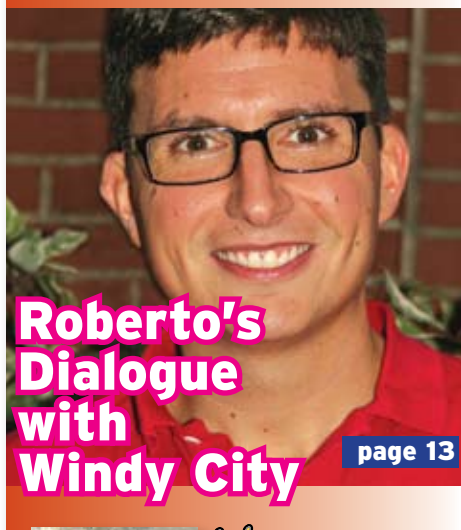




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Liz Thomson and Family page 9



Roberto's Dialogue with Windy City page 13



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Ryan White's Mom Talks Huckabee

BY AMY WOOTEN

For Jeanne White-Ginder, the mother of Ryan White, the last week has felt like Indiana in the '80s all over again, fighting ignorance and conservatives.

White-Ginder is shocked over Republican presidential candidate and former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee's stance regarding people living with HIV/AIDS. The Associated Press revealed that in 1992, Huckabee stated in a questionnaire that all people living with HIV/AIDS should be isolated. After recently being confronted about this, the candidate has remained steadfast in standing by the statement he made 15 years ago.

"You don't know whether to laugh or cry," White-Ginder told Windy City Times. Since, both the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and The AIDS Institute have requested that Huckabee meet with White-Ginder to discuss his comments. So far, Huckabee's campaign has not given any type of official response.

During the '80s, the nation had its collective eye on Ryan White, an Indiana teenager bat-



Jeanne White-Ginder. Photo by Michael Ruppel

ting AIDS contracted during treatment for his hemophilia. White was banned from his school due to fear that the disease could be spread via casual contact. Both he and his mother fought to eradicate ignorance and hate; White passed away in 1990. White-Ginder now lives in Florida, and serves on the board of The AIDS Institute.

One of the first things that ran through White-Ginder's mind when she heard the news while

at a board meeting in Washington, D.C. was, "Where are all the other Republicans? Why aren't they embarrassed?"

She fears that conservatives are eating up Huckabee's comments. "They are loving every minute of this," White-Ginder said. "They found somebody to agree with them."

Huckabee recently told the press he is willing to have a meeting, but both The AIDS Institute and HRC have not received any official response from their multiple requests.

White-Ginder isn't too hopeful until she hears from his campaign. "I don't know if he would ever retract it, though," she said. "From my understanding, he's standing by it."

She doesn't want a meeting in which her words would fall on deaf ears, but does want to give Huckabee one of Ryan's books. "Apparently, he hasn't heard the story, yet."

The tireless advocate is surprised that Huckabee, despite his words, is leading in the polls. She is baffled that he continues to receive support, and that other Republicans haven't spo-

Turn to page 4

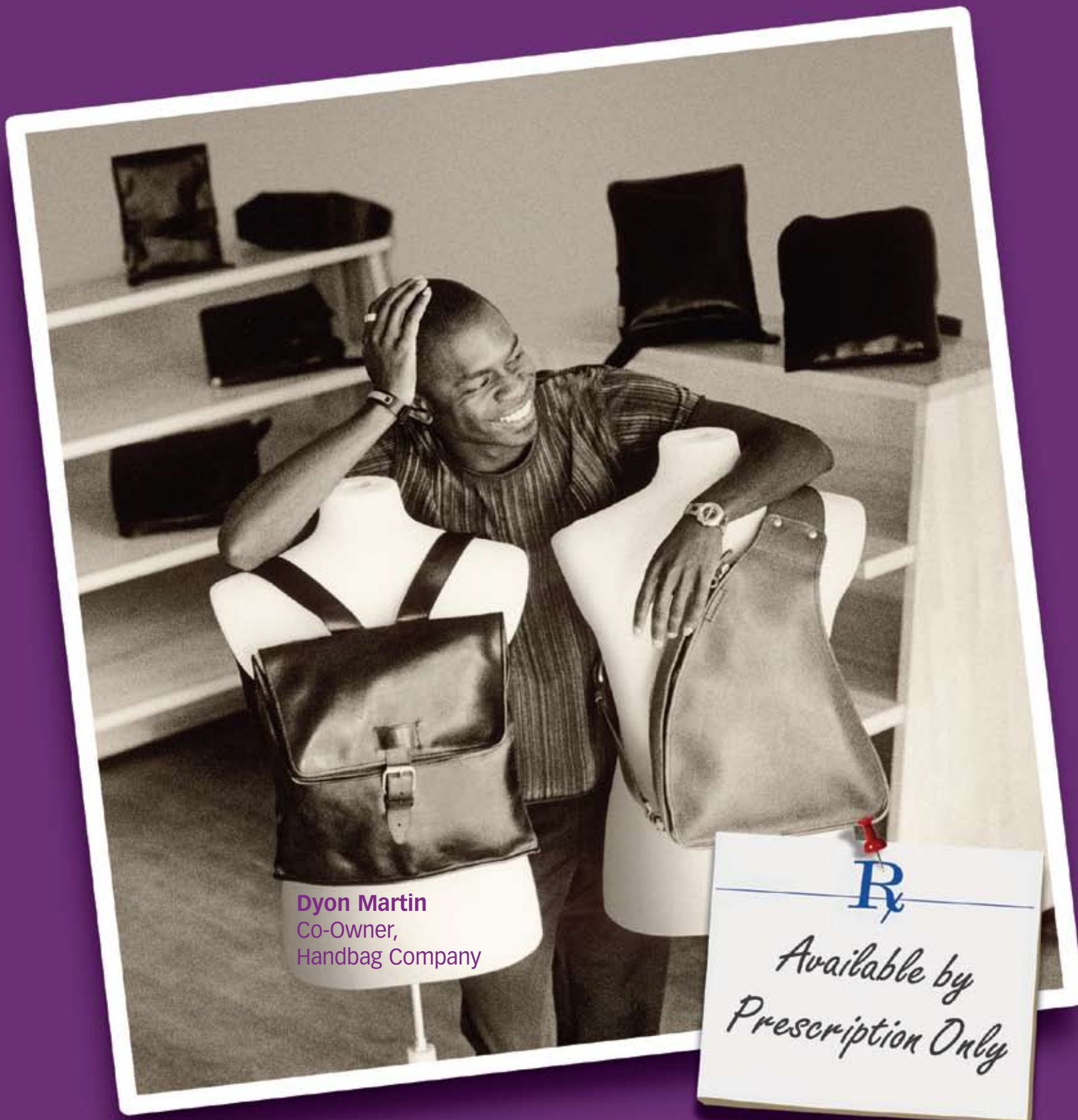


Alexandra Billings Puts a 'Twist' on Things page 16



Steven Rosengard: Working the 'Runway'

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WINDY CITY TIMES

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Project Runway's Steven Rosengard (above) dishes with Windy City Times about the show. See page 19.

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Chicago House held its Champagne Wrap-ture recently. See page 21. More images are at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com and www.MysticImagesPhotography.com. Photo by Kat Fitzgerald

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This week's online-only features include:
-Media Watch
-Deep Inside
Hollywood, featuring Jake Gyllenhaal (right)
-Photos from the Chicago Gay Men's Chorus' holiday concert

Photo courtesy of New Line Cinema



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Allan Berube. Photo by Rex Wockner

PASSAGES

Gay Historian Allan Berube

BY WAYNE HOFFMAN

Gay historian Allan Berube, the award-winning author of *Coming Out Under Fire*, Dec. 11. He was 61.

His death was due to sudden complications following the discovery of two stomach ulcers, according to his close friend Jonathan Ned Katz, a fellow gay historian.

Berube was, for decades, an independent historian and community activist. He first came to progressive political activism in opposition to the Vietnam war, working with the American Friends Service Committee in Boston in the late 1960s, after dropping out of the University of Chicago. After coming out in 1969, he joined a "gay liberation collective household," and later moved to San Francisco to join a gay commune for craftspeople. He remained in San Francisco for many years, and was one of the founders of the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay History Project in 1978. His slide shows about women who dressed and passed as men—and married other women—were welcomed by enthusiastic audiences around the country.

Berube is best remembered for his groundbreaking work of gay history, published in 1990: *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II*. The Lambda Literary Award-winning book, which was later adapted by Arthur Dong into a Peabody Award-winning documentary, was often cited in Senate hearings on the military's anti-gay policies in 1993.

Martin Duberman, distinguished professor of history emeritus at the City University of New York, called Berube's book "superb ... not only in terms of his prose style, which was absolutely lucid and even elegant, but also in terms of the very fine-spun analysis. Allan was not one to create shallow generalizations about either a given individual or a series of events. He was utterly meticulous and utterly careful. No one will ever, I think, have to redo the book on World War II, and you can almost never say that about a historian or a given piece of historical research."

In 1996, Berube received a "genius grant"

from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for his work.

For the past decade, while living in New York City and the Catskills, Berube had been working on a history of queer working-class men in the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union in the 1930s and '40s, a project for which he received a Rockefeller Residency Fellowship in the Humanities from the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at CUNY.

Berube traveled the country presenting slide shows about his current research, and lectured on gay and lesbian history at Stanford University and the University of California, Santa Cruz. He wrote stories for numerous publications, including *Mother Jones*, *Gay Community News*, *The Advocate*, *The Washington Blade*, *Out/Look*, and *the Body Politic*. He also published articles in several anthologies, including *White Trash* (which included a rare personal essay in which he recounted his childhood in a trailer park in Bayonne, N.J.) and *Policing Public Sex*, in which he detailed the history of gay bathhouses.

"Allan took great pride in his role as a community historian," said John D'Emilio, professor of history at the University of Illinois at Chicago and author of several books on gay history. "He loved the excitement that his talks and slide shows generated in an audience, and he loved that he, a college dropout, had written a book that made a difference in the world. He was an inspiration to everyone who knew him, as sweet and kind and genuinely moral a human being as anyone could hope to meet."

For the past several years, Berube lived in Liberty, N.Y., in the Catskills. There, he owned a bed & breakfast, and operated Intelligent Design, a store selling mid-century modern collectibles. Berube's partner, John Nelson, said, "Allan just loved it when people walked into the Liberty store, looked around, and were happy."

Berube was twice elected a trustee of the village of Liberty.

"Allan was extremely proud of helping to preserve Liberty's historic character," said Katz. "Allan initiated the successful nomination of Liberty's whole Main Street as a historic district, saved from demolition a major building with a classic 1950s façade, and bought and renovated the Shelburne Playhouse, one of the last remaining performance halls that were once part of the area's many hotels."

In addition to Nelson, Berube is also survived by his mother and three sisters.

Editor's note: D'Emilio sent Windy City Times this separate tribute to Berube: "Important as Coming Out Under Fire is—and it is an important book—I often think that Allan left his biggest mark through the traveling slide talks he did. From the late 70s through the early 90s, he must have presented "Lesbian Masquerade," on women who passed as men in 19th century San Francisco, and "Marching to a Different Drummer," his talk on gay men and lesbians during World War II, hundreds of times. People came out because of it, went public with their experience and their identities, and became part of a movement. Al-

lan's work as a community historian was proof that knowing history, seeing history, could be a force for change in the world."

Historian Bill Kelley added that "[i]t was a great shock to learn of Allan's death. I hadn't seen him for many years, since our paths crossed a couple of times in activist connections, but he was brilliant, beautiful, and charming."



David Jenkins.

PASSAGES

David Jenkins

Gaston Justice Jenkins—a gay veteran known to friends and family as "David"—passed away Dec. 13 from complications of Parkinson's disease at Chicago's Warren-Barr Pavilion. He was 75.

Jenkins found a sense of purpose in his middle name. He was devoted to his community as well as to his country and lived the principles of compassion and respect his entire life.

Jenkins was born November 13, 1932, in Baltimore. He attended St. Paul's School in Baltimore and graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1954.

He served 13 years on active duty as a pilot in the U.S. Navy at bases and on aircraft carriers around the world. He was among the elite pilots stationed at Guantanamo immediately after the Cuban missile crisis in 1962.

After active military service, Jenkins—known to friends and family as "David"—enlisted at the front of the "war on poverty" during the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964. Working in the Office of Economic Opportunity, he designed and supervised anti-poverty programs that blended economic opportunities, social services and educational programs. Over his 20-year tenure in the federal government, he traveled throughout the United States to implement the programs in small towns and urban areas. Jenkins also concurrently continued military service for 19 years as an officer in the Naval reserve and retired as a Captain in 1985.

During the late 1980s, Jenkins coordinated

the AIDS outreach programs for the Episcopal Diocese in Philadelphia.

"He lived his life affirming a determined commitment to human and civil rights," said Richard Turner, his partner of 16 years. "He made a career of putting his compassion into programs and organizations that served others."

Jenkins came to Chicago in 1997 to live with Turner, who he had met when they were both members of the Board of Governors of the Human Rights Campaign. Prior to returning to Chicago, they lived in West Palm Beach, Fla., and New York City, where Jenkins volunteered with Funders Concerned About AIDS.

Jenkins' passion, in addition to civil rights for gays and lesbians and AIDS issues, was singing. In Philadelphia, he was one of the founders of the Spruce Street Singers. He also sang with the New York Gay Men's Chorus and, after moving to Chicago, with the Windy City Gay Men's Chorus.

Turner told Windy City Times that Jenkins "was the kindest guy in the world. David didn't like the limitations in his life, but he never once complained."

During his four plus years of living with Parkinson's, Jenkins was fortunate to have an extraordinary caregiver, Gilbert Magallanes, who became an integral member of the family.

Jenkins is survived by Turner and three children, David (Giselle), of Herndon, Va.; Suzanne Martin (John) of Reston, Va.; Frank (Ann) of Columbus, Ohio; and four grandchildren: Justin, Gwendolyn, Patrick and Victoria. His earlier partner, the late Dr. Benjamin Verdile of Philadelphia, died in 1993.

A memorial service will be held in January. Contributions can be made to either the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, P.O. Box 65301, Washington, D.C., 20035-5301 (or www.sldn.org) or the Chicago Academy for the Arts, 1010 W. Chicago, Chicago, IL 60622.

Read the entire obituary—including what Howard Brown CEO Mike Cook said about Jenkins—at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

RYAN from cover

ken out against his stance. "We can't have a presidential candidate who is uninformed," she said.

"How could he be leading in the polls?" she asked. "Would you want a president who believes that?"

White-Ginder also fears that there are people out there who will believe his words simply because he is a presidential candidate. Also, she's afraid of the harm that might come to people living with the disease. "Ryan went through so much of this," she said. "A lot of people can't handle it like Ryan did. To put certain people in that situation again, who might not be able

to handle it like Ryan did, is just sad."

"C'mon America," White-Ginder pleaded. "We've already fought this battle. This battle is over about how you get AIDS. We're on to fighting the disease now."

Although she doesn't want to put words in Huckabee's mouth or categorize him, Ginder-White wonders what causes such beliefs, despite scientific fact and common knowledge. Due to her prior experience dealing with conservatives over the years, she wonders if Huckabee's beliefs stems from a desire to "punish people with AIDS" because of homophobia and religious beliefs. "I guess only time will tell," she said.

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Michael Leppen with his mother, Vi, in June at Center on Halsted. Photo by Tracy Baim

PASSAGES

Vi Leppen

Windy City Times mourns the passing of Vienna "Vi" Leppen, mother of local philanthropist Michael Leppen. She passed away Dec. 15 at the age of 86.

Born Oct. 10, 1921, in Humboldt, Mich., Vienna Leppen was the loving daughter of the late Liisa Justina and Leander Niskala and the loving wife of the late Arthur L. "Lee" Leppen. Vi was a loving and caring individual throughout her lifetime. She lived in Waukegan throughout her married life, raising five boys, many dogs and cats, several grandchildren and enjoying a wealth of friends and family. Eventually, she moved to Hawthorn Lakes in Vernon Hills, where she was currently residing.

She is survived by her family: Corrine Leppen of Laurium, Mich.; Michael Leppen of Glencoe, Ill.; Robert and Joyce Leppen of Hawthorn Woods, Ill.; Howard and Lori Leppen of Spring Grove, Ill.; David and Kristen Leppen of Grand Blanc, Mich.; Jeff and Jennifer Leppen of Syracuse, N.Y.; and Nicole Leppen of Chicago; her sister, Miriam Hoover of Glencoe; and her companions and friends, Rusty Raszkievicz of Vernon Hills, Ill. and Laurie Paddock of Gurnee, Ill. She was preceded in death by her mother and father; nine sisters; three brothers; her husband, Arthur L. Leppen; and, this year, by her sons, David L. Leppen and Donald H. Leppen.

In an e-mail, Michael said that "[h]aving lost two sons with the past 2 1/2 months had taken its toll on her and I think she just couldn't muster the strength to continue on."

Michael also asked people to "[p]lease keep our family in your prayers to have the strength to get through this tragic time and to continue on without David, Don and Mom."

Her visitation was on Dec. 18 at Congdon Funeral Home. The funeral will take place Dec. 19 at 10 a.m. the First Apostolic Lutheran Church, 39372 North Carol Lane, Zion, with Pastor Jim Torola officiating. Interment will follow in Northshore Garden of Memories, North Chicago, Ill.

Memorial gifts may be made to First Apostolic Lutheran Church, P.O. Box 252, Zion, IL 60099. The online guest book is at www.congdonfuneralhome.com.

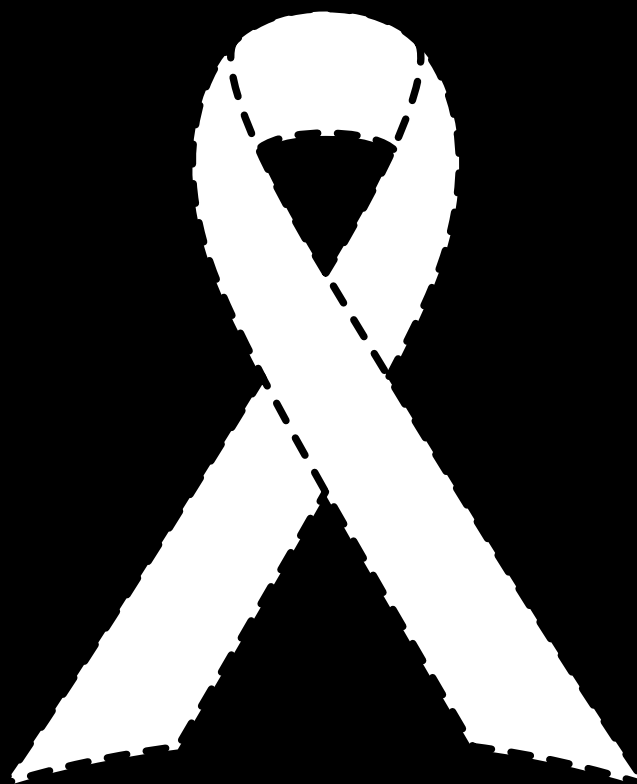
Tunney Victim of Armed Robbery

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Two 16-year-olds have been charged as adults with armed robbery after a confrontation with 44th Ward Alderman Tom Tunney Dec. 15 at a location close to his office, a Chicago police spokesman told Windy City Times.

Tunney was walking along the 3300 block of North Seminary at about 1:30 p.m. on Saturday when the youths demanded his wallet. The robbers were apprehended after Tunney identified them.

The youths were also charged as juveniles for attempted armed robbery regarding an incident that occurred several hours earlier that day.



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Global Gays Initiative Crosses Borders

BY EMMANUEL GARCIA

The Global Gays Initiative was unveiled Dec. 13 at a town-hall meeting at Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted, to discuss issues and concerns related to the LGBT immigrant community. The forum, attended by over 50 people of diverse ethnic backgrounds, listened as Amigas Latinas co-founder Evette Cardona introduced a group of panelists who are directly affected, are advocates for immigrants or identify as allies.

The subject of immigration has been at the political forefront for the past three years, yet many contend that relatively little has been written about how current and future immigration law impacts the LGBT community. The Global Gays Initiative is the second effort in Chicago involving the LGBT immigrant population. In the summer of 2006, CLIA (Chicago LGBT Immigrant Alliance) was formed out of concern over the proposed Sensenbrenner Bill (also known as the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005) and the consequential massive marches in protest across the United States.

Jonathan Eloff, staff attorney for National Immigrant Justice Center's National Asylum Partnership on Sexual Orientation (NAPSO), spoke about asylum and gave a brief overview of eligibility. "In order to apply for asylum a refugee must be present in the U.S. and be able to prove persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of sexual orientation or gender identity," he explained. Under the current definition of the law, members of the transgender community do not fall under the umbrella of "membership in a particular social group," which allows someone who identifies as gay to be eligible for asylum. However, there are special circumstances that may allow a transgender individual to apply.

"Often, a transgender individual encounters identification barriers that reflect gender and chosen names," said panelist Caitlin Daniel-McCarter, an activist. Daniel-McCarter talked about the effect of the No Match Letters (in which employers may terminate workers whose Social Security numbers do not match those in government records) on members of the transgender community. An employer may receive such a letter based on gender and decide to fire the person, assuming the employee is undocumented.

Jonathan Livingston shared his personal experience of being in a binational relationship with

a man from Brazil. Livingston has decided that, in order to be with the person he loves, he will be forced to leave the United States. They met when his boyfriend was here on a work visa [H1B Visa] but was later laid off. Unable to find a job, he was forced to return to Brazil. Livingston is actively trying to create more awareness to pass the Uniting American Families Act, which would allow him to sponsor his same-sex partner. In addition, activists (and panelists) Yasmin Nair and Tania Unzueta both urged audience members to become involved.

The initiative is separated into three groups: support and services; legal; and advocacy and activism. At the forum, attendees received a directory of services and resources of organizations that provide legal support for LGBTQ immigrants.

For more information, contact C.C. Carter at cccarter@centeronhalsted.org.

Lambda Legal Challenges Ind. School District

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Lambda Legal filed papers Dec. 12 in the Northern District Court of Indiana, charging that a Gary, Ind., school violated a student's rights when it stopped a male student from entering his prom because he wore a dress.

Kevin "K.K." Logan attended West Side High School and "expressed a deeply rooted femininity in his appearance and demeanor," according to a Lambda Legal press release. During this time (his junior and senior years), classmates and teachers supported Logan. However, at the May 19, 2006, senior prom, principal Diane Rouse stretched her arms across the door when Logan attempted to enter, blocking his access to the facility. The press release also stated that classmates and friends "rallied to his defense to no avail—even though a female student was allowed entrance dressed in a tuxedo."

Rouse has supported a school policy that bans "clothing/accessories that advertise sexual orientation, sex, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, profanity [and] negative social or negative educational statements."

Jim Madigan, a staff attorney in Lambda Legal's Midwest Regional Office, told Windy City Times said that the plaintiff's case has two facets. "There's an aspect [that] is the First Amendment," Madigan said. "The fact that they shut him out by virtue of wearing this dress—while allowing other students to wear gender-nonconforming clothing, particularly females in

tuxedos—basically suggests that it's the message (associated with allowing a male to wear a dress) that the principal didn't like. We think that her reaction to that message and the challenge to that convention [are] why she shot him down." The other element, according to Madigan, is "an issue of whether they violated the rules that prohibit sex and gender discrimination."

He also said that the legal team representing Logan asked the school district for all of the "reasons and policies [regarding] what happened to [Logan]," and simply received the policy stated above. "They sort of, quite frankly, gave us the brush-off," Madigan said. "They didn't send any explanatory letter other than [the] policy." Madigan added that subsequent requests to dis-

cuss the situation have yielded no response.

When questioned about what is being sought, Madigan responded that they are seeking compensatory and punitive damages as well as a declaration from the court "that the school's policy is in violation of the First Amendment."

The case is *Logan vs. Gary Community School Corporation et al.*

Madigan is handling the case along with Cole Thaler, staff attorney for Lambda Legal's Transgender Rights Project and co-counsel from the Chicago law firm Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal.

Windy City Times contacted the school corporation's superintendent, Dr. Mary Steele-Agee, but had not received a response by the time the newspaper went to press.



Sir Robert J. Loescher.

PASSAGES

Robert J. Loescher

Sir Robert J. Loescher, professor emeritus at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) and founder and chair of the school's art history department, passed away Dec. 8. He was 70.

Loescher was born Sept. 13, 1937, in Appleton, Wis., to the late Clarence Albert Loescher and Sarah Jane (McCullough) Loescher. After graduating from Menasha High School in Menasha, Wis., Loescher attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he graduated *summa cum laude* and Phi Beta Kappa with a B.A. and M.A. in art history. He studied at the University of Mexico in Mexico City and completed a Fulbright Grant at the Institute

of Fine Arts and the University of Madrid in Spain. After obtaining his Ph.D. in art history at the University of Michigan, Loescher taught the subject at the University of Michigan, Dartmouth College, Northwestern University and the University of Chicago.

In 1973, Loescher joined the faculty at SAIC, and developed one of the largest art history departments within a professional art school in the United States. In the 1980s, the department was renamed the Department of Art History, Theory and Criticism. His main areas of education centered on Spanish and Latin American art as well as gastronomy in art and culture. Loescher was beloved by students, faculty and staff for his intelligence, wit and dedication.

In 1990, King Juan Carlos of Spain proclaimed Loescher a caballero (knight) in honor of the educator's contributions to the dissemination of Spanish culture. In a ceremony at the Art Institute of Chicago, Loescher was formally presented with the Cross of the Order of Isabella the Catholic.

Loescher is survived by his brothers, Thomas Loescher of Tucson, Ariz., and Richard Loescher of Appleton, Wis.; and special friends Shay DeGrandis, Nathan DeFoor, Brian Sikes and Bibiana Suarez of Chicago; Joyce Neimanas of Albuquerque, N.M.; Wendy Woon of New York City; and many colleagues and students.

SAIC has established a memorial fund in Loescher's honor. On April 4, 2008, SAIC will hold a symposium devoted to Loescher will be held at the Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State, in conjunction with the Midwest Art History Society Conference.

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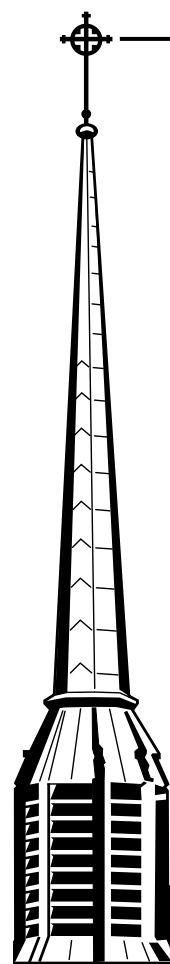
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Fredrick Federley. Campaign photo

WORLD ROUNDUP

BY REX WOCKNER

Swedish MP gay-bashed

Swedish Member of Parliament Fredrick Federley was gay-bashed at a hot-dog stand after leaving a gay club in Stockholm on Dec. 8.

Federley, 29, and two friends were attacked by six or seven men in their 20s who called them "fags." Federley was hit four times.

"They screamed that we were disgusting and a threat to Sweden and that they were going to beat us up," he told The Local newspaper.

Federley spent the night at a friend's house rather than take the bus home. He did not seek medical treatment.

Botswana gay group to sue government

Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals of Botswana (LEGABIBO) is suing the Department of Civil and National Registration for refusing to register the organization.

Lawyer Duma Boko served Attorney General Athaliah Molokomme with a notice of intention to sue on Dec. 6.

The department reportedly rejected LEGABIBO's application because of Penal Code Section 164, which states: "Any person who has carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature, has carnal knowledge of an animal, or permits a male person to have carnal knowledge of him or her against the order of nature is guilty of an offense and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding seven years."

Boko called the department's rejection "improper and unlawful" and demanded that it be "nullified."

"This matter implicates a whole array of constitutional rights and protections not least of which are the right to freedom of expression, freedom of association as well as the right to the equal protection of the law," he said.

Men jailed for gay sex in Morocco

Six men were sentenced to prison in Ksar el Kbir, Morocco, on Dec. 10 for alleged violation of Penal Code Article 489, which bans "lewd or unnatural acts with an individual of the same sex."

The men were arrested and jailed in late November after media reports identified them as attendees at an alleged "gay marriage" party that was the subject of an amateur video uploaded to YouTube.

Following the arrests, hundreds of people marched in Ksar el Kbir calling for the men to be punished.

Lawyers for the men, who were sentenced to between four and 10 months' imprisonment each, complained that prosecutors presented no evidence that any crime had taken place, and Human Rights Watch denounced the verdicts.

"The men's rights to privacy and freedom of

expression have been violated, and the court has convicted them without apparent evidence; they should be set free," said HRW's Sarah Leah Whitson, who directs the group's North Africa programs.

"These men are behind bars for private acts between consenting adults that no government has any business criminalizing in the first place," she added.

The one individual who received a 10-month sentence also was convicted of selling alcohol.

Article 489 punishes gay sex with imprisonment for six months to three years and a fine of \$15 to \$150.

20,000 party in Santiago

Some 20,000 people turned out for a gay pride celebration in Santiago, Chile, Nov. 16.

The organizers, the Movement for Homosexual Integration and Liberation (MOVILH), said it was the nation's largest pride event ever. Their demands included passage of anti-discrimination and civil-union legislation.

The festivities on Paseo Bulnes featured 22 DJs performing on three stages, go-go dancers and drag shows.

"It was an incredible, emotional scene," MOV-

ILH said in a statement. "A real charge of energy to continue fighting against discrimination. A thousand and one times we will say that moments like these are unique—seeing thousands of people exercising, not just demanding, their right to free expression."

Chilean President Michelle Bachelet sent a letter to the festival supporting MOVILH's goals.

"Her Excellency is conscious of your sustained effort for the acceptance of sexual minorities and supports you in this act of integration of equality," she said. "We express to you, and to all who participate in this event, the best wishes for success and we send you an affectionate greeting."

A similar pride event in Santiago in July attracted some 5,000 people to the Plaza de Armas for seven hours of dancing, music and drag performances.

Dramatic HIV increase among Chinese gays

The percentage of Chinese gay men infected with HIV jumped from 0.4 percent to 3.3 percent between 2005 and 2007, according to a new report from the State Council AIDS Working Com-

mittee Office and the U.N. Theme Group on AIDS in China.

But the overall rate of HIV infection has slowed, said the report, "The Joint Assessment of HIV/AIDS Prevention, Treatment and Care in China (2007)."

While there were 70,000 new infections in 2005, only 50,000 are expected this year, the report stated. In all, around 700,000 of China's 1.32 billion residents are believed to have HIV.

Heterosexual sex is expected to account for 45 percent of new infections, intravenous drug use for 42 percent, and gay sex for 12 percent.

The report claimed that 70 percent of gay men have multiple sexual partners and that only 30 percent use condoms.

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

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NATIONAL ROUNDUP

BY AMY WOOTEN

According to 365gay.com, **postings on a Web site believed to be made by Colorado Church shooter Matthew Murray stating that he is bisexual** were recently removed. The Web site was for people who have left evangelical churches. Several of the posts alluded to his sexuality and a couple posts mentioned the hypocrisy of Ted Haggard, who was exposed as being gay by a male escort. Haggard was the former pastor for New Life Church, where one of the shootings took place.

In Florida, sponsors of an anti-gay marriage ban may have gathered enough signatures to place the proposed amendment on the ballot next year. The 611,009 collected signatures still need to be verified for the measure, which would prevent judges from overturning Florida's anti-gay marriage laws, to be placed on the November 2008 ballot. If passed, Florida will become the 28th state to pass such an amendment, according to the Associated Press.

After a young D.C. gay man was violently attacked in a subway and the Metro transit investigating the crime initially didn't classify it as a hate crime, a D.C. councilmember is asking for some changes, according to Washington Blade. The councilmember is asking subway authorities to review their policies for investigating bias-motivated crimes.

A lesbian who wed her partner in Massachusetts filed for divorce in Rhode Island's Superior Court. She filed a week after the state's Supreme Court said that the lesbian couple's divorce case couldn't go forward in Family Court because the court was never given the power to dissolve same-sex marriages when it was created in the '60s.

Republican presidential candidate and former New York City mayor **Rudy Giuliani recently revealed his thoughts on gay relationships** on an episode of Meet the Press. "No, I don't believe it's sinful," he said. "My moral views come from the Catholic Church. The way that somebody leads their life is not sinful. It is the acts that people perform that are sinful, not the orientation."

It might take a while before California Supreme Court will declare whether or not same-sex marriage is legal. Chief Justice Ronald George recently told San Jose Mercury News that it could take a while because there is a "vast amount" of literature to read from all of the "friend of the court" briefs it has received from 145 different organizations. George said the court expects to hear the case sometime next year, however.

A medical examiner's report reveals that **two gay men who were found dead four days apart from each other in a Washington, D.C., apartment in September died from "acute intoxication,"** Washington Blade reported. It has not been determined whether or not the deaths were accidental, but the report reveals that the men died from intoxication from drugs or alcohol. One of the men, Dean Johnson, was a legendary New York performer, and was leader of the band Velvet Mafia.

The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) received a \$25,000 grant from AT&T to support its ongoing work to ensure fair representation in the media. AT&T previously supported the organization's "Digital Initiative" internet activism campaign.

According to Human Rights Campaign, **28 retired, high-ranking military leaders signed onto a letter calling for the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"** on the 14th anniversary of its signing. This is the largest number of former military leaders to voice their opposition of the anti-gay policy at one time.

Jodie Foster Comes Out?

At a recent Women in Entertainment awards ceremony, honoree Jodie Foster thanked "my beautiful Cydney, who sticks with me through the rotten and the bliss," her partner, in addition to her friends and family, according to a CNN video of the event.

The acknowledgement is seen as the first public one of Bernard, who has been with the two-time Oscar winner for almost 15 years. They have two children: Charles, 9, and Kit, 6.

"I'm not sure I deserve the family and friends that surround me," Foster said. "Here we all are, after so many years, getting older together, staying young together. Thank you all for holding me and for being in this together."

Foster's sexuality has been the subject of speculation in the gay community for years. According to EdgeBoston.com, comedian Suzanne Westenhoefer said in a 2005 interview that "[a]t this point Jodie Foster should just come out. She's not an ingénue anymore. You know, it really saddens me because Jodie Foster could do so much good."

OUT Magazine had everyone talking with its

May 2007 issue, which featured the 50 most powerful gay men and women in America. The cover showed two people holding masks of Foster and television journalist Anderson Cooper—neither who had officially come out at that time—in front of their faces. The accompanying headline read "The Glass Closet: Why stars won't come out and play."

As she accepted the Sherry Lansing Leadership Award at the breakfast, Foster said, "I don't feel very powerful."

Jodie Foster's dear friend was gay filmmaker Randy Stone, who passed away in February. Stone was executive director of Foster's directorial debut, Little Man Tate. In 1998, Stone co-founded the nonprofit Trevor Project, named after Trevor, a short film he did about a gay teen's attempted suicide. Foster was the first major donor to support the short film, and has been a strong supporter of the organization, which runs a 24-hour suicide prevention hotline. This year, Foster presented Trevor Project with its largest donation in history in order to kick off a \$1 million fundraising campaign to open a new call center. She recently appeared at the organization's annual benefit, as well.

—Amy Wooten

PASSAGES Rep. Julia Carson

Rep. Julia Carson, the first Black and first woman to represent Indianapolis in Congress, died Dec. 15 after a battle with lung cancer. She was 69.

Carson recently announced her diagnosis and and that she would abandon plans to run for a seventh term in Indianapolis' 7th District.

Carson was first elected to Congress in 1996. She supported children's issues, women's rights and the eradication of homelessness. She also was a staunch opponent of the war in Iraq.

She began her political career in the 1960s. She ran for the Indiana Legislature in 1972—which turned out to be her first victory. She ran for Congress in 1996 after Jacobs retired.

Among the organizations mourning Carson was the Stonewall Democrats. Executive Director Jon Hoadley said in a statement that "Congresswoman Julia Carson was a true friend to National Stonewall Democrats. ... We remember and honor the life and work of our friend, Congresswoman Carson, while we extend to her family, staff and constituents our thoughts and prayers."

Funeral services were pending.

PASSAGES Melvin Cheren

Melvin Cheren, a New York disco legend and AIDS activist who set up the club Paradise Garage and helped start 12-inch records, passed away Dec. 7. He was 74.

Cheren began his five-decade career in the music business at ABC/Paramount. He co-founded his own company (West End Records) in 1976, which has been associated for over 30 years with dance classics like Heartbeat.

The history of Paradise Garage is documented in Cheren's autobiography, My Life and the Paradise Garage: Keep on Dancin', and in a recent documentary, The Godfather of Disco. In 2005, Cheren was inducted into the Dance Music Hall of Fame with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

Cheren is survived and will be greatly missed by many family members, friends and fellow activists. A memorial service/celebration and various memorial benefit parties are slated to take place over the third weekend in January. Donations can be made to GMHC, 119 W. 24th, NY, NY 10011; The LGBT Community Center at 208 West 13th Street, NY, NY 10011; or LIFEbeat, 630 9th Avenue Suite 1010, NY, NY 10036.

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Liz Thomson.

Liz Thomson: Family Ties

BY LOLA LAI JONG

Elizabeth Anh Thomson—known to many simply as “Liz”—is coordinator of Office of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Thomson talked with writer Lola Lai Jong about her life, starting with her immediate adoptive family.

Liz Thomson: My moms are two biological sisters living in Indianapolis. They never got married, tho both knew they wanted to have a family. The one I call “Ma” really wanted to travel, and took a secretarial job with the government. [This] landed her in Vietnam for three years. [While] working in Saigon, Ma hired girls for household duties; they wondered why this 33-year-old American, white, middle-class woman was in Vietnam without a husband or family. Ma told them she did want kids. I don’t know how she explained not wanting or needing a husband. So, I think her name was Boi Tu, brought me to her—just came to her apartment—and said, “Do you like this one?” Ma said, “Yes. Of course, I’ll take her,” without hesitation. Looking back, it was like a plant: “If you don’t like this one...”

Lola Lai Jong: Tell us about your upcoming 12-day trip to Vietnam.

Liz Thomson: It’s the first time I’ve ever gone

back [though] not the first time I’ve thought of it. I figured when it was the right time, I would do it. Last December, I seriously started looking for programs. I connected with [the organization] Vietnam Ties. Vietnam is one of the nine countries they go back [to] with adopted children. Another program that seemed very good, go in May, is more for adult adoptees. Vietnam Ties goes in December. I got more information from [them], and December works a lot better for me for work. I’d talked with the founder of the program, [because] I’m going by myself. I understand other people [in the group] will be the mom and dad, and the 8-, 10- or 12-year-old adoptee. She reassured me. Also, a social worker, who’s about my age, comes on the trip, so I wouldn’t be the only adult person.

LLJ: How would you identify yourself in terms of your sexuality?

LT: I would say bisexual. In high school, I knew the word “gay,” but ... I associated that word with just men. People in my surroundings were just very heterosexual—like there wasn’t even an option. In my group of friends, no one ever came out as being GLBT, so we kind of didn’t pay attention to that. In college, one of my good friends did come out as being gay.

...Right now I’m at UIC’s Office of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns. It’s [one] of the oldest of [five] cultural and diversity centers, about 12-13 years old. We do a lot of educational and academic programs around different GLBT stuff. I think it’s pretty good to be so old, and from a state school.

LLJ: What would you say to a young bisexual Asian-American woman in the Midwest?

LT: Actively seek out groups that could support you—an Asian-American studies class. Even though you might not see people like yourself—Asian-American, bi [and] Midwest-adopted—just to know that there are. It’s such human nature that if you don’t see people like you, then how do you know there are [others]? Be proactive.

Read much more about Thomson at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

QUOTELINES

BY REX WOCKNER

“IT [BEING ONE OF THE INTERVIEWERS ON THE LOGO CHANNEL DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES FORUM] MEANT that I was grateful for my celebrity. And I know that we live in a world of celebrity worship or whatever it is—that we’re celebrity-crazed. And know that I was asked to be on that because I am a name and it will bring people to watch it or something. I hope that I represented my community, and it’s hard, the gay community, you can’t get more different people. We’re all the people in the whole world, we’re not even all Democrats or liberals. And I hope that I brought a personal side to it. That’s what I was asked to do and that is what I wanted to do, and I was so honored to be there and I learned a lot.” — Singer Melissa Etheridge to the San Diego gay magazine *The BottomLine*, Nov. 2.

“I WAS ASKED TO SING AT A NASCAR RACE LAST WEEK. Any time I’m asked to go into the heart of fear of the people who fear gay people and think they don’t know gay people, that’s when I want to step up now. I’m through with the us and them thing. We are all just people. We need to stop being afraid.” — Singer Melissa Etheridge to the national lesbian magazine *Curve*, December issue.

“WHAT REALLY IRRITATES ME IS THAT SO OFTEN THE NEWS SHOWS CHARACTERIZE THEM [GAY PRIDE PARADES] AS FREAK SHOWS. When I was there in San Francisco it was primarily families, so totally unlike what the media often tries to portray it as being. And it’s really true that this is the way the media often tries to characterize the gay community—as a freak show. They don’t look at people and their relationships, they don’t look at the families, and in doing so it really makes it hard in terms of passing legislation for GLBT people regarding the most simple of rights, including basic things like hospital visitation. People aren’t looking at gay couples other than as some form of bizarre entertainment. And that’s really upsetting to me.” — *The L Word* star Jennifer Beals to *QVegas* magazine, November issue.

“FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT FAMILIAR WITH IT, of the four nationally leading [Republican]

candidates for president—and I count myself as one of those, but also Mayor [Rudy] Giuliani and Sen. [John] McCain and [former Sen.] Fred Thompson—there’s only one of us who’s in favor of a federal amendment to the constitution to limit marriage to the relationship between a man and a woman. And that’s me.” — Mitt Romney speaking at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, Nov. 2. Some students booed and hissed.

“IT’S NO FUN TO WORRY ABOUT HOLDING HANDS IN A PUBLIC PLACE and that some red-neck is going to follow you in a pick-up truck and show you what it’s like to be with a man.” — Crime novelist Patricia Cornwell to London’s *Telegraph* newspaper, Nov. 26. Cornwell married Staci Gruber, a psychiatry instructor at Harvard Medical School, in February 2005.



...So often the news shows characterize [gay pride parades] as freak shows.

—The L Word star Jennifer Beals.



Photo by Rex Wockner



“I WENT TO HARVARD TO RESEARCH NEUROSCIENCE and was directed to meet with Dr. Gruber because she’s so eminently respected. It was one of those things: You meet someone when you’re not looking. I’ve never been a soapbox person for gay rights, but now I’m in a same-sex marriage I tend to be more open, because I am outraged that it should be illegal in other states. If we were outside of Massachusetts and Staci were in a horrible car wreck, a hospital could forbid me from seeing her. The federal government does not honor same-sex marriage, so couples can’t file joint tax returns and, in terms of death benefits, people have to go to extraordinary lengths with lawyers to try to make sure that their partner isn’t evicted from the home.” — Crime novelist Patricia Cornwell to London’s *Telegraph* newspaper, Nov. 26. Cornwell married Gruber, a psychiatry instructor at Harvard Medical School, in February 2005.

—Assistance: Bill Kelley

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REV. IRENE MONROE

These statistics overwhelming?!

But so, too, is the failure of leadership African Americans have faced since the epidemic began.

And no group of women is as affected by the failure of leader-

ship in this country than women of African descent.

American women and their struggle against the AIDS epidemic was never so glaringly obvious than in the 2004 vice presidential debate between Dick Cheney and John Edwards.

And the invisibility of my group's plight has less to do with African-American women's agency to combat the epidemic than with how the government, African-American men, the Black church, and race and gender biases inherent in the problem collude with African-American women's efforts to get help.

Gwen Ifill, an African-American female journalist with PBS' Washington Week and moderator of the vice-presidential debate, brought the issue of AIDS in the U.S. front and center when she asked the men to comment on its devastating impact on African-American women.

"I want to talk to you about AIDS, and not about AIDS in China or Africa, but AIDS right here in this country, where Black women between the ages of 25 and 44 are 13 times more likely to die of the disease than their counterparts. What should the government's role be in helping to end the growth of this epidemic?" Ifill asked.

Vice President Cheney responded to Ifill's question by saying, "Here in the United States, we've made significant progress. I have not heard those numbers with respect to African-American women. I was not aware that it was—that they're in epidemic there."

But Edwards' response wasn't any better. Edwards deflected the question by first going back to answering the previous question. Then with the remaining seconds left, he flubbed his way through.

However, three years later at this June's Democratic Primary Debate at Howard University that focused on African American issues ranging from health care and housing to Katrina relief, the economy and the environment.

Black women stood on their feet as they applauded Sen. Hillary Clinton's comment about the impact of HIV/AIDS on African-American women.

"Let me just put this in perspective: If HIV/AIDS were the leading cause of death of white women between the ages of 25 and 34 there would be an outraged outcry in this country," she said.

When the color of the epidemic shifted from white to black, the inherent gender bias focused only on the needs of African-American men and rendered women invisible. And when gender became a new lens to track the epidemic, white women were the focus. The invisibility of African-

continuously calls us to never limit either our community family or our responsibility for each other. Like Christmas, Stonewall calls us to promote peace and avoid war.

The Christ child who was born on Christmas Day is not an endorsement of Christianity. His birth and story is a consistent challenge to the religious establishment to move beyond the box of comfort when it comes to community, love and hope. Stonewall, like Christmas, challenges us to be an inclusive community, promote diversity and not leave any member of our community family behind when it comes to social justice. Under the mantle of political strategy, Pharisees and Sadducees among us have justified rights for gay/lesbians/bisexuals while cutting off our transgender brothers and sisters.

So Christmas and Stonewall challenge us to be better people. We are called by both stories to love one another and be responsible for one another.

This era of Black women and HIV/AIDS

Black women are dying of AIDS, and is anyone doing anything about it?

With the recent commemoration of the 19th anniversary of World AIDS Day and the United Nations AIDS-fighting agency overestimating the global impact of the epidemic by six million people we would think we've seen the worst of this pandemic.

Not quite! Right here in the nation's capitol, the HIV/AIDS epidemic rivals that of many Third World countries. Washington D.C. affectionately dubbed as "Chocolate City" is approximately 60 percent of people of African descent. And of its residents, one in 20 is thought to have HIV, and 1 in 50 of its residents to have AIDS. Of the 3,269 HIV cases identified between 2001 and 2006 who tested positive nine of 10 were African American.

Are these statistics overwhelming?

"The Washington data is really a microcosm of what we already know: that AIDS in America today is a black disease," said Phill Wilson, founder of the Black AIDS Institute, an HIV/AIDS think tank that focuses exclusively on AIDS among black Americans.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, African Americans account for half of all new HIV cases despite comprising 13 percent of the U.S. population.

Equally alarming is that HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death for African-American women between the ages of 25 and 44.

At the "Women and Response to AIDS" panel at the 16th International AIDS Conference in Toronto in 2006, Sheila Johnson, founder of the Crump-Johnson Foundation in Washington D.C., pointed out that another at-risk population in the African-American community is teenage girls.

Seventeen percent of the U.S. teen population is African-American. In 2004, 70 percent of all teens testing HIV-positive were Black. One in 10 African-American teenage girls test HIV-positive in the nation's capital, the highest percentage in the country among this age group.

When asked why such a high percentage test positive, Johnson said, "As long as girls see themselves as glorified sex objects in hip-hop videos, HIV/AIDS will increase within this population."

LETTER

Dear Editor:

Merry Christmas to ALL.

Advent in the Christian Church is a time for preparation, anticipation and hope. It is a time of retelling a centuries-old story about God's love for humanity. A story full of possibilities and hope that can guide us in this time of moral confusion and ethical dilemmas. It can be our moral compass, which will challenge our ability to love as a community. Also, more importantly it emphasizes love as the road to community.

Like Christmas, Stonewall is a story of hope and love for the GLBTA community.

Both stories challenge us to see our neighbor in the poor, the outcast and the immigrant. Both stories require us disobey any laws or religious dogma which promote homophobia in the name of religious/political correctness.

Stonewall points to a community of love, and

American women in this epidemic has much to do with how the absence of a gendered race analysis makes African-American women invisible to the larger society.

What is also unnerving is that today African-American women make up 60 percent of all AIDS cases reported among women, 64 percent of new AIDS cases among women, and are three times the number of new cases reported among white women.

"There are many women, too many women, in relationships with men who they think they know but really don't. He knew he had the disease, his mother knew he had the disease, his doctors knew, everyone seemed to know except me. And no one said a word," LaJoyce Brookshire wrote in the foreword of Browder's book, herself author of Faith Under Fire: Betrayed by a Thing Called Love.

While homophobic attitudes in the larger African-American community and church contribute to their behavior, African-American men are also not taking responsibility for how their behavior is killing African-American women, and putting the entire community at risk.

But the disparities within the healthcare system also contribute to the disproportionately higher number of HIV cases among African-American women, which directly affects their quality of life and the spread of HIV.

While health disparities in the black community is overwhelming so too is the failure of leadership African Americans have faced since the epidemic began.

But Phill Wilson states it plainly: "I think it's important for us to take just a moment to realize that we are where we are today because we weren't concerned when we thought it was somebody else's disease,"

However, the disease has also taught us about the various faces—across race, class and gender—who wore and continue to wear the face of this disease.

When The New York Native, a now-defunct gay newspaper, in its May 18, 1981, issue first reported on a virus found in gay men then known as GRID (Gay-Related Immune Deficiency), an editorial noted that "even if the disease first became apparent in gay men, it is not just 'a gay disease.'" And HIV/AIDS, having neither an alliance to nor an affinity for queer sexualities, spread.

But where would the leadership on HIV/AIDS come from?

But let's confront the elephant in the black community, by telling the truth and shaming the devil. The biggest problem that black lawmakers have had to confront concerning the HIV/AIDS crisis in their communities is the political gag order imposed on them by their voting constituency's homophobia and animus toward any discussion of the disease.

Read Rev. Monroe's entire message at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com.

Both stories point to a world in which everyone knows and accepts each other with love and dignity. Both Christmas and Stonewall remind us no person is excluded from this vision of hope.

The Rainbow Sash Movement (GLBTA Catholics) wishes all of our community happy holidays. Speaking directly to members of our community who are transgender, remember that faith is "the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen." This, indeed, is the time of hope and anticipation for a better world for all of us.

God bless,
 Joe Murray
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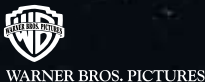
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GOINGS-ON

WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



Writer Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa, whose *Good Boys and True* (above) is at Steppenwolf, talks with us. See page 13.

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Looking sharp.
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Sew figure.
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'Nice' Shows for the Holidays

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Two weeks ago, we offered our list of holiday season shows that are naughty. This week, we bring you a list of shows that are nice, pitched to families with "kids of all ages," as the ads like to say. Also in this issue, check the Dancin' Feats column for a rundown on holiday-themed dance events including several versions of *The Nutcracker*.

Prices quoted are for regular adult tickets. Discounts frequently are available for kids, seniors and card-carrying elves on R&R. Venue addresses are given only if the producing theater company and the venue name are different. In addition to ordering by phone, you can purchase tickets by e-mail, at the theater box office or often at a discount through the League of Chicago Theatres Hot Tix program. Check online at www.chicagoplays.com. Remember, too, that many family-friendly shows offer additional matinees over the holiday weeks.

Black Nativity, Congo Square Theatre Company, through Dec. 30. For the fourth year, Congo Square presents this elaborate gospel reworking of Langston Hughes' setting of the Nativity as an African-American folk tale. It's not short and it verges on church service, but it sure delivers a bulging Christmas stocking of great music, dance and costume. At the Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn; 312-443-3800; \$40.

Blue Nativity, Quest Theatre Ensemble, through Jan. 1. For the sixth year, Quest Theatre takes its unique, charming and *free* nativity pageant—featuring live music and oversized puppets—to venues across Chicago, suggesting ancient traditions of mummery, mime and music. Locations and times vary (St. Mary of the Woods Church, Dec. 14; St. Barnabas Catholic, Dec. 16; St. Teresa's of Avila, Dec. 22, etc.). For full info: www.questensemble.org or 312-458-0895.

A Charlie Chaplin Christmas, Silent Theatre Company, Dec. 7-Jan. 6. Inspired by Chaplin's universally-known Little Tramp character, and drawing on Chaplin's films and music (did you know he was a composer, too?), this original mostly-silent show borrows vaudeville performing styles to tell the tale of the Tramp and his companions on the eve of a poverty-stricken holiday season. Chicago Cultural Center Studio Theater, 66 E. Randolph; 312-742-8497; \$20.

A Christmas Carol, Goodman Theatre, through Dec. 29. The Mother of All Xmas Carol productions returns for the 30th year, this time with a brand-new Scrooge in splendid veteran actor Larry Yando. Former Scrooge William Brown directs. As ever, the Goodman version is a lavish, full-length production boasting a large cast, music and dance. Sometime during the run, someone will purchase the one millionth ticket for the show and receive a special prize. 312-443-3800; \$20-\$70.

A Christmas Carol, Metropolis Centre (Arlington Heights), through Dec. 24. This is the Metropolis Centre's sixth annual staging of the holiday classic, but with a new director, choreographer and 30-person cast this year. There's song, dance and a children's chorus from nearby schools. 847-577-2121; \$27.

A Christmas Carol, Writers' Theatre, Glencoe, Dec. 19-23 only. For the 12th year, Writers' Theatre Artistic Director Michael Halberstam performs a reading of the greatest ghost story ever written, for four performances only. No music, no dancing, no expurgations—just Dickens' original words and Halberstam's finest British voice. Suitable for mature kids. Performed at 325 Tudor Court; 847-242-6000; \$30.

The Christmas Schooner, Bailiwick Arts Center, Dec. 18-19 only. The beloved annual schooner has sailed, but will make a port of call for two performances only in a concert version to benefit the American Brain Tumor Association and Bailiwick's Capital Campaign Fund. The warm-hearted original show—based on fact—tells the story of the German and Swiss immigrants who



Black Nativity. Photo by Michael Brosilow

sailed schooners across Lake Michigan to deliver Christmas trees to Chicago in the late 19th Century. 773 883 1090; \$25-\$50.

A Christmas Story, Theater Wit, through Dec. 30. Gifted humorist Jean Shepherd's story of an Indiana Xmas, seen through the eyes of a boy, has become a cult classic in its delightful film version, inspiring this stage adaptation. Theater Wit offers its production for the first time, directed by James Pelton. At Theatre Building Chicago, 1225 W. Belmont; 773-327-5252; \$15-\$25.

Cirque Dreams Jungle Fantasy, Jam Theatricals, Dec. 26-31. OK, so this isn't at all a holiday show but it is a "holiday engagement," borrowing from the successful Cirque de Soleil formula of extravagant visual production, original music and dance, and all the circus acts you can imagine minus animals (well, minus live animals). It's all set in an enchanted forest, er, jungle. At the Chicago Theatre, 175 N. State; 312-902-1500; \$20-\$57.50.

Ebenezer, Village Players Theatre, Oak Park, Dec. 9-23. This original musical adaptation of *You Know What* (hey, how many misers named Ebenezer do you know?) returns by popular demand to the newly-remodeled Village Players, a mainstay of the performing arts in Oak Park.

Among the large cast are two people named Rabinowitz but, hey, that's what acting is all about, right? 866-764-1010; \$25.

The Hipmas Carol, Headcheese Fat Boss Productions, through Dec. 30. Can it actually be the eighth year for this hip and literate alternative holiday show? Inspired by the hippest cat of all (except for *The Naz*), the late and great Richard Buckley, Lord of Hip Manor, this show is a jive, jazz, blues and beat retelling of Dickens' classic tale, performed by two actors and a guitarist. And, by the way, it isn't satire. At the Apollo Theater, 2540 N. Lincoln; 773-935-6100; \$22. Suitable for mature kids.

It's a Wonderful Life, American Theater Company, through Dec. 30. The sixth annual production of this great, 90-minute version of the classic Frank Capra movie, staged as an old-time live radio play complete with live sound effects, singing commercials and actors who double and triple in various roles as they bring Bedford Falls to life. Free milk and cookies after every performance. 773-929-1031; \$40.

Princess Donkey-Head, A Christmas Tale, New World Repertory Theater (Downers Grove), through Dec. 22. This world-premiere play by M. E. H. Lewis based on a Scottish folktale, Kate Krackernuts, comes to the Western burbs, which always remind me of lochs, highlands and men in skirts blowing pipes. This family show offers two princesses on a magical journey, a handsome prince under a spell and some puppets. 630-663-1489; \$12-\$20.

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, Annoyance Theater, through Dec. 29. The Annoyance has a strictly adult reputation, but this is a family-friendly aberration (so they swear), based on the familiar and popular animated TV special. 773-561-4665; \$15. Don't confuse this show with the "naughty" Rudolph the Red-Hosed Reindeer at Bailiwick.

Scrooge! The Musical, Theatre at the Center, Munster, Ind., through Dec. 23. We'll admit this

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Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa.

Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa: 'Good' to Go

BY AMY MATHENY

Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa is an openly gay playwright making his debut at the Steppenwolf Theater with *Good Boys and True*. From his work with Marvel Comics to writing for HBO's *Big Love*, Roberto is making a name from stage to screen.

Amy Matheny: Welcome to the blisteringly cold city of Chicago.

Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa: It seems like a dream that four weeks ago I was in shorts in Los Angeles. I mean I was on a picket line, but I was in shorts and a T-shirt.

AM: You went from Yale School of Drama to the comic book business writing for the Fantastic Four and Spiderman. How did that happen?

RAS: I was really lucky. Before I graduated from Yale in 2003, I was getting ready to go to New York to be a struggling playwright, and all playwrights are struggling playwrights. I wasn't ready to move to L.A. to be a film or television writer. So I thought I would get an office job or

teaching job like 95 percent of the playwrights do. I got a random phone call from a woman at Marvel Comics whose job it was to recruit writers from different disciplines, novelists, television writers [and] screenwriters, who seemed to have an affinity for comic books.

This woman called a couple of theaters that had read my plays [asking for] playwrights who would be good for comic books. [Somebody] said, you should talk to this guy named Roberto. He is a comic book fan, and a bunch of his plays have comic book themes, or are about comic book characters. I spent months essentially pitching Marvel different ideas. [Then] they said, "We're also thinking about doing something with the *Fantastic Four*." They had just started work on the first movie, and those were among my favorite comic book characters. So I came up with a pitch, and it was basically to take these superheroes and humanize them and focus on their everyday lives, as opposed to their superhero lives ...to feature them as a family, which is what the *Fantastic Four* are. So that was a really lucky break.

AM: What was your draw as a young gay man to comics?

RAS: There are lots of different theories about comic books and being gay. Like in the *X-Men*, some gay people really see the *X-Men* as a metaphor for being "other," for being gay. Like in *X-Men 2* the movie, the one kid who is Iceman, he comes out to his parents as a mutant, and his mom says, "Do you have to be a mutant? Can you not be a mutant?" For me, I don't know what it was. I've read comic books all my life. For me it was more about plugging into a fantasy world. So in terms of the secret identity or the odd homoeroticism of some comic book superheroes ... ultimately, a lot of superheroes are outsiders, and ultimately they are power fantasies that I think any sort of group that is marginalized can plug into.

AM: Your play *Say You Love Satan* is about a gay man who falls in love with a guy who just happens to be Satan. How much does your

sexuality inform your writing? And have you ever fallen in love with a guy that was just this side of Satan?

RAS: I think we've all certainly dated people we shouldn't have dated.

AM: It's a rite of gay passage.

RAS: Exactly. I am a gay man and that does inform everything that I write. I don't consciously set out to write this play and the main character is going to be gay, or write about a gay issue. It just sort of kind of happens, because I do think there's something about representation that's important. That's why a lot of my plays, even if they have gay characters, they're not usually about gay issues. There are some exceptions, but in *Say You Love Satan*, that guy was gay, but he could have just as easily been a woman who was dating a guy.

AM: Tell me about *Good Boys and True*.

RAS: It is basically set at a Boys prep school in the late 1980s, and it involves a senior at the prep school who is sort of a golden boy, top of his class, great athlete. He is implicated in a sex scandal that sweeps through the school. The play is a mystery, and it follows the mother as she tries to figure out if her son was or wasn't involved in this scandal, and if he was, why, and what that means for them and their relationship, and what [this all] does to his family and the school.

AM: How does the scandal start?

RAS: Boys' prep schools, they're very insular. Because it's set in the '80s, it doesn't spread as quickly or as virally as [today's] YouTube Generation.

AM: The '80s is the era of the Rob Lowe sex video.

RAS: Twenty years later, it feels like everyone has a sex tape. It's not quite as shocking as it would have seemed like ten years ago or twenty years ago.

AM: How is working at Steppenwolf, the great American theatre?

RAS: What's so funny is that I've been in Los Angeles doing things for TV. If I say I've had

shows at some pretty big New York theaters, Manhattan Theater Club, Second Stage, people nod. Then I say I have a show at Steppenwolf, and they immediately perk up because of its national reputation. Growing up, I had an idea of a certain wish list. ... I want a show on Broadway, to win a Pulitzer Prize or a Tony Award and I want to have a show at Steppenwolf. It's been slightly surreal, and Steppenwolf's reputation precedes it. It has incredible actors who will act the hell out of a play, are very smart, incredibly committed and never go for the easy choice, and that's exactly what it's been.

AM: With the writer's strike, you've been able to be here [more].

RAS: Absolutely. In the back of my head I was thinking, "Well, if there's a strike, I could go to Chicago and really spend time at *Good Boys*."

AM: There is a trend of playwrights flocking to L.A., [such as] John Rogan [and] Jon Robin Baitz. Can you do both?

RAS: There are lots of different opinions about this. When I first finished graduate school, I said I'm going to be a playwright and live that gritty lifestyle. But the truth is that the economics of being a playwright are pretty scary. Not every play of mine is going to be done at a theater like Steppenwolf. Most of the time my plays are done in pretty small theaters where it really is about the work. I don't think anyone gets into theater for money—and I don't even mean a healthy living. I mean a livable wage.

There are maybe five or ten playwrights living and working consistently in the theater right now. You do need to supplement your income, and I think that's what's really attractive about Los Angeles. For me, I'm a pop culture junky. I love movies. I love TV. I am happiest when I'm working on a play, but I also think that certain stories will make great comic books, and certain stories will be better as a TV show. So my hope is that I'll be able to keep a toe in many different worlds.

Turn to page 15

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The advertisement features a collection of Christmas ornaments, each representing a different Broadway musical. The ornaments include: *Sweeney Todd*, *Avenue Q*, *Jersey Boys*, *Wicked*, *Dirty Dancing*, *The Fair Lady*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Rent*, *Drowsy Chaperone*, and *The Sparrow*. The text is set against a dark background with gold and red accents.

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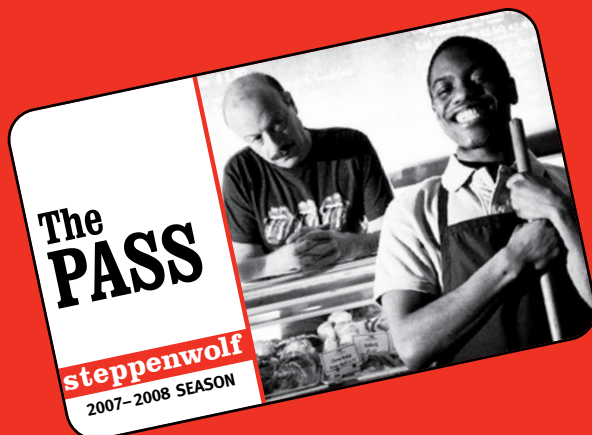
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'Diva' Dec. 20-23

The new holiday revue *How the Diva Stole Christmas 2*, starring the duo of singer Amy Armstrong and pianist Freddy Allen, will continue its performances at The Lakeshore Theater, 3175 N. Broadway, Dec. 20-23.

Diva Christmas 2 features classic songs and musical numbers (Jingle Bells, Santa Baby, The 12 Drinks of Christmas) along with some not-so-traditional surprises along the way. According to a press release, the following holiday customs will not be featured in this show: cute children; staged nativity scenes involving real livestock; dancing Santas; and figure skaters, among others.

Tickets are \$25 and are available by calling 773-472-3492 or by visiting www.lakeshoretheater.com.

Randy Duncan Named Chair

The Chicago Academy for the Arts, 1010 W. Chicago, has named internationally recognized choreographer Randy Duncan chair of its dance department. Duncan will provide leadership for faculty and students, and build upon a curriculum that incorporates various dance disciplines, including classes in ballet, modern dance and jazz technique.

Duncan has since created works for numerous companies, including the Joffrey Ballet, River North Chicago Dance Company and Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago. His first major motion picture, *Save the Last Dance*, earned him a nomination for the American Choreography Award for dance on film.

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CRITICS' PICS

A Christmas Carol, Goodman Theatre, through Dec. 29. Greater attention to sound effects and an epic-sized performance by Larry Yando, fresh off the *Lion King* circuit, make this familiar fable a feast for the ears as freshly reassuring as the humanitarian values it celebrates. *MSB*

The Sparrow, The House Theatre of Chicago at Apollo Theatre; through Dec. 31. Time is running out to catch this amazingly staged homegrown show full of teenage angst and uplift. Don't let it fly the coop before seeing it. *SCM*

Hunchback, Redmoon Theater, through Jan. 20. The tolling of the cathedral's bells, the ethereal beauty of the gypsy Esmeralda and haunting, tragic specter of the title character come to life in Redmoon's enthralling interpretation of Victor Hugo's classic. *CS*

—By Barnidge, Morgan and Sullivan

GOOD from page 13

When *Big Love* made the offer, I was like, "I'm going to do this" because I wanted to learn what it was to be a TV writer. And I wanted to [work] on a show I believed in. And when I talked to the two creators, they are writing and life partners.

AM: I adore *Big Love* because it challenges us to look at alternative families.

RAS: Absolutely, and, truthfully, when you look at everything—*Big Love*, my plays, even the *Fantastic Four*—they're all alternative families. What is the *Fantastic Four* if not the ultimate alternative family? And *Big Love*, when we're talking about characters, and without giving too much away, one of the wives thinks about what it would be like to live a monogamous life, as opposed to a polygamous life, and we were trying to wrap our brains around it, and one of the creators said, "Well, it's like when I would think about living a straight life. It would be so much easier, and there's all this heartache, societal heartache. Is it worth it, you know? There is something that's attractive about the mainstream 'lifestyle.'" When he said that, I was like, "Oh, yeah." It clicked. They seem very disparate, but they also seem like they inform each other.

AM: There should be some wife-on-wife action this year. The business partner's wives were playing cards last year and there was some footsy action going on.

RAS: I think you'll find some good stuff in season three.

AM: You're working on a show for FOX called *Howl*. Are they werewolves?

RAS: There are many werewolves. I've always loved werewolves, and as I was working on the pilot, and I remember vividly my dad taking me to see *American Werewolf in London*. It felt like I'd been getting ready to write this pilot for the last 35 years of my life. The central relationship is this woman who is 25 and lives in San Francisco, and her gay best friend and they're roommates. She gets bitten by a werewolf in the pilot, and realizes that there's a whole community of werewolves living in San Francisco, many of them passing as humans. It's sort of like *I Claudius*, but with werewolves. She finds out there's a whole sort of monarchy or dynasty of werewolves that she may be a part of. I'm really proud of it. I don't know what's going to happen because of the strike, but I feel really good about it.

The world premiere of *Good Boys and True* is at *Steppenwolf* through Feb. 16. For tickets and info, visit www.Steppenwolf.org. To listen to this full interview, visit www.WindyCityQueercast.com.

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Alexandra Billings.

Alexandra Billings: Twisted Sister

BY JACOB ANDERSON-MINSHALL

Twist, a queer pop-rock musical that opened Dec. 1 in L.A., weaves Victorian erotica, dark comedy and gender-bending into Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist. Driven by physical desire but begging for more, Oliver journeys into an underworld ruled by a male dominatrix—Fagin—played by former Chicagoan Alexandra Billings.

"[This] is the first time in twenty-plus years of theater that I've ever played a man," exclaimed the trans actress, whose novice years included shows with luminaries like Carol Burnett, Yul Brynner and Sandy Duncan. Formerly a female impersonator, Billings made the leap to professional acting in the 1980s, when she starred in Chicago's rendition of Vampire Lesbians of Sodom, a role that won her an After Dark Award for Best Actress in a comedy.

"My past...helped me get my foot into that particular door, which was some weird bridge between female impersonation and legitimate theater. Everything that I had done before helped me on the road ahead."

Billings has since appeared in dozens of plays,

including Xena! Live!, Larry Kramer's Just Say No and her one-woman autobiographical show, Before I Disappear. Her first television role was on the ABC movie Romy and Michelle—A New Beginning. She's also appeared on ER, Karen Sisco and Grey's Anatomy.

She currently appears in Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)'s "Be an Ally & a Friend" public service advertisements that encourage viewers to treat people with respect regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

As the first openly trans actress to play the many theatric roles of her career, and the first trans woman to play a transgendered female character on television, Billings has broken many barriers. But don't call her a pioneer.

"You say the word pioneer and I think of some woman wearing a bonnet and churning butter. I just wanted to work. Now, when I look back, I think to myself, 'Wow, I guess that is kind of important.'"

"I'm 43 years old and I'm everybody's grandmother in this town," Billings jokes. "All the roles that didn't go to Jessica Tandy are going to me. But that's just sort of the nature of the beast. The camera is just a very unforgiving monster."

Billings (www.alexandrabilings.com) identifies as a lesbian woman and is married to director Chisanne Blankenship, whom she's known since high school, where they were cast in Shakespeare's Twelfth Night as brother and sister. "Of course we look nothing alike. I'm brown and have dark hair and she's practically invisible because she's so white. [But] I was in love with her and I had to have her close to me."

An accomplished singer, Billings was awarded the New York MAC Hanson Award for Cabaret Artist of the Year in 2004, and release two CDs, including her debut, Being Alive, which was up for Grammy consideration.

HIV-positive for several decades, Billings has sat on the Board of Directors of Season of Concern and worked with Healthworks Theatre, an AIDS educational theatre geared towards teens.

To combat HIV in the trans community, Billings argued that more trans people need to come out: "There's no reason to lie to your partner; there's no reason to make up a past. You've got to embrace what happened to you because...whatever happened to you informs what's happening to you now."

Billings has found her own past relevant to her role of Fagin, who—halfway through the play—changes into a dress. "He plays the rest of the show as sort of a female impersonator! So all of my past...[I] just dig that up."

Playing Fagin has led to some unusual compliments, as when an audience member asked her to sign his program: "I flipped open to my picture and signed. And he said, 'That's you? I

thought you were this guy!'"

Twist plays at L.A.'s Avery Schreiber Theatre through Dec. 30. Tickets can be purchased at Theatermania.com. In spring 2008, Billings will appear in The House of Yes.

The trans writer Jacob Anderson-Minshall co-authored *Blind Leap*, the second installment of the *Blind Eye* mystery series available now. For more information visit anderson-minshall.com or e-mail jake@trans-nation.org.

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SPOTLIGHT

The Mistress Cycle



When is a musical not a musical? When it's *The Mistress Cycle*, a new work described as a "song cycle" illuminating stories of passion, sacrifice and spirit in the lives and loves of five notorious mistresses. The historic females, who rose to positions of power and influence through their liaisons, range from 20th-century sexual adventurer Anais Nin to 16th-century Diane De Poitiers (mistress of King Henri II) to Ching, a teenage concubine in 12th-century China. With music by Jenny Giering and lyrics by Beth Blatt, *The Mistress Cycle* has won a slew of honors in theater development circles. This regional premiere runs through Jan. 5 at Apple Tree Theatre, 1850 Green Bay Road, Highland Park; 847-432-4335; \$38-\$48. Photo by Michael Brosilow

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Heidi Kettenring (left) and Dara Cameron in *Little Women*. Photo courtesy of Dan Rest

THEATER REVIEW *Little Women*

Playwright: Based on the novel by Louisa May Alcott;
book by Allen Knee; **music** by Jason Howland,
lyrics by Mindi Dickstein
At: Marriott Lincolnshire Theatre,
10 Marriott, Lincolnshire
Phone: 847-634-0200; \$45
Runs through: Feb. 3

BY CATEY SULLIVAN

In this, the Age of Irony, Louisa May Alcott's novels might seem to scream out for a revision. *Little Women* and its companion tomes (*Little Men*, *Jo's Boys*, *Under the Lilacs* and *Eight Cousins*) are unabashedly earnest, unashamedly unhip and absolutely sincere in their praise of authentic family values—integrity, loyalty and interdependent sisterhood. Marmee March and her daughters—tomboy Jo, style-conscious Amy, angelic Beth and romantic Meg—are all too easily caricatured more than a century after their creation. So it's to the Marriott's immense credit that *Little Women*, the Broadway Musical, rings with truth rather than treacle.

Alcott's complex, fully-formed women stand out in a literary era thick with hysterical governesses, doomed adulteresses and dragon-lady spinsters. Leaving such ladies to her menfolk peers, Alcott penned complex characters embracing life in all its messiness; real women in a literary era of archetypes and impossibly virtuous heroines. Which isn't to say *Little Women*, the Broadway Musical, is as well constructed as Alcott's books—far from it. Jason Howland's music and especially Mindi Dickstein's lyrics are egregiously generic. Predictable power ballads (such as *Astonishing*) ooze triumph-of-the-human spirit clichés while subtle-as-a-Mack-truck shifts in tone and dynamics let you know precisely what you should be feeling.

But the limitations of the score doesn't stop the Marriott's blazing cast from making *Little Women* a joyous and even inspiring event. Led by Paula Scrofano (more gorgeously luminous than ever in the fourth decade of a remarkable career) as Marmee March and Heidi Kettenring (fire-eyed and clarion-voiced) as the headstrong Jo, *Little Women's* ensemble infuses every moment of the production with heart.

In a genre (over)populated by ingénues, director Joe Leonardo creates a crowd of fierce, fascinating females: Morgan Weed's precocious, endearingly vain Amy; Abbey Mueller's soulful, compassionate Meg; Dara Cameron's sweet, saintly Beth and the invaluable Ann Whitney's horse-hide tough Aunt March—each is a portrait of a deeply memorable lady. Their context is also memorable, with Allen Knee's book etching a clear picture of how easily and how often the so-called fairer-sex was dismissed back in the days of hoop skirts and corsets. *Little Women* opens with aspiring novelist Jo reading a rejection letter: Her writing is terrible, the publisher

tells her. Moreover, she should go home and do what women are supposed to do with their lives: have babies. (And if you think that scene is jaw-droppingly archaic, think again: I've got a shoebox full of rejection letters from the mid-1960s, addressed to my Lisagor Award-winning mother, containing the exact same advice.)

A formidably proper John Reeger as the wealthy, curmudgeonly neighbor Mr. Lawrence and a bright-eyed Stephen Schellhardt as honorary March brother Laurie complete an ensemble of mighty heart. The pleasures of *Little Women*? They're anything but small.

Hunchback

By: Jim Lasko and Mickie Maher
At: Redmoon Theatre, 1463 W. Hubbard
Phone: 312-850-8440 ext. 112; \$15-\$35
Runs through: Jan. 20

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

There's a grand tradition of Chicago theaters adapting great works of literature for the stage. Redmoon Theatre's brilliant revised revival of *Hunchback* is one of the great reminders that the transition from page to stage can revel in flamboyant theatrical tricks.

Much is lost when paring down the mammoth novels of Victor Hugo for the stage—even if those adaptations like the musical *Les Misérables* go on for more than three hours. Redmoon's *Hunchback* runs approximately 90 minutes without intermission, but under the assured direction of Leslie Buxbaum Danzig, the entire company cleverly packs as much as they can in an inordinately creative fashion.

Hunchback is filled with many of the creative Rube Goldberg-style contraptions that we've come to expect from Redmoon: Perspective-altering puppets (in the hand, marionette and shadow varieties originally designed by Laura Heit), oversized masks designed by Shoshanna Utchenik and a dazzling display of acrobatics played out on two moving-parts pylons designed by Jim Lasko and Utchenik which skeletally suggest Notre Dames' iconic bell towers.

Redmoon could have just stuck with pantomiming the story to the ear-clattering pre-recorded score. The opening chase scene between hunchback bell-ringer Quasimoto (Jay Torrence and Alden Moore) and lovely gypsy Esmeralda (Katie Rose McLaughlin) showed that the entire story could have been told without a muttered word. But what Redmoon cleverly does to acknowledge the missing swaths of text is to have actor Jeremy Sher playing author Hugo come back to life to impudently challenge some of the gross (if extremely creative) simplifications of the novel.

For instance, while the two puppets of lovers Esmeralda and Phoebus copulate, a sinister knife-wielding shadow puppet of villain Claude Frollo (Samuel Taylor) hovers in the background. At that point, Hugo demands that his character is given his proper back story to explain his lust-driven hatred.

Though the largely silent company first look

upon Hugo as an annoyance, they go with the flow and find a creative Redmoon way to capitulate to the author's demands that proves to be just as entertaining as it is enlightening.

These Hugo interruptions do dissipate the linear flow of *Hunchback*, but they add to the quirky and creative magic that goes on in this sometimes deconstructionist look at the iconic 19th-century novel. Redmoon's approach makes you stop and think about how stories get adapted to different mediums, especially with the impressive grab bag variety of storytelling techniques that the folks of Redmoon confidently show off.

So anyone expecting a straightforward retelling of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* will be disappointed. But you're in the mood for some amazing theatrical magic that tickles the imagination, you'll find loads to admire and fall in love with in Redmoon's *Hunchback*.

Ella

Playwright: book by Jeffrey Hatcher,
music by various artists, conceived
by Rob Ruggiero and Dyke Garrison
At: Northlight Theatre at
the North Shore Center for the
Performing Arts, 9501 Skokie, Skokie
Phone: 847-673-6300; \$38-\$58
Runs through: Jan. 6

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

"You're the *nice* one!" her manager reminds her. And she was, too—the jazz diva who didn't drink, smoke, take drugs or sleep around. That didn't mean that Ella Fitzgerald had an easy life, however. As another pop star in another musical warns us, "*You* sell a hundred million records, and see how *you* handle it." But the caution that kept this international celebrity on the straight and narrow was rooted in the same insecurities that drove her peers to reckless extremes.

Indeed, the destiny of the 16-year-old child who cooched for small change in front of sportin' houses might have turned out very differently if her escape from the police one night hadn't taken her through the stage door of Harlem's Apollo Theatre on amateur night. After that fortuitous debut, she was hired by her first mentor, bandleader Chick Webb, who taught her the value of self-presentation while manager Moe Gabler guarded her against bad company. During these years she honed her skills at "scat-singing" (in be-bop music, an improvised vocal doggerel employed as a solo turn, its name derived from the word, "scatter"). In 1955, she signed with Verve Records under the management of Norman Granz, forging a worldwide career until her death in 1996.

In the musical revue conceived by Rob Ruggiero and Dyke Garrison, we meet Fitzgerald in 1965, just before a concert in France. She has just come from the funeral of her beloved step-sister (a conceit making for additional resonance on the Sunday night that I attended), only to be told by Granz that she must cut one song from the program in order to make room for some "patter," setting us up for some biographical confessions, along with banter with the band over the proposed excision.

Despite signs of strain on the cold and snowy evening, E. Faye Butler's voice never faltered over two hours of warbles ranging from Cole Porter and Hoagy Carmichael to such rare classics as the Carter-DePaul-Raye ditty *Cow Cow Boogie* and Sam Coslow's *Mr. Paganini*, backed by a quartet of musicians alert to her slightest nuance, with trumpeter Ron Haynes standing in for Louis Armstrong on a free-wheeling rendition of *Let's Call The Whole Thing Off*. However wintry it might be in Skokie, audiences of all ages can warm to *le jazz hot* at Northlight Theatre.

A Charlie Chaplin Christmas

Playwright: adapted by Tonika Todorova
from the films of Charlie Chaplin
At: Silent Theatre Company at the
Chicago Cultural Center, 77 E. Randolph
Phone: 312-742-8497; \$20
Runs through: Jan. 6

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Audience members arriving early in the lobby of the Cultural Center may be puzzled at hearing a decidedly vocal group exercise occurring inside the auditorium. After all, isn't this the *Silent Theatre Company*, dedicated to live-action replications of movies from the days before sound tracks? Oh, the stageside combo supplying the customary musical accompaniment might want to play a few warm-up scales, but what purpose are these other noisy preliminaries to serve?

Citizens with first-hand recollections of pre-talking motion pictures are now aged somewhere in their 90s (though Baby Boom brats may recall afternoon broadcasts of Ben Turpin and Buster Keaton on television during the 1950s and '60s). Taking this into consideration, *Silent Theatre* adapter/director Tonika Todorova provides us with a prologue: a comedy shoot in progress is interrupted by the studio producer, who threatens to withdraw his funding of the project. The desperate director claims that they have signed a sure box-office draw, the immensely popular Charlie Chaplin. After a search for a copycat Chaplin, they proceed to make *A Tramp's Christmas*—a linear narrative blending slapstick, sentiment and social commentary and featuring the genre's classic comic routines.

The speeded-up pace associated with vintage two-reelers was a technical glitch engendered by faulty projection, but even so, the *Silent Theatre* ensemble is to be commended for resisting the temptation to overstated facial or bodily movement, instead imposing no more exaggeration than mandated by historical accuracy and the artificial chiaroscuro created by a unified scheme of starkly neutral colors carried into all design aspects, down to the white-face makeup. Anchoring the action is the amazing Marvin Eduardo Quijada, playing the Little Tramp himself, ably assisted by Gillian Hastings as his urchin sidekick and a bevy of clown-mimes performing such familiar lazzi as "the piano movers" and the "flea circus," along with three musicians as agile with a czarda or ragtime as the actors with a pants-kick or a pratfall.

Clocking in just over an hour, *A Charlie Chaplin Christmas* is a unique theater experience for Loop visitors reluctant to make the investment required by the playhouses west of State Street, as well as a treat for downtown shoppers looking to rest their feet and brains in some old-fashioned populist escapism.

Olympia Dukakis to Direct Victory Gardens Play

Academy Award-winning actress Olympia Dukakis will direct the world premiere of Todd Logan's *Botanic Garden*. The two-character play will begin preview performances on Wed., Jan. 30, at The Victory Gardens Greenhouse Theatre, 2257 N. Lincoln, and run through Sun., March 9.

Among Dukakis' films are *Steel Magnolias*, *3 Needles*, *Mr. Holland's Opus* and *Moonstruck*, for which she won a Best Supporting Actress Oscar. In the world of TV, she is known for her Emmy-nominated role as Anna Madrigal in the *Tales of the City*, *More Tales of the City* and *Further Tales of the City*, among other productions.

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Il Divo's David Miller: Divine Intervention

BY AMY WOOTEN

The last several years have been a whirlwind for David Miller, the American tenor for the operatic pop quartet and international sensation Il Divo.

Ever since he was invited to join the chart-topping group created by American Idol judge Simon Cowell, it has been a wild ride Miller never expected.

Il Divo means "divine male performer" in Italian, and the group is known for its beautiful ballads, fashion and good looks. Their albums have gone multi-platinum all over the world since their 2004 debut.

Before Il Divo, Miller worked with some of the top opera companies around the globe, performing in lead tenor roles.

Miller will come to Chicago Dec. 21 for a solo concert backed by the Chicagoland Pops Orchestra at Rosemont Theatre, 5400 N. River. Tickets are \$40 and \$55, and can be purchased at www.chicagolandpops.com or 847-671-5100.

Windy City Times talked to Miller about transitions, touring the world and stereotypes.

Windy City Times: Were you always into singing?

David Miller: Actually, no. I didn't started signing until my second year of high school. Before that, I was really interested in science, oddly enough. Math and sciences, and I wanted to go into the Air Force Academy and I wanted to be an astronaut. Around my freshman and sophomore years, my height grew to be about 6' 2", and the cutoff for a person is 5' 11", I believe, for a person to be an astronaut because they live in such confined spaces. So, that whole dream kind of went out the window, so I started searching for other things, and I found music.

WCT: At first, did you know Il Divo was a Simon Cowell project?

DM: Actually, I didn't. The other guys had been told who was in charge of it, but they had never heard of him. He's not that big in Spain, and he's definitely unknown in France and Switzerland. In a way, that was a really balanced thing. We all came together because we all wanted to do something we believed in, and not because we thought who was behind it.

WCT: Was it weird to transition from doing solo work in lead tenor roles to being a part of a pop group?

DM: Definitely, there was a transition period.



David Miller.

You know, the four of us are soloists. Let me tell you, that first year and a half was a lot of learning to, let's just say, define boundaries. *[Laughs]*

WCT: A lot of egos in the room?

DM: A lot of healthy self-esteem, for sure. There was some ego-clashing. There was actually a lot of language and culture barriers. I actually thought that was pretty funny. You know, France and Spain are right next door to each other. You'd think they would be able to understand the cultures, but apparently not.

WCT: I bet you've learned so much, so far.

DM: When we look back at the end of that year and a half together, we had done a lot of things. But every even kept coming one right after the next, so there was no time to slow down and think, "Oh, wow. We've done a lot." It was all, "What's next? What's next?" We went to Japan for the first time and we made our kind of showcase debut over there in the same performance space that The Beatles did when they first performed in Japan. That was really cool. They had this video screen that was up while they were presenting us before we went on stage. It was showing all the things we had done. A part of our video was up there, all the TV shows we were on...and they just kept putting up one country after the next of all these major TV shows we had been on. We just stood there, saying, "Oh my God!"

WCT: Is that when it hit you that this had definitely exceeded your expectations and this is, indeed, huge?

DM: For me, that was definitely the moment.

WCT: Do you ever miss opera and Broadway?

DM: Oh yes, absolutely. I connect very strongly to musical situations, where you're a character, you're in a costume, you're on set, you're going to lose yourself acting-wise and put up a fourth wall. For me, that's so much easier singing-wise to let go of all of my preconceptions of who I am personally, and drop into a role and drop into the music. When it's me on stage, just me, that's a lot harder. Like what's coming up [his solo show], it is all opera tunes, but people are coming to see just me? That just feels so different. I haven't done a lot of concert repertoire over the years. It's been mainly shows on stage. But I definitely miss it, and I'm so looking forward to it, you have no idea.

WCT: Let's talk about your fan base a little bit. You have such a huge following, not only all over the world among women of all ages, but interestingly enough, you have a huge gay following, too.

DM: I'm not entirely sure what makes Il Divo tick, in the first place, among women. Obviously, there's a kind of romantic fantasy that goes along with it, sure. I suppose that that translates to all people who are interested in that type of music. It has to do with the exoticness of all four being from different countries. We dress up nice, we sing nice music and we use our voices in the most beautiful ways that we can. I think there's something in there for everyone that connects to something of quality, something of luxury. It's really great for us to know that, especially in this MTV culture, where the memory span is about 2.3 seconds, people can stop and unplug for a little while to use our music to connect to a really emotional place.

WCT: There have been many interviews where people have asked if you guys are straight or gay, and I'm not going to ask you that because you guys have said you are straight enough times. What I want to know is what do you think that says about our culture still, where if a guy dresses nice and sings beautiful music, we automatically assume?

DM: I think there's an aspect in Western society that really tries to very clearly delineate between the sexes and in terms of sexuality. I think when people see us, we spend a lot of time creating the look, focusing on details and making sure its very high quality. I think that's naturally perceived as a feminine aspect. And then there's this stereotype that gay men are feminine men, which plays into that. So, when men are displaying creativity by taking care of their appearance and being sensitive to emotional music, they just automatically put those two categories together. But that's just my theory.

WCT: Let's talk about your show with Chi-

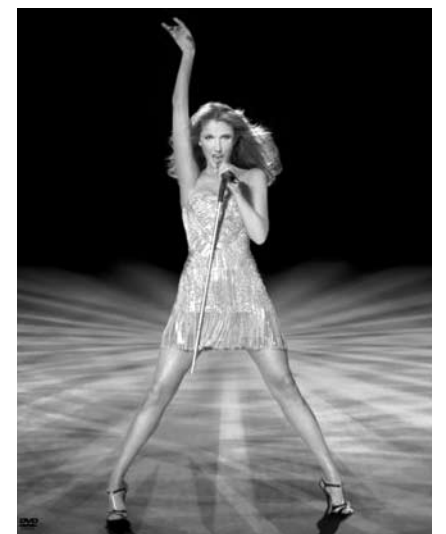
cagoland Pops Orchestra. Tell me a little bit about what we should expect.

DM: It's going to be a lot of my favorite things, in a way. I'm singing the operatic repertoire that kind of got me to the point before Il Divo, like Romeo ... and La Boheme, which I did on Broadway and was the only production of it I've done, which was just prior to Il Divo, ... and also where I met my current girlfriend, who will be singing with me in the concert. We're very excited about that. We'll also be doing something from La Boheme and West Side Story. There're a couple other musical theater numbers in there that are just some of my favorite pieces. There's also going to be some holiday music in there. Then, I'll also be going back to opera, pieces where I've just previously been too young to handle in the voice. Opera has an age hierarchy. Some roles are appropriate earlier in the career, and some are for later. These roles you just don't touch until your mid-30s. Well, now I've been in Il Divo for four years, and it's kind of transitioned a maturation period in my voice. It's very exciting for me. I'm looking forward to coming back to Chicago. It is one of my favorite cities.

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Celine Dion fans may be very happy this holiday season now that A New Day (\$21.98), a two-disc set featuring the singer's Live in Las Vegas concert, came out on DVD Dec. 11.

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Making It Work With Steven Rosengard

BY JERRY NUNN

Project Runway is in its fourth season on Bravo this year. For me, it was exciting this time out to see one of Chicago's very own taking on Heidi and friends. Although he heard "Auf wiedersehen!" too soon on episode five, Steven Rosengard kept his dignity and continues to wow us in The Windy City.

Windy City Times: Who is the person you bonded with on the show? [The show] must be a surreal experience.

Steven Rosengard: During the show I probably bonded most with Jillian just because she's a great girl and was all of five feet away from me. As time wore on, I got close to Kit and Kevin and others. But I have to say that I adore everyone—we're a very tight-knit group. That's why it's easy for me to be offended when someone starts to make off-handed remarks about my castmates. To make disparaging remarks about them is really no different than someone bashing any other friend of mine. We're all real people who work in museums and bars and studios, just the same as anyone else and I think it's easy to forget that. All of that aside, it was a surreal experience, but it was also one of the most wonderful I've had. I don't know that I'll ever have such a chance to share an experience with so many wonderful people again.

WCT: Do you feel you are depicted correctly on the show?

SR: I am having such a blast seeing the way I look on TV! The best part is that it's not like watching any other TV program—it's more like watching home movies in an odd way.

WCT: Is it finished filming?

SR: Filming is not entirely complete at this point. There is still a riveting ending and a reunion show to shoot.

WCT: Who would be your dream model?

SR: There are so many women I would love to dress: Nicole Kidman, Natalie Portman, Anne Hathaway, Catherine Deneuve. But for someone with whom I'd love to collaborate and just hang out for hours, I would have to say Sarah Jessica Parker. She is such a phenomenally beautiful person. Her sensitivity and sweetness is beyond touching—it's disarming.

WCT: Where do you see yourself next? Staying in Chicago?

SR: I think I have to go wherever work will take me. I don't care much for New York and I think we have a much higher quality of life here, generally speaking. However, when I was in New York a couple of weeks ago, I noticed something while walking around: women that I could envision wearing my clothes on a daily basis. It gave me such a rush to see these women and know that those women were out there. With some of my pieces erring on the more dramatic side, I'm afraid that they come off as "too much" for most Chicago women who are in the market for custom-made clothes. I want so much for the Chicago woman to prove me wrong! But I have to say the last challenge to design a menswear look really intrigued me. I have been bouncing around several ideas for men's sportswear items that I'd like to start producing.

WCT: You live in Boystown. Are you ready for the fans in your neighborhood?

SR: The in-person fan response has been slow, but I'm all right with that. I'm actually a very private person and sometimes just being able to walk down the street without anyone staring or saying "hi" is a nice thing. But I do have what I like to call the "Eva Peron complex." When I get noticed, I want my privacy. But when I go



Steven Rosengard.

unnoticed, I wonder why no one is paying attention to me. I'm sure I'll get a couple of shrinks' phone numbers from that remark.

WCT: What is your educational background?

SR: I went to Columbia College for a year for fashion design (which is why I find it amazing that Web site after Web site claims that I have absolutely no formal training). I took a few years off, worked [at] a pre-employment psychological

testing firm grading tests in French, then went to [University of Wisconsin at] Madison for two years and studied Dutch and German.

WCT: You sew for the exhibits at the Museum of Science and Industry. How is that project going?

SR: It's actually quite a bit of fun. There's something very satisfying in knowing that whatever I put into the museum will be seen by as many as 1.5 million people a year.

WCT: You recently were involved in the Gay Games. How was that experience?

SR: Being involved was an eye-opening experience. I was with the Special Events committee. I ended up having to leave the committee because there was so much design work coming in at the time in addition to preparing for try-outs for season three of Project Runway. But what was so great to see was a group of Chicagoans putting together whatever ideas they wanted and then going forth to make them a reality. I think so many Chicagoans—myself included—suffer from the Second City Syndrome where we think that New York will always be able to do things better with more talented people. I think the Games were a great example of how hard work can make anything happen.

WCT: What's your Web site? What are your plans for the future?

SR: My Web site address is StevenRosengard.com and there is a link for new clients to contact me. I am looking to expand my business to include men's sportswear, but I am working towards opening a boutique with some prêt-à-porter items, but with a stronger focus on custom-made clothing. I believe the future of fashion is not in every woman wearing a mini-skirt or every woman wearing a full-skirted ballgown. The future will be about women dressing for their body types and not about one trend or another.

KNIGHT AT THE MOVIES



Sweeney Todd, Charlie Wilson's War

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

With Tim Burton at the helm, the emphasis on blood and gore in **Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street** in this long-awaited adaptation of the Stephen Sondheim musical masterpiece as expected, is very high. In fact, from the opening credits, the film literally drips with blood. It falls from the skies over a London so dark and foul it might even make old Scrooge pause. But unlike *The Corpse Bride* and *Sleepy Hollow*, Burton's most recent goth movies, *Sweeney Todd's* story of doomed romance and revenge is so perfectly suited to Burton's gloomy yet enticing sensibilities that it cannot fail to land.

Welded to Sondheim's exquisite score, even in this truncated form, is a perfect meeting of director and material. The movie rests on the performances of Johnny Depp in the title role and Helena Bonham Carter, to be sure, but it's the intersection of Burton with Sondheim's doom-and-gloom score that is the real triumph—a veritable match made in hell. The result is a (par-



Johnny Depp in *Sweeney Todd*.

don the pun) bloody good time for young and old, and one that goths and show-tune queens alike can embrace.

The story follows the former Benjamin Barker, now re-dubbed Sweeney Todd (Depp), who has returned to London after escaping a false imprisonment at the hands of the nefarious Judge Turpin (Alan Rickman) and his evil henchman, the Beadle (Timothy Spall). Turpin coveted Sweeney's beautiful wife and, to get her, had Sweeney imprisoned. The wife—gravely used by the judge—poisoned herself and now Turpin has Sweeney's grown-up daughter in his clutches, with plans to marry her. With the aid of the amoral Mrs. Lovett (Bonham Carter), who runs a meat-pie establishment above where his barber shop used to stand, Sweeney goes about getting his horrible revenge. While Sweeney awaits a chance to get at Turpin, he and Mrs. Lovett hatch a dastardly plan: Using the gleaming razors ("My Friends") that Lovett has hidden away, Sweeney will kill a batch of black-hearted Londoners, who Lovett will then bake in her pies. A reconfigured barber chair which shoots bodies through a trapdoor down to the cellar ingeniously helps the plot along.

A subplot involves Anthony, the young sailor (Jamie Campbell Bower) who has fallen for

Sweeney's daughter, Johanna (Jayne Wisener), who he has glimpsed through a window at Judge Turpin's. There's also the Italian barber, Signor Pirelli (Sacha Baron Cohen), to contend with but mainly we're concerned with Todd and Lovett—the evil duo at the center of the film (and who are made up to look like silent-film stars or human panda bears) and sing lustfully of their rapacious desires—briefly, as all the songs have been trimmed and the chorus numbers jettisoned. To shore up Depp's pleasant and resonate tenor singing and Bonham Carter's whispered vocals, Burton has cast lesser-trained voices in the other parts and downplayed the score's operatic qualities. Mood is all here and the songs move quickly around the fantastic, cramped, inky dark sets (by Dante Ferretti). The color palette is so dark it's almost like seeing a movie of charcoal drawings. (The film's breathtaking cinematography is by Dariusz Wolski.)

I'm a huge fan of the stage version but the shortened songs didn't bother me as the atmosphere is so overpowering here. The vocal deficits of the cast, on the other hand, are harder to overlook; both *Pretty Women* and *Not While I'm Around*, two of the score's most achingly beautiful songs, are not the expected highlights, though they are aided (as is the entire score) by Joannathan Tunick's gorgeous orchestrations. Going with a younger cast also has its advantages—the freshness of Anthony and Johanna is quite believable (they seem like high school kids) and really ups the sexual tension between Sweeney and Lovett. Bonham Carter's cleavage almost spills over her dress into those meat pies and Depp wields his phallic symbol razors like a man possessed.

I'm not sure how mainstream audiences are going to take to *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. This isn't exactly *Hairspray*, you know. Will the gore and creepy atmosphere and golden goose Johnny Depp be enough for musical-phobic crowds? Will show-tune queens forgive Burton for butchering Sondheim's score (even with Sondheim's help) in order to keep the running time down to two hours? No matter how these questions get answered, however, it's hard to argue that this is yet another enthralling derring-do between Burton and Depp—perhaps their strongest pairing to date.

Mike Nichols' latest film, **Charlie Wilson's War** (with a screenplay by Aaron Sorkin), is being sold by the star power of Tom Hanks and Julia Roberts and the incongruities of the story that the movie loosely reenacts: A playboy Texan Congressman joined forces with a mega-rich blond bombshell—another Texan—in the early '80s to arm Afghan rebels and defeat Russian forces, thus ending Communism in that war-torn country.

One would expect the star wattage of the two leads, aided by thick accents and character eccentricities (not to mention a big 'ole bouffant for Roberts) to be incredibly, tantalizingly high, but instead it only burns fitfully. Scenes that would have increased caring about these two seem to have been cut while the ironies in the story don't really seem so off-the-wall, considering the effect Texas conservatives have had on American politics the last seven years. The picture just sort of bumps along in a fairly entertaining manner, light in tone but not particularly involving. Only a visit to a Darfur-like refugee camp and each appearance of Philip Seymour Hoffman as a scrappy CIA operative (who has a great opening rant and then never lets up) have the effect of drawing you back into the movie—temporarily.

Check out my archived reviews at www.windycitytimes.com or www.knightatthemovies.com. Readers can leave feedback at the latter Web site, where there is also ordering information on my new book of collected film reviews, *Knight at the Movies 2004-2006*.

Gay Man Wins 'Survivor'

For the second time, a gay man has come out on top on TV's *Survivor*.

Todd Herzog, 22, a longtime fan of the show, won the \$1 million prize after 39 days of outwitting and outlasting the other contestants. Herzog—the youngest winner ever—won *Survivor's* 15th season by garnering four votes from the seven-member jury, which consisted of players who were eliminated before the final three: Herzog, Courtney Yates and Amanda Kimmel.

Herzog, a flight attendant, was actually the second gay Mormon to compete on the show, following *Survivor: Guatemala's* Rafe Judkins.

The first gay man to win it all was Richard Hatch. Hatch is currently serving time for failing to pay taxes on his winnings, or on the income he earned as co-host of a Boston radio show and rent on property he owned.

Entertainment News

Shock jock Don Imus is at it again. On a Dec. 12 edition of ABC Radio Networks' *Imus in the Morning*, host Imus asked guest Jay Severin, "Why don't you like [Mike] Huckabee? Because you are gay, or what?" The two had been discussing Republican presidential candidates. According to Media Matters for America, you can hear sound engineer add, "Stand by for the drive-by," following Imus' comments. Imus had only been on the air a handful of days before the slip-up. Imus was fired from his previous on-air position for making a racist remark.

An anonymous L Word fan recently donated \$1 million to the Dr. Susan Love Research Foundation, a breast cancer foundation, in honor of Erin Daniels and Leisha Hailey, two of the show's stars. Erin Daniels' character died of breast cancer at the end of one of the hit show's seasons.

Australian actor Tim Campbell ("Home and Away") came out of the closet, reported Queerty.com. He confirmed rumors that out singer Anthony Callea is his ex. Campbell said he is concerned he'll be labeled as "the gay actor" now.

A gay plot line will be revealed in an upcoming episode of *Reaper*, AfterElton.com reports. In the episode, Sock and Sam, after moving into their condo, will be given a helping hand by their new gay neighbors. Comedian and director Kevin Smith is involved in the series, and directed *Reaper's* pilot.

In an interview with *GQ Magazine*, **Heroes star Hayden Panettiere said she doesn't mind the rumors floating around that she is interested in women.** "You want to make me a lesbian? That's totally fine by me," Panettiere said. "We could do a love affair with Angelina [Jolie]." She went on to list off other women she thinks are beautiful, such as Charlize Theron, Kate Beckinsale and Jessica Alba.

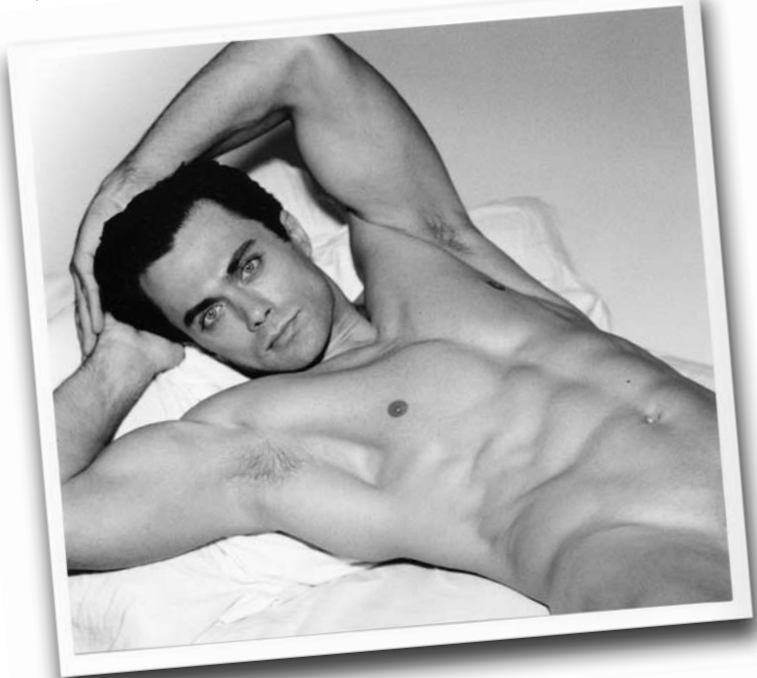
After calling "The Bachelor" Brad Womack a "jerk" on a recent episode of her show, talk show host **Ellen DeGeneres met with Womack face-to-face on her show to apologize**, Access Hollywood reported. During the season finale of *The Bachelor*, Womack surprised viewers when he revealed to contestants DeAnna Pappas and Jenni Croft that he would not choose either of them. After sharing his side of the story, DeGeneres told Womack she was sorry for judging him.

Boy George's trial date has been set for Feb. 25, according to The Press Association. George is accused of falsely imprisoning a male escort. The escort claims George chained him to a wall in his London home. George is currently out on bail.

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WHAT TO DO?

Wednesday, Dec. 19

Annoyance Theatre Dick O' Day's Big, Lovely Holiday Bingo. One night only. 8 p.m., \$10, <http://dickoday.com>

Association of Latino Men for Action Gay Wednesday nights at Bocadillos; raises funds for ALMA. 8 p.m.- 1 a.m., \$5 suggested donation at door, 6739 Ogden Ave., Berwyn, www.almachicago.org

Windy City Gay Naturists Club night at Touche. 7:30 p.m., RSVP by Dec. 17, 312-494-2654

Thursday, Dec. 20

Affinity Drumming Circle. Every third Thursday. 7-9 p.m., 5650 South Woodlawn Avenue, Garden Level, www.affinity95.org

Estrojam Chicago Artists Underwear Auction. Modeled and auctioned live. Crew, 4804 N. Broadway, www.estrojam.org

Friday, Dec. 21

Affinity XPU Youth Drop-in. Every third Friday. 7 p.m., 5650 South Woodlawn Avenue, Garden Level, www.affinity95.org

Berlin DJ Greg Haus until 4 a.m., 954 W. Belmont, www.berlinchicago.com

Hydrate Lube wrestling at 11 p.m. and DJ Jeannette. 3458 N. Halsted, www.hydratechicago.com

Lakeshore Theater Miss Richfield in Fall on Your Knees. And Dec. 22. 10 p.m., \$20, \$30 VIP tickets available, 3175 N. Broadway, www.ticketweb.com or box office

Spin \$200 Bear Shower Contest. Halsted at Belmont, www.spin-nightclub.com

Saturday, Dec. 22

Berlin DJ Chester until 5 a.m., 954 W. Belmont, www.berlinchicago.com

Chicago 3160 The Tajma Hall Show. Special guest Aurora Sexton. 10:30 p.m. and midnight, 3160 N. Clark St., www.chicago3160.com

Chicago Community Chorus Christmas concert, "Songs of the Season." 3 p.m., \$10 suggested donation, St. Luke's Lutheran Church of Logan Square, 2649 N. Francisco Ave., www.chicagocommunitychorus.org

Circuit Holiday party with free holiday buffet from 9 - 10:30 p.m., hosted by Miss Fozzie, entertainment by Cyon Flare, Sebastian Cock and more, 3641 N. Halsted St., www.CircuitClub.com

Hydrate Mike Cruz. 3458 N. Halsted, www.hydratechicago.com

South Suburban SISTERS Social Group X-Mas dinner at Buca di Beppo in Lombard, 90 Yorktown Rd., RSVP required to lezbefriends71@yahoo.com, www.myspace.com/southsuburbansisters

Spin Ear-rotic Hip Hop Reggae Party. Halsted at Belmont, www.spin-nightclub.com

Sunday, Dec. 23

Hydrate DJ Jeannette. 3458 N. Halsted, www.hydratechicago.com

Oak Park Area Lesbian and Gay Association Women Like Me group. 2 p.m., OPALGA Center, 947 Garfield, Oak Park, www.opalga.org, 708-848-0273

PFLAG/Oak Park Monthly meeting. 3 p.m., First United Church, 848 Lake St., Oak Park

Monday, Dec. 24

achurch4me/MCC Christmas Eve Celebration. Everyone welcome. 7 p.m., Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St.

Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders Coffee and Conversation on a special day! Holiday Party! Special lunch provided. 12-3 p.m., Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St.

Tuesday, Dec. 25

Berlin Open at 11 p.m. \$1 drinks all night. DJ Chester. 954 W. Belmont,

www.berlinchicago.com

Thursday, Dec. 27

New Town Writers Workshop. 7:30 p.m., Gerber/Hart Library, 1127 W. Granville Ave., www.newtownwriters.org

Friday, Dec. 28

Affinity Speed dating. 7-9 p.m., 5650 S. Woodlawn, www.affinity95.org

Gerber/Hart Library Cinema Lesbiana. 7:30 p.m., 1127 W. Granville Ave., www.gerberhart.org

Saturday, Dec. 29

Flesh Hungry Dog Show Featuring performances by The Joans, The Pussy Pirates. Host Gary Crawford and DJ Mercedes Crawford. 8:30 p.m., Jackhammer, 6406 N. Clark St., www.fleshhungrydog.com

Windy City Gay Naturists Annual holiday party. 4:30 p.m., RSVP by Dec. 27 at 312-494-2654

Sunday, Dec. 30

achurch4me/MCC Cross-cultural Kwanzaa Celebration. 11 a.m., followed by community pot luck and music by Drum Divas, Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St.

Monday, Dec. 31

Circuit NYE celebration. DJs Teri Bristol, Dani. B. Hosts Paula Sinclair, Veronica Zaid. Doors open 8 p.m., 3651 N. Halsted St., www.circuitclub.com

Crew Crew Year's Eve 07, a benefit for Howard Brown Health Center. Dancing, party favors, champagne toast, raffle and more. Doors open 8 p.m., \$40 advance, \$50 at the door, 4804 N. Broadway, www.worldsgreatestbar.com

Encompass NYE celebration. Dinner 6-8 p.m., hors d'oeuvres, champagne toast, cash balloon drop, etc. Doors open 5 p.m., 2415 Rush St., Lake

Station, Ind., 219-962-4640 or www.emcompassnightclub.net for info

Hydrate New Year's Across the Nation. 3458 N. Halsted, www.hydratechicago.com for info on tickets

Neo-Futurists "Too Much Light" New Year's Eve Benefit. Performance, hors d'oeuvres, toast and pizza at midnight. Doors open 9:30 p.m., all ages performance at 11 p.m., \$40, advance tickets required, www.neofuturists.org, 773-275-5255

Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders Coffee and Conversation on a special day! Lunch provided. 12-3 p.m., Center on Halsted, 3656 N. Halsted St.

Sidetrack NYE on the Isle of Sidetrack. Includes steamy, island-war fashion show. Host: Circuit Mom. Performance by Miss Fozzie. Open at 7 p.m., \$20 advance from bartender or at www.eqil.org (portion benefits equality Illinois), 3349 N. Halsted, www.sidetrackchicago.com

Spin NYEVE. \$20 cover includes hors d'oeuvres, party favors, champagne toast. Doors open 8 p.m., Belmont and Halsted, www.spin-nightclub.com

Saturday, Jan. 5

Girlie-Q Live show starring Cherish the Burlesque Goddess, Miss Bea Haven, Red Hot Annie and more. Hosted by Tamale. 10 p.m., Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western Ave.

Sunday, Jan. 6

WACT Brunch. Noon, email cherylchicago@earthlink.net for info.

Tuesday, Jan. 8

Steppenwolf An Intimate Evening with David Sedaris (author of Me Talk Pretty One Day, Naked). Through Jan. 13. 7:30 p.m. Tues.-Sun., 3 p.m. Sat. and Sun, \$35, Upstairs Theatre, tickets at 1650 N. Halsted St, www.steppenwolf.org or 312-335-1650

Mon., Dec. 31



HAPPY CREW YEAR

Crew (featuring co-owners Steve Milford and Brian Wells, above), 4804 N. Broadway, will be among the many area bars ringing in the new year.

Photo by Kirk Williamson

Tues., Jan. 8



'NAKED' AMBITION

Writer **David Sedaris**—the author of such books as Naked and Me Talk Pretty One Day—will perform at Steppenwolf, 1650 N. Halsted.

See our online calendar: www.windycitymediagroup.com/calendar



Caught Up in the Wrapture

Chicago House held its annual Champagne Wrapture Dec. 11 at The James Hotel, 55 E. Ontario. Attendees enjoyed champagne and Belvedere Vodka cocktails and tasty treats while viewing and bidding on unique works of champagne bottle artistry. At a VIP reception, a guest sommelier hosted a tasting of rare vintages of Veuve Cliquot champagne. Photos by Kat Fitzgerald; see more at www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com and www.MysticImagesPhotography.com



Upon Further Review...

Jay Paul Deratany (left in the picture above), an openly gay candidate for the Cook County Board of Review, held a fundraiser Dec. 12 at Cru Cafe and Wine Bar, 25 E. Delaware. (Among the event's hosts were U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky and Cook County commissioners Mike Quigley and Forrest Claypool.) Primary elections will be held Feb. 5, 2008. Photos by Andrew Davis





Mac
Chisaboon.

SPORTS

The OutField

BY DAN WOOG

GLAF Supports Acceptance for All

This fall, Mac Chisaboon fielded an anguished e-mail sent to the Gay & Lesbian Athletics Foundation (www.glaf.org). As founder of the organization, which promotes the visibility and acceptance of GLBT athletes at the professional, amateur and recreational levels, he was used to queries from closeted players. But this was different.

It came from the father of a gay rower. His 17-year-old son was applying to college, and the man wanted to know how he could help. He was very supportive of his son; he recognized that whether the young man was out to his teammates or not was a personal decision. But he wanted to make sure that wherever his son went, the environment would be safe and he could be himself.

Chisaboon—a rower himself—forwarded the e-mail to GLAF's advisory board. That eclectic group included activists, professors, triathletes, an HIV-positive gymnast, Gay Games organizers, a wrestler, swimmers, an equestrian, tennis players, football players, administrators, extreme sports competitors, skiers, business executives, and even a former Major League umpire. (Full disclosure: It also includes me.)

Advisory board members leaped to respond. A Brown University graduate contacted a former fraternity brother about his alma mater's program. He told the rower's father that Brown was "almost assuredly" welcoming; as far back as the early 1970s, there were gay rowers, even a gay assistant coach. Someone else offered to call college coaches directly. Other respondents passed along names of gay rowers and coaches for the father and son to contact themselves.

To Chisaboon, the quick, insightful replies were "a good example of how we can leverage the great talent, the years of personal experience, that gay athletes have, in order to help others."

That help was on display when former National Basketball Association player Tim Hardaway spoke derisively of John Amaechi's coming-out. GLAF fired back with a press release. NBA Commissioner David Stein's decision to bar Hardaway from participation in All-Star Weekend activities was, GLAF said, "an appropriate 'first step' toward ridding the league of such inexcusable ignorance within its ranks." However, GLAF advised, "the NBA and others should actively speak up against such overt homophobia at every opportunity, whether it occurs in an interview, in the locker room, or on the court."

GLAF continued: "We often look to sports stars as heroes and role models, particularly when they have overcome substantial barriers to their success. GLAF hopes that today's youth can see beyond Hardaway's hateful rhetoric and instead make sport a better meritocracy where we all can play according to one's ability, regardless of other factors. This, after all, is the very thing we love about sport."

Chisaboon notes that "sports has huge ramifications on how people—including youths—see the world. If GLAF can utilize our knowledge base, we can help become a mechanism of social change."

It's taken eight years for Chisaboon to develop that mechanism. In 1999, as an MBA candidate at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he joined students from Harvard and Boston Universities to form the Boston Bay Blades, a gay and lesbian rowing group. As the Blades met GLBT squash players, tennis players, flag football players and bowlers, they formed PrideSports Boston, an umbrella group.

Around that time, a panel discussion at Harvard on the topic of gay sports drew a packed house. Chisaboon and others decided to build on the energy created by organizing a New England-wide group. Their board soon mushroomed beyond the region. By 2003, when they hosted their first conference at MIT, GLAF had become a national organization. A second event was held a year later. In the summer of 2006, GLAF sponsored panels at the Outgames in Montreal and at Chicago's Gay Games.

GLAF also ran a train-the-trainer session at a conference on counseling athletes, at Springfield College.

That's a lot of work for a group run entirely by volunteers. GLAF has no directors, no staff and no fundraising. "We're strictly an educational organization," Chisaboon says. "It's all about giving athletes an opportunity to network and connect with each other."

Recently, a basketball player e-mailed Chisaboon. She wanted a job in the gay sports world. He told her that no such position is available yet—but one might be in the future, and it could be with GLAF. "She has the mindset and experience to help take us to the next level," Chisaboon says.

A real estate developer and broker and former consultant to the Young Presidents' Organization, Chisaboon knows his way around a company boardroom. "Corporations are open to sponsorship," he insists. "They know the impor-

tance of aligning themselves with something like this." Something, that is, that reaches not only GLBT athletes, but folks like the father of a 17-year-old rower who wants to be sure that, in college, his gay son can be himself.

Olivia Cruise to Honor King

In 2008, Olivia—which creates travel experiences for lesbians—will commemorate its 35th anniversary while celebrating three women's sports historical events, including Billie Jean King's monumental win in the "The Battle of the Sexes" and the passing of Title IX into law. This first-of-its-kind experience will include Grammy Award winner singer and songwriter Paula Cole; other Olivia favorites include Vickie Shaw, Suede, Rene Hicks, Poppy Champion and Julie Wolf; others will be announced soon.

Olivia guests will depart San Diego to the Mexican Rivera on Oct. 4, 2008, and return to the United States Oct. 11 aboard the Holland America's ms Oosterdam. The cruise will offer everything from spa services to a casino.

See www.olivia.com.

EU to Fight Homophobia in Soccer

Franco Frattini, the European Union (EU) justice commissioner, has talked about his desire to establish a EU police force for sport, according to PinkNews.co.uk. Frattini wants to implement the plan at next year's Euro 2008 tournament in Austria and Switzerland.

At a recent sports conference, Frattini pledged 10 million euros toward raising a training program for the police.

Michel Platini, president of UEFA, soccer's European governing body, said that he has "talked about a monitoring or control or surveillance organisation, not just for violence but for illegal betting, match fixing, racism and homophobia."

Blackhawks Thanking Santas

To thank Santa Clauses for bringing cheer, the Chicago Blackhawks is offering up to 50 Santas a chance to start their vacations right by attending a Blackhawks game on their first day off—Wed., Dec. 26.

The Dec. 26 game against Nashville is a home-televized game so "Vacationing Santas" should expect to have their picture taken and be on TV.

If you or someone you know deserves a break after being Santa, Mrs. Claus or a Christmas elf, e-mail All Terrain Public Relations at public.relations@allterrain.net. Include your name, e-mail address, phone number, a photo of your-

Dan Woog is a journalist, educator, soccer coach, gay activist, and author of the "Jocks" series of books on gay male athletes. Visit his website at www.danwoog.com. He can be reached care of this publication or at OutField@qsyndicate.com.

self in a Claus outfit, and a description of why you should be part of the special "Vacationing Santas" section.

Skiing "Gay-La" Jan. 23-27 in Tahoe

Disco act KC and the Sunshine Band will be one of the entertainment headliners during the action-packed second annual Blue Gay-La gay and lesbian ski week in South Shore Lake Tahoe, Jan. 23-27, 2008.

Blue Gay-La combines skiing and riding with 24-hour gaming and nightlife, headliner entertainment, renowned comedians, top-rated DJs, *après-ski* parties, hot nightclubs and on-mountain activities.

Comedians Paula Poundstone and Anthony "ANT" Kalloniatis are also scheduled to appear.

Other highlights include the Chocolate and Martini Party as well as the Blue World Pub Crawl. The notorious "Queen of the Mountain Drag Races" will take place Jan. 26.

See www.BlueLakeTahoe.com/glski.

Gay B-ball Show to Air on LOGO

Logo recently announced the launch of a show that centers around the San Francisco Rock Dogs, a gay basketball team, according to OutSports.com.

The working title of the show is Rock Dogs and the series will reportedly follow the players on the team as they live together in San Francisco. One of the people on the team—which won a gold medal at the most recent Gay Games, in Chicago—is DeMarco Majors, who played pro basketball overseas and was a part of OUT Magazine's OUT 100 this year.

No official air date has been announced, although it may start next summer.

Gay Basketball Tourney in L.A.

The National Gay Basketball Association has announced that the West Coast Classic III will be held over the Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday weekend, Jan. 19-20, 2008, in Los Angeles, according to GayWired.com.

Twenty teams from across the United States and Europe will compete in three men's divisions; there will also be a women's division.

Teams can reserve slots by visiting www.ngba.us and filling out the team registration form. Individuals can also register to be placed on a team by visiting www.ngba.us.

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NICE from page 12

isn't our favorite version of the Dickens tale, but it's a familiar one 'cause it's adapted from the popular movie. It's certain to be a good show with James Harms in the title role, Dale Benson as Marley's Ghost, and stage full of colorful scenery and costumes. 219-836-3255; \$36-\$39. FYI: fill up with gas across the border; it's a lot cheaper.

The Snow Queen, Victory Gardens Biograph Theater, through Dec. 23. Year Two of this Hans Christian Andersen tale promises an improved version of the slightly dark but family-friendly adaptation by stellar folk composer Michael Smith. New scenery and choreography will compliment Smith's wonderful music and great puppets by Blair Thomas & Co., with the esteemed Frank Galati again serving as director. 773-871-3000; \$20-\$45.

Spirit of Christmas, Paramount Theatre, Aurora, Dec. 21-22 only. It's a TV Christmas variety special, only it's live: dancers, singers,

spectacular scenery and favorite holiday songs from White Christmas to Silent Night to I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus. Famous songs from Broadway hit shows also are promised, although holiday tunes from Les Misérables or Phantom of the Opera escape us. Whatever, it's unique for the Western 'burbs. 630-896-6666; \$35.50-\$45.50.

A Wonderful Life, Porchlight Music Theatre, through Dec. 30. The second annual staging of this musical version of It's a Wonderful Life, the legendary Frank Capra film selected as the most inspiring movie of all time by the American Film Institute. "We honor the film with this musical version," says Porchlight Artistic Director L. Walter Stearns. "We cannot improve on the classic, but our live musical experience tells the story in a unique way." At Theatre Building Chicago, 1225 W. Belmont; 773-327-5252; \$34-\$35.



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