telephone  
713-46PFLAG 713-467-3524  
[HelpLine@pflaghouston.org](mailto:HelpLine@pflaghouston.org)

AssistHers: [www.assisthers.org](http://www.assisthers.org)

The Lesbian Health Initiative (LHI)  
[www.lhihouston.org/](http://www.lhihouston.org/)

Houston Political Organizing Network  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HoP-ON>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LoneStarActivists/> (LSA)

FEMINIST ONLINE NETWORK  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FEMNET>

Northwest Corner: [www.nwcorner.org](http://www.nwcorner.org)

[www.socialnotesHouston.com](http://www.socialnotesHouston.com)

AIDS Foundation Houston  
[www.AFHouston.org](http://www.AFHouston.org)

Imperial Court of Houston  
[www.spacecityempire.org](http://www.spacecityempire.org)

Empire of the Royal Sovereign Imperial  
Court of the Single Star [www.ersicss.org](http://www.ersicss.org)

TG Center: [www.tgctr.org](http://www.tgctr.org)

UH LGBT Resource Center  
[www.uh.edu/lgbtrc](http://www.uh.edu/lgbtrc)

[www.Do713.com](http://www.Do713.com)  
(Community Calendar)

My Gay Houston  
[www.visithoustontexas.com/mygay-houston/](http://www.visithoustontexas.com/mygay-houston/)

Houston: Area Rainbow Collective History  
<http://houstonarch.pbworks.com/>

[www.queermusicheritage.com](http://www.queermusicheritage.com)

Gulf Coast Archive & Museum of GLBT  
History, Inc. GCAM  
[www.gcam.org](http://www.gcam.org).

social club for HIV+ men  
[www.pozlife.net/Houston](http://www.pozlife.net/Houston)

[www.equalitytexas.org](http://www.equalitytexas.org)

<http://www.kesheth>

[www.legislativequeery.com](http://www.legislativequeery.com)

Let us know of other groups that should be  
on this list at [montrosegem@yahoo.com](mailto:montrosegem@yahoo.com)

### Join the Houston Stonewall Young Democrats February Movie Hour

Wednesday, February 23, 2011  
6:30pm-8:30pm

14 Pews Filmhouse  
800 Aurora St  
Houston, TX 77008

Event link:  
<http://on.fb.me/dUwPPs>

Complimentary champagne  
reception and hors d'oeuvres  
provided.. A contribution of \$10  
encouraged, but not required.

2 short films being screened:

*Bedfellows*  
*The Marriage Matters*

We hope you will be able to come  
out and join us!

Special thanks to 14 Pews for al-  
lowing us the use of this unique,  
charming performance space!

401 Franklin St, PO Box 4178  
Houston, TX 77210  
[www.houstonstonewallyd.com](http://www.houstonstonewallyd.com)

### *Lovett Inn sold to become youth hostel*

A company called Hostelling Inter-  
national is nearing the final steps of  
acquiring the Lovett Inn from owner  
Dan Lueken. Hostelling Int'l has hos-  
tels all over the world. To stay at their  
places you have to become a member,  
and most of their members are young,  
world travelers. Their hostels are kind  
of like high class YMCA's.

### ON THE RADIO

MONDAYS, 9 - 11pm  
"QUEER VOICES"

SUNDAY MORNINGS  
12 - 4am  
"AFTER HOURS"

ON KPFT 90.1FM  
Pacifica - community radio  
HOUSTON, TX  
[www.kpft.org](http://www.kpft.org)

**Tune in!**



### Grand Marshal Voting Continues until April

To vote go to:

<http://pridehouston.org/celebration/pages/gmvote>

2011 Grand Marshal Nominees  
Below are our 2011 nominees for  
Male, Female, Honorary/Allied  
and Organization Grand Marshal.  
Click on the candidate's headshot  
to learn more about them, what  
they believe and how they contrib-  
ute to our community. Vote your  
choices for Parade Grand Marshal  
here.

Bryan Hlavinka

Jeffery Wallace

Nick Brines

Tim Brookover

Arden Eversmeyer

Meghan Stabler

Tammi Wallace

Hollyfield Foundation.

Houston TGRA

The GLBT Center

Judy & Duane Roland

Voting will end Monday, April 4  
and the grand marshal will be an-  
nounced Thursday, April 7 online

### HOUSTON GLBT COMMUNITY CENTER

**15 years of service to the  
community: 1996-2011**

The Center is located at 1900 Kane  
St., The main Center entrance are  
the Silver Street doors at the corner  
of Silver and Lubbock. (look for the  
Center sign above the door). The  
phone number is 713.524.3818. The  
website is [www.houstonglbtcommu-  
nitycenter.org](http://www.houstonglbtcommu-<br/>nitycenter.org)

The Center has been nominated for  
Organization Grand Marshal for the  
2011 Pride Parade, and president  
Tim Brookover has been nominated  
as Male Grand Marshal. Voting has  
begun at [www.pridehouston.org](http://www.pridehouston.org).

### FBar supports the Center

The Center has been selected as the  
beneficiary organization for the pre-  
view night of FBar (202 Tuam) on  
Thursday, February 24 (tentative due  
to construction delays). Each guest  
who makes a donation to the Cen-  
ter will receive a raffle ticket for a  
special gift basket. More info on this  
new club: [www.fbarhouston.com](http://www.fbarhouston.com).

### The Center turns 15

In 2011, the Center marks the fif-  
teenth anniversary of its founding.  
Our Fifteenth Anniversary Week  
(March 20-March 27) will include  
these activities:

•March 20-27. 15 Great Things To  
Do at the Center.

•March 23. Fifteen Anniversary  
Gala Open House. 6-9 p.m.

•March 27. Center Dinner on the  
Grounds Picnic. 12:30-4 p.m.

Looking ahead: Mark your calendar  
for the next First Saturday Queer  
Bingo on Saturday, March 5. On  
Saturday, we had our largest crowd  
to date for FSQB! Thanks to every-  
one who joined us.



[www.gayswitchboardhouston.org](http://www.gayswitchboardhouston.org)  
Community Resource Directory



## Nose in a Book

Review by Jone Devlin

### *Queer Questions Straight Talk – 108 Frank and Provocative Questions it's OK to Ask Your Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual Loved One*

by Abby Dees

The biography on the back of Abby Dees new book describes her as an openly gay “civil rights attorney who has worked for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights and awareness for 25 years.” What the biography doesn't say, however, is that it is because of her work in this field that she has run into, time and time again, individuals who are honestly curious about GLBT individuals and their lives but are too afraid to approach their queer friends with their questions.

The book was conceived while Dees was working as an editor on a question and answer book for caregivers. As she was editing this manuscript, she realized that a similar format would be a great way to answer everything, from the serious to the silly, that people want to know about the queer community.

She approached the publisher with her idea and was told “Great, and you're just the person to write it.” She accepted the challenge and “Queer Questions, Straight Talk” was born.

In Dees own words the book is an easy read “with a lot of white space” but quickly added that that was done on purpose to foster communication and discussion. It is in this same spirit that some provocative, and yes, ridiculous, questions have been included.

The book is divided into chapters covering such topics as Identity, Coming Out, Stereotypes, Politics, and Homophobia; and the answers (where they are provided) are by everyone from Dees to some famous (and not so famous) contributors.

The intros to each chapter, however, are all written by Dees herself. In these intros she discusses each individual topic in an open, easy to read way that manages to enlighten without becoming preachy. Dees told me that one of the most important lessons she has learned over time is that communication is the key to

For example, in her chapter on Marriage and Relationships she talks about how, when she first came out, the only way to identify her spouse was as her lover – a term Dees found disturbing, especially in casual conversation (i.e. No, I don't need anything, I'm just waiting for my lover to finish shopping).

After a brief discussion on the evolution of gay relationship labels, and how the author herself had to overcome some of her own stereotypes about marriage (like thinking it was a rigid institution meant only for straight people), she gets to the questions.

These include everything from “What is your perfect date?” to “Do you want to have kids?” to “What's the difference between a marriage and a commitment ceremony?” Meanwhile, in order to break up the “white space” sprinkled throughout this section, are blue boxes that include both the question and answers from everyone from people identified only by their first name, to well known GLBT individuals, like “Married with Children's” Amanda Bearse.

Along with educating straight people, Dees also made it clear that the purpose of the book is to help GLBT people realize that they don't have to be the experts on all things gay, another issue Dees found herself running into when she first came out.

A wonderful ice breaker at parties as well as a fun, thought provoking read on your own time, *Queer Questions Straight Talk – 108 Frank and Provocative Questions it's OK to Ask Your Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual Loved One* by Abby Dees is a great way to chase away the winter blues.

Reviewer's Grade: 5 out of 5 stars.



*“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us”*

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

## ~ Legislative Report

from page 1

\* HB 208 by Rep. Roberto Alonzo which would prohibit insurance discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.

\* HB 415 by Rep. Raphael Anchia which would allow same-sex parents to get accurate birth certificates for their children

\* HB 604 by Rep. Jessica Farrar which would repeal the state's sodomy statute (which the U.S. Supreme Court has declared unconstitutional, but remains on the books)

\* HB 665 by Rep. Mike Villarreal which would prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.

Unfortunately, a month into session none of these important bills have received any attention. Bills, both those introduced in the House and those introduced in the Senate, must be heard in committee before they can be voted on by the legislature. At the time of writing the House, which has 5 of the 6 bills listed above, had not yet determined who will sit on which committee.

House committees are appointed by the Speaker of the House, Rep. Joe Straus (Senate committees are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, David Dewhurst). Speaker Straus is particularly delinquent in appointing committees. In the last 10 years the average day of committee assignments in the House was the 13th day of the session, if Straus had kept with that trend committees would have been appointed on January 24. Without House Committees House bills (the ones that start “HB”) aren't going anywhere.

The Senate already has committee assignments. SB 245 (the anti-bullying bill) was referred to the Senate Education Committee, which is chaired by Sen. Florence Shapiro, a Republican from the Plano area. As of this writing she has not set the bill for a hearing. Without a hearing there is no hope for substantial improvement to Texas' bullying problem.

One way that you can get involved, and encourage lawmakers to act on these important issues, is to participate in Equality Texas' Lobby Day on March 7th.

Lobby Day starts on Monday morning with a complimentary breakfast, followed by a press conference at 9 am on the capitol steps. Participants will then attend a workshop on how to effectively talk to representatives and then, in groups of four to five, talk face to face with the people elected to represent us. Each group will have at least one person who has experience with lobbying, so no-one will be on their own during lobby day. Lunch is provided.

Please register on-line for Equality Texas Lobby Day at <http://tinyurl.com/eqt lobbyday2011> (Lobby Day is free, but preregistration is requested so that plans can be made to accommodate all participants).

Daniels Williams is a contributor to “Legislative Query” A Queer Perspective on the Texas Legislature

[www.legislativequery.com](http://www.legislativequery.com)

A former legislative aide, he takes on the little reported LGBT issues at the Texas capitol. Williams is a community activist, serves on the board of the TG Center and says, “I'm not a lawyer, just a nerd who finds the law fascinating.

### Lesbian Health Initiative's Celebration of Love Gala

Gala tickets have sold out. But it's not too late to join the fun! We have added a dance party ticket!

Yes, you can dance the night away from 10:00 PM to 1 AM!

- Ticket price \$40
  - No admission before 10PM
  - Advance tickets available by going to: <http://galalhihouston.eventbrite.com>
  - Cash only tickets available at the door (no checks, debit or credit cards accepted)
- Valet parking is \$8, cash bar available, iPad raffle \$1 per ticket (need not be present to win), and ATM available on site. Dress is Texas chic or semi formal.

Doubletree Hotel  
400 Dallas St.  
Houston, TX 77002

~ **Freedom to Marry**  
from Page 1

Thursday, February 10, 2011

Political, Religious, and Legal Panel Discussion on the Current Status of the GLBT Rights Movement at 6:30 pm - GLBT Cultural Center [Montrose Counseling Center] (401 Brannard Street, Room 106, Houston, TX). Professor Sophia Mrouri is a political science and social movements professor at LoneStar College. She will address the status of cultural and political progress towards marriage equality

Professor Jim Paulsen teaches at South Texas College of Law. He frequently publishes and speaks on a variety of topics related to his expertise in family law, marital property, jurisprudence, and civil procedure. In 2004, he published an article on the significance of *Lawrence v. Texas*. Professor Paulsen will provide a legal perspective on the marriage cases that are moving through the courts across the country. Rev. Harry Knox is Senior Pastor at Metropolitan Community Church in Houston. Harry has served as program director at Freedom to Marry and as director of the Human Rights Campaign's Religion and Faith Program. He will address efforts and progress within the faith community to achieve marriage equality.

Happy Hour Kickoff 8:00pm - Guava Lamp (570 Waugh Drive) - Come join us and meet everyone as we kick off National Freedom to Marry Week

Sunday, February 13, 2011. ***The Texas' Big Gay Wedding Celebration and Protest***, 1:30pm - Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church. (2025 West 11th Street, Houston TX) Register to be married in the ceremony.

Couples will participate in a multi-faith wedding ceremony and celebration to share their vows, renew their vows, and/or demonstrate that our churches will marry us; it's our government that denies us. Come and enjoy the fun, celebrate your relationship or support your friends and family. There will be a wedding reception afterwards.

Monday, February 14, 2011  
Valentine's Day March and Demonstration for the Right to Marry, 11:30 am - 2:00pm

11:30am - Marriage License Protest at County Clerk's Office (201 Caroline St.). Same-sex couples will line up

and request marriage licenses at 12:00 noon. Register to participate in requesting a marriage license. Others will demonstrate with signs.

The week's events culminate with a protest starting from that site to City Hall.

12:30 m - March to City Hall (901 Bagby Street). Rally and demonstration for the right to marry. Bring family/marriage rights protest signs. Extras will be available at the event.

For more information or to register for events, go to [www.FamilyMarriageEquality.org](http://www.FamilyMarriageEquality.org) or <http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=36950066047>

**National News Briefs regarding "Right to Marry" from around the Nation via the *Washington Blade***

[www.WashingtonBlade.com](http://www.WashingtonBlade.com)

**Ind. House panel approves marriage amendment**

A House committee in Indiana on Monday reported out a state constitutional amendment that would ban same-sex marriage in the Hoosier State.

According to the Chicago Sun-Tribune, the Republican-controlled committee approved the amendment along party lines by an 8-4 vote before sending the measure to the House floor.

Current law in Indiana restricts marriage to one man and one woman, but, the amendment, if passed, would prevent the courts from overturning the statute or the Legislature from approving marriage rights for gay couples in later years.

The House and Senate, both controlled by the GOP, are expected to approve the amendment. After both chambers pass the proposal, it would have to pass again in 2013 or 2014 in order to get on the ballot in 2014. Md. Senate to talk marriage on Tuesday

**Hearing for bill in Maryland**

Maryland's same-sex marriage bill gets its first hearing in the Senate on Tuesday, Feb. 8 beginning at 1 p.m.

in Annapolis. Those interested in testifying have until 12:45 p.m. that day to register, but a Senate spokesperson today warned that large crowds are expected so anyone planning to attend should arrive early.

Senate committee hearings are not televised. To listen to the hearing live, visit the Maryland General Assembly website at <http://mlis.state.md.us> and select the link for "hearings/listen/view" and follow the links to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee.

The hearing is expected to take the full day, possibly lasting until 9 p.m. The SPJ Committee generally casts votes on Fridays; it's not yet known if the marriage vote will happen this Friday or the following. But a majority of SPJ committee members supports the bill.

Maryland's Senate has 47 members; 24 votes are needed for passage. The Baltimore Sun reported this weekend that the marriage bill has 20 solid supporters, with six senators so far declining to express a position on the bill.

The National Organization for Marriage has been active in the state over the past week and has paid for an extensive robo-calling campaign masked as a "poll" seeking opinions on whether marriage should be reserved for a man and a woman. It is anticipated that NOM representatives and others opposing marriage equality will sign up to testify, but because advance registration is not required, it is unknown who will speak on NOM's behalf.

The Blade will have reporting staff in Annapolis will update their website as developments warrant.

**Protesters return to Smithsonian after ban lifted**

Two activists detained in December after protesting a decision by the Smithsonian Institution to remove a video from the "Hide/Seek" exhibit about gay art in America were officially permitted to return to the National Portrait Gallery, site of the exhibit, for a private tour sponsored by the Washington Blade on Feb. 3.

After intervention by the Blade, David Ward, co-curator of the exhibit, agreed to seek an official end of the enforcement of any "ban" by Smith-

sonian security officials barring the two protesters — videographer/photographer Mike Iacovone, who is straight, and Mike Blasenstein, who is gay — from entering any Smithsonian museum. The two were detained following their protest of a decision in late November by Smithsonian Secretary Wayne Clough to remove a four-minute video, an extract from a longer video by the late gay artist David Wojnarowicz, who died of AIDS in 1993, showing for a few seconds ants crawling on a crucifix, imagery that a right-wing group, the Catholic League, claimed to be anti-Catholic.

They were detained when Blasenstein and Iacovone entered the National Portrait Gallery and Blasenstein displayed the video on an iPad hung around his neck. He was also holding a stack of fliers with text explaining his protest at the video's removal from the exhibit. Iacovone was then also detained by Smithsonian police for filming Blasenstein's run-in with security. Each was released but only after being made to sign letters pledging not to return to any Smithsonian facilities.

Explaining his decision to protest, Blasenstein later told the newsletter ArtInfo, that he joined in actions critical of the removal of the video because, he explained, "I just felt this was an important issue."

"I'm not really an artist or an activist," Blasenstein declared, "but when I heard that they took it down, it just seemed to send such a clear negative message. So I thought to myself, I would send my own message and bring this art back into the museum."

Blasenstein later told the Blade that they were not only banned from the museum but during their detention they were "forcibly stripped of our materials, handcuffed, dragged into a stairwell, and told to sign papers thrust in front of us or be arrested." They were then escorted from the building, he said, "without being given copies of what we had signed."

Ward, an historian at the Portrait Gallery and co-curator of the exhibit with Jonathan D. Katz of the State University of New York in Buffalo, told the Blade that the ban was actually "never imposed" by the Smithsonian,

~ See **Blade briefs** on Page 14

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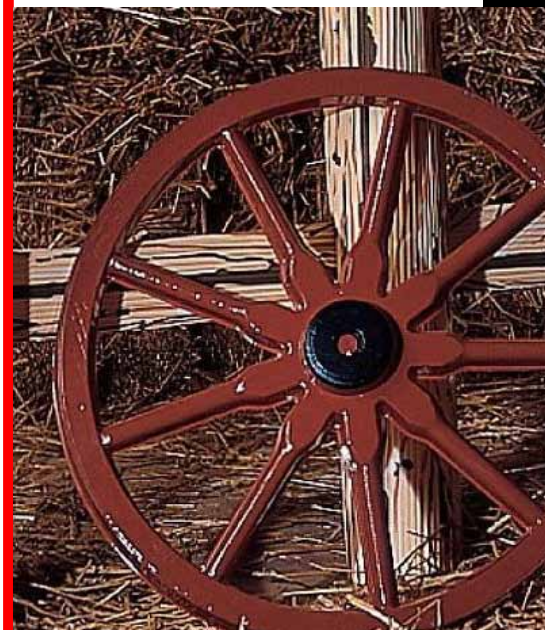


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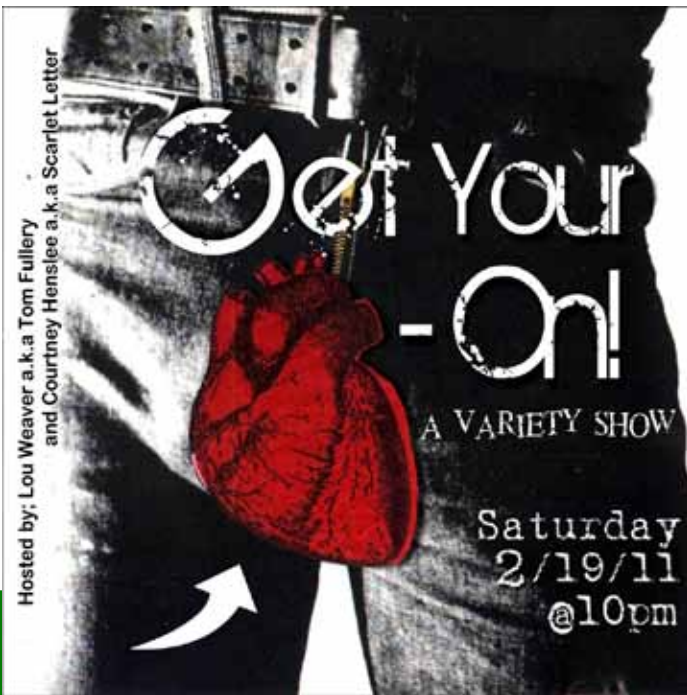
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The play has a cast of 5 males, besides the roles of Harry Hay (this role has been cast) and Rudi Gernreich, there are 3 actors that play multiple roles, which are very challenging for actors. Age range: for Rudi and the other 3 roles, mid-20's to mid-30', with some flexibility in ages. Actors will receive some compensation.

The production will run Friday and Saturdays from March 25 through April 16. Rehearsals will begin February 14, will need to cast the show by that date.

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Left is the campanile, the bell tower of what was once the Central Church of Christ, on Montrose near Richmond.

Below is the Eleanor Freed Branch of the Houston Library, also known as the Montrose Library.

The Black Labrador Pub and Restaurant (usually called "The Black Lab") has a long-term lease in the building.



## HISTORY AT A GLANCE

by Craig Farrell



The Date: 1940

The Place: 4100 Montrose Blvd

The Event: The Finished construction of the Central Church of Christ, now known as the Eleanor K. Freed Montrose Neighborhood Library.

As you near the intersection of Montrose Boulevard and Richmond Avenue, you can't help but notice the wonderful church building that is now the Montrose Library. Designed by William Ward Watkin, construction was completed in 1940. William Ward Watkin was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on January 21, 1886. Other ecclesiastical commissions included the First Methodist Church of Wichita Falls, and the St. Mark's Church in Beaumont, Texas.

The building is known in Houston as "The Campanile", which is the Italian word for a bell tower. When you entered the church on Montrose, the bell tower was located by the front door. Although today the bell is gone there is a small colonnade connecting the main church-library building to the former church meeting rooms and offices. The original stained glass window of the church can still be seen featuring a dove with an olive branch in its beak. There is a concrete block set into the wall of the building that reads "Church of Christ, 1946".

In 1986, developer John Hansen bought the former Central Church of Christ and renovated the sanctuary into a library, which is now called the Eleanor Freed-Montrose Neighborhood Library. The fellowship hall was converted into offices and commercial space, now home to Kraftsmen Bakery, Cezanne's jazz club, and the British pub called the Black Lab. Eleanor Freed Stern, longtime art critic for the Houston Post and a patron of numerous cultural institutions in Houston, was for many years a member and then president of the Friends of the Library. She later served with distinction on the Houston Public Library Board.

On February 23, 2007, The Houston Business Journal reported the sale of the property at 4100 Montrose, to The University of St. Thomas. Jim Booth, Vice President for Finance at St. Thomas, stated, "We'll continue

to lease the property and use the cash flow to pay off our debt."

"Four members of a group called the 25-year-old Birthday Girls met recently for lunch at the Black Lab," says Bobbie Huebner. "One of us has difficulty hearing, which I mentioned to Armando, the general manager. He most graciously seated us separately in the quiet Churchill Room. We reminisced about the days the room was a church nursery when we were worshiping in the sanctuary of the Central Church of Christ."

Hansen Partners' John Andell confirmed the sale, saying "Yes, we have sold the buildings to the University of St. Thomas... HOWEVER, before we did, I signed the restaurant up for a LONG term lease. The university appreciates how the pub has been such an integral part of the neighborhood and the student body, and would like The Black Lab to keep on serving up their Bass Ale pints for years to come."

The Houston Press ranked the library as the best public library branch in Houston in 2009. There was "something so urban and civilized about the Montrose branch" and the library was "a great place for parents and kids, as the branch hosts a multitude of child-friendly events each week."

The Library is also home to the once a month Lesbian Book Club, and has been the meeting location to other events sponsored by various GLBT organizations.

In 1999 this library was the site of the first meeting of yours truly, the Gulf Coast Archive and Museum of GLBT History!

Rumors have always stated that the reason the Church sold to Hansen was due to the dislike for the "direction of the community". Now stands a wonderful neighborhood library! So the next time you get a chance... stop in... sit... and read for a spell!

History at a Glance is sponsored by The Gulf Coast Archive & Museum of GLBT History (GCAM).

### ~ Blade Briefs from Page 12

The regents, however, announced after their meeting that they supported Clough, though even he subsequently acknowledged that perhaps it had been made in haste and that he would respond differently in the future.

"I'd like to think I'm a little wiser than I was six months ago or three months ago," he said at a news conference following the meeting with the regents, which reviewed the entire controversy and then issued a statement backing him. However, a three-member panel reporting to the regents implicitly criticized the way the censorship decision was made and communicated. And regents repeatedly asked by reporters whether Clough had made the right decision refused to answer directly.

Another rebuke, this time more direct, came from the board of a Smithsonian member institution, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, that met last week and issued an open letter, saying they were "deeply troubled by the precedent" of the November decision to pull the video from the show.

### Latino HIV Task Force open house on Feb. 25

Latino HIV Task Force open house to feature networking, talk focusing on HIV's impact among Hispanics. The Latino HIV Task Force will sponsor an open house from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Friday, Feb. 25 at the Houston Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Drive.

The event will start with a networking session for people interested in increasing education and awareness of HIV, AIDS and sexually-transmitted diseases among Hispanics in the Houston area. Dr. Olga Lugo-Torres will present "Addressing the Seriousness of HIV in the Latino Community."

The event will feature a Houston Council Member Ed Gonzalez and a presentation on the task force's events and initiatives planned for 2011.

Hispanics in Houston and Harris County represent 22 percent of the 18,364 HIV infections reported to the Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS) since 1999. They also make up 18 percent of the 26,843 local AIDS cases reported to HDHHS since the start of the epidemic in 1981.

Convened by HDHHS in 2002, the task force is comprised of health agencies and community-based organizations providing HIV and AIDS prevention programs or medical treatment.

To RSVP, call 713-987-4740 or email latinohtf@hotmail.com.

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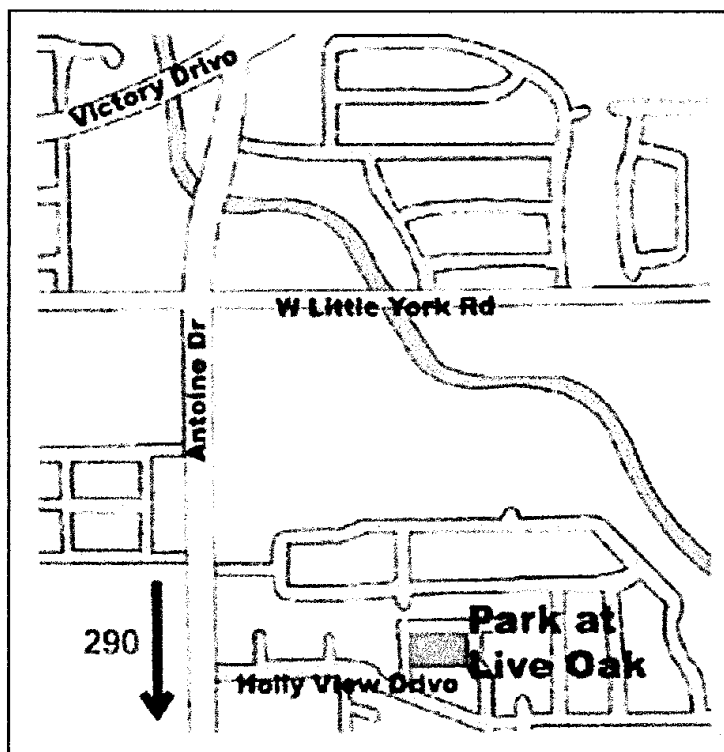
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Tim Pugh owner of TC's Bar presents a check to the TG Center's Executive Director, Cristan Williams ~ photo by William Toler

## Successful event benefits TG Center

by Lou Weaver

On Wednesday, January 26th, TC's Bar played host for a show "New Beginnings". William Toler, aka Sashay Larouge, put this show together to give back to the Transgender Center.

"I just love the Transgender Center. We're lucky to have a resource like this in Houston," said Toler. "They do so much for so many of us and I just want to do what I can to give back."

Toler coordinated the fund-raiser at TC's Bar featuring local drag queens, with all the proceeds going directly to his cause.

The show had many incredible acts including Vanity Wilde, Dixie Monroe, Krystal R Monroe, Kisha Adams, Vanessa Harper, Laisha Larue, Jame Roberts, Vivica Perry, Nicole Houston, DeyJzah Mirage, Gia Elektra, Amber Lemay Foxx and Violet S'Arbleu!

TC's Bar matched all the tip money that Vanity's number generated, then added to the donated funds to bring the total check for the Transgender Foundation of America's (TFA) Transgender Center to \$500. TFA wants to thank TC's bar, all of the performers and especially William for making this such a huge success!

## Latino HIV Task Force open house

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Convened by HDHHS in 2002, the task force is comprised of health agencies and community-based organizations providing HIV and AIDS prevention programs or medical treatment.

To RSVP, call 713-987-4740 or email latinohtf@hotmail.com.

## The Mayor of Montrose\*

by Henry McClurg



### Ronald Reagan at 100

Much has been written about that president, who would have turned 100 years old this month. But we in the gay community are fully aware that Reagan's legacy had a major embarrassing chapter in the early days of the AIDS health crisis.

Americablog.gay.com passes this on. On his death in 2004, the San Francisco Chronicle wrote, "Following discovery of the first cases in 1981, it soon became clear a national health crisis was developing. But President Reagan's response was 'halting and ineffective,' according to his biographer Lou Cannon. Those infected initially with this mysterious disease, all gay men, found themselves targeted with an unprecedented level of mean-spirited hostility."

"A significant source of Reagan's support came from the newly identified religious right and the Moral Majority, a political-action group founded by the Rev. Jerry Falwell. AIDS became the tool, and gay men the target for the politics of fear, hate and discrimination. Falwell said, 'AIDS is the wrath of God upon homosexuals.'"

Reagan's communications director Pat Buchanan argued that AIDS is "... nature's revenge on gay men."

With each passing month, death and suffering increased at a frightening rate. Scientists, researchers and health care professionals at every level expressed the need for funding. The response of the Reagan administration was indifference.

### Gay Life in Egypt?

Muslim nations take a dim view of people loving people of the same sex. Some of them stone these people to death. How is it in Egypt?

Gaylife.about.com writes this: Consensual homosexual sex is considered a "practice of debauchery" and punishable under Egyptian law, although not explicitly stated in the penal code. According to Human Rights Watch, some men are tortured and coerced by police to sign statements of homosexuality.

### LUEY Schedule Announced

One of the big events in Montrose every year is **Let Us Entertain You** (LUEY) Weekend. This will be its 38th year. How it started remains a little fuzzy but next issue I will tell you my memories of it, as I always do every year.

Your official host bars this year are BRB, George, The 611, Rich's, Ripcord and Tony's Corner Pocket. Your "official unofficial" host for the after-LUEY party is EJ's while Crocker will

host a reception for the women attending LUEY.

So, it's a leather affair. Get your leather conditioned up for March 10 through 13. Or buy a new set of sexy attire from our friends at Black Hawk Leather.

### From Where to Where?

We are born. We live. And we die. That's the inescapable cycle and it raises interesting contemplations. Let us start at the beginning.

Where were you and I before we were born? There is a question in that question. Before this life, was there a "where"? Was there a "when"? It depends on your beliefs which then are incorporated into one's faith, for most of us.

The same contemplations arise when you and I think about what comes after our death in this lifetime. The most common question posed by us mere mortals is "Where do we go?" That question implies that physics as we know it exists after we "pass on." I don't know the answer to that question. Does it?

Those past three paragraphs of my thoughts were quite deep; don't you think? But here's what I do know. A friend of mine, and my boss here at the GEM for the past few months and then several years prior to that, recently died. Michael Gaitz has passed to the "beyond." His soul is somewhere, or in some time, or in some different existence. He knows the answers now to those questions, I believe.

I met Michael over thirty years ago at the old Main Street bar, Venture-N. He, I, and several others were afternoon regulars. Back then, playing darts was the event we engaged in as we consumed our beverages, waiting for them to kick in with the happy feelings. But Michael would always just watch us with our darts. He was afraid to play.

One day, I insisted. Big Jim, the owner, also insisted. So we played a little game of 301. Michael's first dart missed the board completely and ended up about 15 feet down a hallway. He was embarrassed and said he was not going to ever play again. But he did and he eventually got pretty good at it.

Years later, whenever Michael and I would have a little tiff, and we had many, I would always remind him that I taught him how to play darts. That eased our feelings and we made up.

Good bye Michael. You were and are a GEM.

\* He's not really the Mayor.



## Two on the Aisle

Theater Review by Bill O'Roarke

*The Year of Magical Thinking* (at Main Street's Rice Village location) and *Gee's Bend* (at The Ensemble) have a lot in common. Phenomenally good acting, for one thing. Both plays also feature a strong woman who is adjusting to the loss of her husband.

Joan Didion in her autobiographical play, is an already established woman. She is a quiet, somewhat introverted writer whose husband was her rock – no, make that her anchor. She spent a year after he died waiting for him to come back. During that year, she also had to live through the long, slow death of her daughter. She winds up believing that “no one's eye is on the sparrow.” So, she's agnostic. Writing poetry helps her to try to keep up, to stay connected to this world, after her loss.

We watch Sadie, the heroine of *Gee's Bend*, establish herself. She is outgoing and so stitched into her community that she follows the way her mother taught her – to never lock your door. Her husband (whom we see for the first act) is her rock, but in a bad way. He cannot accompany her in her involvement in the civil rights movement. He's afraid and thinks that the only way he can protect his wife and children is to give them a home with a lock and lock it. When he dies, she buries the key to that lock, feeling like a great weight has been lifted from her shoulders. Then we watch her establish herself and her community as artists – quilt makers- in the public eye. But while she is doing that she must adjust to the long, slow decent of her beloved sister into senility. Her God is important to her. So much so that this becomes a play with music (but not a musical) with all the songs spirituals. These are older songs than the ones I hear the Gospel Ensemble do over at Resurrection Metropolitan Church, but they are ones that I would like to hear more often. His Eye is on the Sparrow was not one of them.

Claire Hart-Palumbo (Didion) is a very experienced, seasoned actress. Sure handed and .... well, let's just say that this is a one woman show and at no time did she lose my interest. Brava! This play is based on one of my husband Loyal's favorite books and he loved her in this role.

Michelle Harper (Sadie) is a young actress on her way up. She's very good, but she'll get even better. She is also well supported by an excellent ensemble that includes Kendrick Brown, Teacake and Detria Marie Ward.

Rebecca Greene Udden (director, *The Year of Magical Thinking*) is also very sure footed, doing a great job with a minimal set in a space that she knows like the back of her hand. After all, she's the artistic director of Main Street and has been a local theatrical leader for, what, forty years? Elizabeth VanDyke (director, *Gee's Bend*) is a visiting artist from NYC. She draws good performances out of her cast, but she doesn't take this particular stage into account enough. Many of the scenes were done, at least partially, on the floor which caused some sight-line problems.

Jodi Bobrovsky's set design for *Gee's Bend* is one of the best sets I've seen in quite a while. The slide show used within the play created by Adrian Washington was good use of that technique in theater. It was not only well done but it became integral in the progression of the story. The tech for *The Year of Magical Thinking*, particularly Shawn W. St. John's sound design, was understated but effective. A good simplicity can be difficult to achieve.

I'm glad I got to see both of these shows. If I had to choose between them? Very happy I don't have to do that, although there isn't a wrong answer to that question.

### OPENINGS

*Stairway to Paradise* (Bayou City C.M at Ensemble's smaller stage, 2/7 – 2/21) – once a week cabaret of songs written by Gershwin when he was young.

*August: Osage County* (Alley, 2/18 – 3/26) – exciting comedy

*Sunday in the Park With George* (Masquerade at Hobby Center, 2/18 – 2/27) – Sondheim!

*The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Theater Southwest, 2/18 – 3/26) – Falstaff!

To learn more about *The Quiltmakers of Gee's Bend* you may want to do an internet search.

~ *Blade Briefs* from Page 6

It was instead “done by D.C. Metro,” the city's police force, which was called to the scene, “without our knowledge or acquiescence.”

“They then passed the buck back to us to make us ‘lift’ a ban that wasn't our doing,” he insisted. Ward personally welcomed both Iacovone and Blasentein to the exhibit for the private tour on behalf of the Blade, saying, “I hope this is the end of it.” He also stated he wanted to “move on” from the entire controversy over the edited video, one of 105 items in the exhibit, which opened in late November, and closes on Feb. 13.

Blasentein told the Blade that he never felt the ban was purely a paper reprimand, saying, “let me tell you, when everyone around you is wearing guns, nothing about the process feels ‘bureaucratic.’” He said that though “you could spend hours untangling this thing” Ward was correct to insist that the so-called ban was really triggered by the city's police, but he added that “the sergeant I spoke to at MPD was pretty clear in his opinion that MPD doesn't ban anybody, but merely enforces a ban on behalf of the property owner.” He also stressed that the Smithsonian management “to the best of our knowledge” never insisted on barring them from the museum. That action, he believes, “was solely a decision of Smithsonian police.”

Blasentein said that “the story here is not primarily our ban,” but rather the act of official censorship itself. However, he insists that “had we been allowed back into the building,” after the incident with the iPad and the leaflets, “our protest would have been a lot different.”

“The only reason a trailer is parked outside the National Portrait Gallery is because that was the closest we were legally allowed to get to the building. If the Smithsonian had let me stand there for seven and a half hours with the iPad, we would have mobilized volunteers to do the same every day until Feb.13,” the day the exhibit closes its doors.

Instead, Iacovone and Blasenstein secured paperwork from the city to park a trailer directly in front of the museum at its entrance in the 700 block of F Street, N.W., where what

they call the Museum of Censored Art — to show “the art the Smithsonian won't,” will remain open until Feb. 13 from 11:30 a.m.-7 p.m. Even though they can now legally enter the museum, Iacovone said their counter-exhibit in the trailers will continue to remain open, staffed by 12-15 volunteers through Feb. 13.

Iacovone said they have spent more than \$6,500 so far on trailer and parking space costs and for powering batteries to run the video player. He praised two art galleries — the Hamiltonian and Flashpoint, as well as two others, Transformer and Civilian — for assisting them in various ways. More than 4,000 people have entered the trailers and viewed the video, he said, noting that “our biggest day so far was over 500 people,” and he thinks by the time the Museum of Censored Art shuts down they will reach the 5,000-visitor mark.

The exhibit is the first on the subject of same-sex desire in American art and shows the work of noted artists Thomas Eakins and John Singer Sargent as well as more recent icons such as Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol and Robert Mapplethorpe, the latter a photographer whose photo images showing explicit male sexuality caused the Corcoran Gallery to halt the exhibit planned of his work more than 20 years ago.

Smithsonian secretary G. Wayne Clough, the official responsible for the decision to order removal of the video, part of a larger work in 1987 called “A Fire in My Belly,” meanwhile, has been the target of calls for him to resign in the wake of that decision. Last week, about 30 protesters rallied outside the Smithsonian Castle on the Mall during a quarterly meeting of the Smithsonian Board of Regents, to demand that they fire him.

Organized by Art+ (positive), a New York City-based group that fights censorship and homophobia, and backed also by the activist group, People For the American Way, protesters declared that Clough had given in to right-wing pressures and should step down. They chanted “Hey, hey, ho, ho, Clough must go!” and “Ants in my pants, fire in my belly – Clough has got to go!”

~ see *Blade Briefs* on Page 14

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