

HAL SPARKS TALKS WITH WCT



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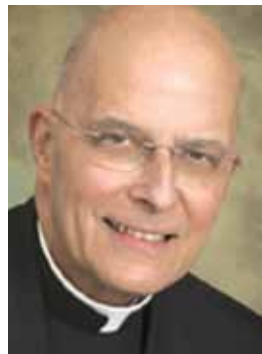
# WINDY CITY TIMES

THE VOICE OF CHICAGO'S GAY, LESBIAN, BI AND TRANS COMMUNITY SINCE 1985

JAN. 4, 2012  
VOL 27, NO. 13



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## James Hormel

### Former ambassador reflects on life, activism and philanthropy

BY TRACY BAIM

James Hormel, born in 1933 in the heart of the Depression, was mostly sheltered from the economic crisis facing the United States. However, despite being brought up with wealth and privilege in Austin, Minn., Hormel eventually found his way to progressive activism and he has been a strong force for gay rights.

Hormel, an heir to the Hormel Foods fortune (Spam and other processed meat products), is perhaps best known as President Clinton's choice for ambassador to Luxembourg. The title of his new autobiography, *Fit to Serve*, reflects his long battle to become the nation's first openly gay person to win Senate approval as a presidential appointee. Despite intense lobbying, and subjecting himself to public scrutiny and lies, Hormel never was approved by the Senate. Instead, Clinton made him a recess appointment in 1999. He served until 2001.

Hormel's book, co-written with Erin Martin, is a tightly written tale of his life, and includes his:

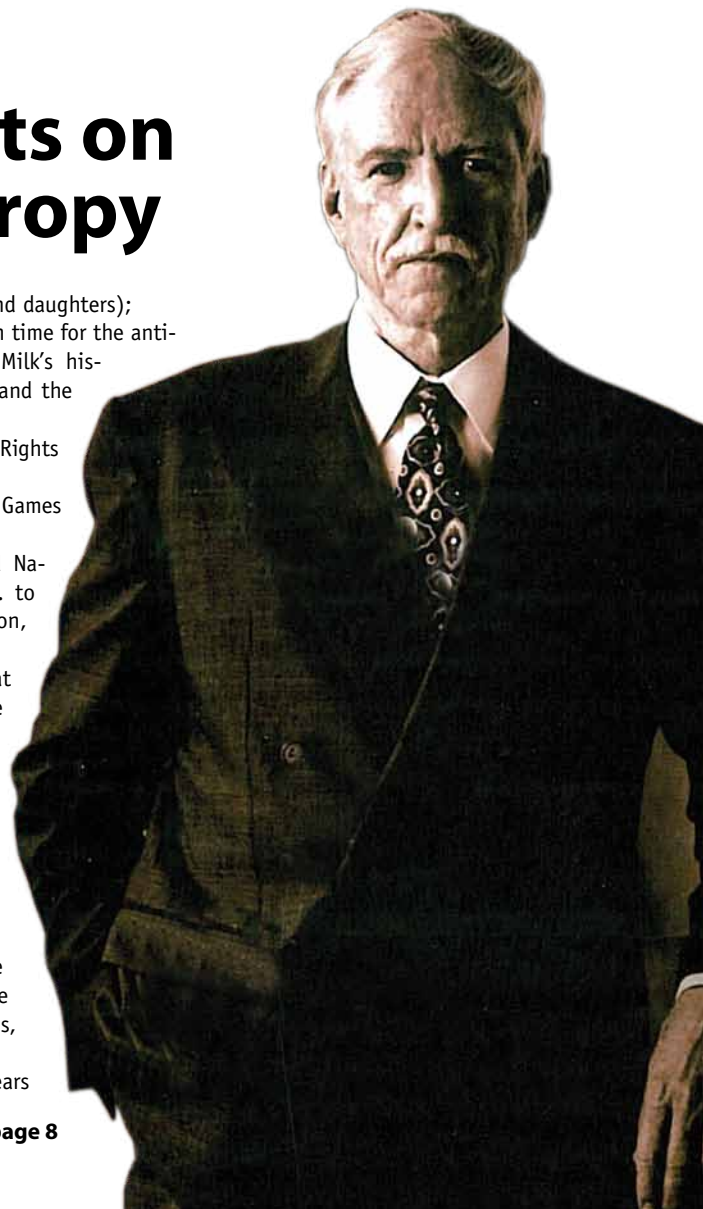
- boyhood in Minnesota;
- teenage years learning about racism in the south (accidentally using a "colored" water fountain);
- time in Illinois attending and working at the University of Chicago;
- participating in both Republican and Democratic politics (including protests at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago);
- working on behalf of third-party presidential candidate Dick Gregory in 1968;
- living in New York City during the years before and after the 1969 Stonewall rebellion;
- traveling to Cambodia just as war was breaking out;

- coming out (to his wife and daughters);
- moving to San Francisco in time for the anti-gay Briggs Initiative, Harvey Milk's historic campaign for supervisor, and the start of the AIDS crisis;
- co-founding of the Human Rights Campaign;
- friendship with Gay Games founder Dr. Tom Waddell;
- working with the United Nations delegation from the U.S. to the Human Rights Commission, and much more.

When reading the book, at times I wanted to compare Hormel to *Forrest Gump*, because he always seemed to be in the thick of the most important things happening. But that would be unfair to Hormel; while he was perhaps unintentionally in the middle of these events, he also helped shaped them. He was not a mere observer Photoshopped into the movement; rather, he was, and is, an important participant.

I found Hormel's Chicago years

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## Gone too soon

The year starts on a sad note locally as Windy City Times covers the deaths of (from left) legendary female impersonator Sasha Valentino, HIV/AIDS activist Fernando Blasco and community ally Merry Mary. Pic of Blasco by Emmanuel Garcia; photo of Merry Mary by Israel Wright



"CULT SUPERSTARS" —Chicago Magazine

LES BALLETS TROCKADERO DE MONTE CARLO

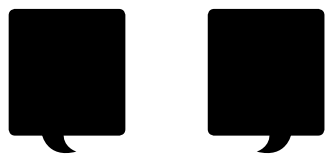
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# MOM

A Tribute to



## Mothers of LGBTs

Mothers of LGBT individuals will be the focus of a new photo essay book from Windy City Times. We are soliciting submissions from LGBTs in the Chicago area, or those formerly from Chicago, for this new project.

Just in time for the holidays, people can submit photos with their moms via email, Facebook or Twitter through Jan. 15, 2012. Windy City Times is looking for diversity in families. Once the winners are selected, a professional photo shoot will be done by Kat Fitzgerald of Mystic Images Photography (of the winning mothers with their child or children), so winners must be available in the Chicago area, although some additional photos may be used. Winners will also be asked to submit a 200-word essay about what their mother has meant to them.

Depending on the reception for this project, other books may be done with fathers, or queer parents, but the focus of this first book is on mothers.

### To submit:

Send photos of you with your mother to

-  [www.facebook.com/windycitymediagroup](http://www.facebook.com/windycitymediagroup)
-  **Twitter: windycitytimes1**
-  **or email [editor@windycitymediagroup.com](mailto:editor@windycitymediagroup.com)**

**DEADLINE: JAN. 15, 2012**

You can also submit a short essay about why you think your mother should be selected to be photographed with you. Families with multiple LGBT children are welcome to submit as well.

Images may also be used in Windy City Times newspaper.



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**WINDY CITY TIMES**

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Photos on cover (left, from top): PR photo of Hal Sparks; official head shot of Cardinal Francis George; photo of Pariah star Adepero Oduye courtesy of Focus Features; photo of Rami Kashou courtesy of Kashou



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**SOUND JUDGMENT**

Bent Nights looks at the musicians and performances of 2011.

Photo of Erykah Badu by Vern Hester



Jim Morrison talks about his new show on here! TV, For & Against.

Photo from here! TV



The mind behind Nunn on One, Jerry Nunn, looks at a year's worth of celebrity highs and lows.

Photo of Wendy Williams by Jerry Nunn

**MULL IN THE ACTIVITY**

Psychotherapist Edward Fajardo looks at how the new year is a chance for reflection.

**FULL REPORT**

Read the full interview with Janet Planet author Eleanor Lerman about her book.

**THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT**

This week's entertainment round-up includes items on Boy George, James Franco and TLA Video.

plus  
**DAILY BREAKING NEWS**

**I'VE GOT TO GET AWAY**



Travel expert Jeff Guaracino writes about prime destinations for the new year.

Photo from the Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa

**LGBT**  
**ANYTHING BUT STRAIGHT**  
**FILM SERIES**

Visit the museum every Saturday in January to watch films that focus on the LGBT communities. Films begin at 10:00 a.m. and run continuously until 4:30 p.m. Screenings are FREE with Museum admission.

**JANUARY 7**

- Free to Be You and Me
- Hell Divin' Women
- Two Spirits
- The Strange History of Don't Ask, Don't Tell
- Milk

**JANUARY 14**

- It's Still Elementary
- Hannah Free
- Small Town Gay Bar
- Go Fish
- Imagine Me & You

**JANUARY 21**

- Daddy & Papa
- Becoming Chaz
- Out and Proud in Chicago
- Philadelphia

**JANUARY 28**

- Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin
- I am the Queen
- If These Walls Could Talk 2
- The Kids Are All Right

**OUT IN CHICAGO**

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# Looking forward: Drama for 2012

BY LISA KEEN  
KEEN NEWS SERVICE

Significant events are crowding the calendar for 2012, and each promises considerable drama and suspense for the LGBT community. Here are the 10 most important to keep an eye on:

**1. The next decisions on Proposition 8:** A three-judge panel of the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals could release its opinions any day now. That's "opinions," plural. Before the panel can rule on the constitutionality of California's law banning marriage for same-sex couples, it must decide whether the Yes on 8 coalition has legal standing to appeal the federal court ruling that Prop 8 is unconstitutional, and it must decide whether there is any justification for Yes on 8's request that the lower court decision be vacated.

The list of possible outcomes in *Perry v. Brown*—the case brought by the American Foundation for Equal Rights with famed attorneys Ted Olson and David Boies leading the charge—is mind-boggling. Whatever the results, any or all aspects could be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court immediately or they could be appealed to a full 9th Circuit bench and then to the Supreme Court. However, the panel's decision will almost certainly have political impact, too. Not only will it affect the momentum of the marriage equality movement, it will almost certainly become fodder in the presidential campaigns.

**2. The decision, on appeal, in DOMA:** A three-judge panel of the 1st Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals will hear oral arguments, perhaps as soon as early February, in a powerful challenge to the federal Defense of Marriage Act's (DOMA's) denial of federal benefits to same-sex married couples. The challenge, referred to most often as *Gill v. OPM*, is actually three consolidated cases, two brought by Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) and one by the state of Massachusetts.

While there are other challenges underway to DOMA, this is the "big guns" challenge and the



From top: Barney Frank and Scott Brown.

one most likely to reach the U.S. Supreme Court first. And while there is no deadline by which the panel must render its decision, it is likely to turn out one by year's end. Then, as with Proposition 8, the case could go to the full circuit court for appeal or straight to the Supreme Court. And, if the appeals court decision is rendered before the November elections, it will almost certainly provoke debate on the presidential campaign trail.

**3. Tammy Baldwin's historic bid:** U.S. Rep. Tammy Baldwin is not the first openly gay person to run for U.S. Senate, but she's the first who has a real chance of winning. The daily Capital Times is already referring to her as the "likely" Democratic nominee to fill the seat being vacated by Democrat Herb Kohl. She doesn't have a challenger for the nomination. However, she will have a very tough battle against whomever the Republicans put on the ballot. That's because the battle will be for more than just one seat in the powerful U.S. Senate, which currently has a breakdown of 53 in the Democratic Caucus and 47 in the Republican. It will be part of a multistate slugfest between the parties over control of the chamber, the Congress and the nation's laws.

**4. The fight for the Senate:** Polls at the moment indicate voters are inclined to vote for Democrats over Republicans next November. However, that sentiment is not providing a large margin (one or two points), and it's too soon to guess who the voters will blame for what 11 months from now. But some Senate races—in addition to Baldwin's—could have big consequences for LGBT voters. In Virginia, pro-gay former Gov. Tim Kaine will likely be pitted against an anti-gay former senator, George Allen. In Massachusetts, a pro-gay challenger, Elizabeth Warren, will almost certainly be the Democrat facing incumbent Scott Brown, whose attitude toward the community has been less friendly. Also, at least seven other states are expected to have competitive races for the Senate.

**5. Counting the "Gay Caucus":** U.S. Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., will be starting his 40th year in Congress when the House reconvenes Jan. 17—and it will be his last. He announced last year that he would retire. When he does, the clique of four openly gay members of Congress—Frank, Baldwin, and Reps. Jared Polis and David Cicilline—will shrink by one. If Baldwin fails to win a Senate seat, it could shrink by half.

However, there are prospects for adding members. Openly gay Wisconsin Democratic Assemblymember Mark Pacon is running for Baldwin's U.S. House seat. In addition, there are two other openly gay candidates for the U.S. House this November: Marko Liias from Seattle and Mark Takano from Riverside, Calif. So, the number of openly gay members of Congress could go from four to as low as two (though zero is, technically, possible) to as high as six. But no one will have the seniority and clout that Frank has had and used to advance pro-gay measures.

**6. On hold, and on defense, in Congress:** Pro-LGBT bills—such as efforts to repeal DOMA and pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA)—are not likely to see much action in 2012. Anti-gay measures might, because it's an election year and Republicans still control the House. Supportive Democrats will not be inclined to push controversial legislation during an election year, because it can detract from the focus on jobs and the economy, where most voters want focus right now. Republicans, on the other hand, have often used hostile measures aimed at gays during election year as a way of putting Democrats on the spot with voters generally and gays specifically.

**7. Ballot battles abound:** There will be impor-

tant LGBT-related ballot measures before voters in several states this year: North Carolina and Minnesota will vote on whether to ban same-sex marriage through an amendment to their state constitutions. Voters in Maine will decide whether to strike down their existing ban on same-sex marriage. LGBT activists in Washington state are gathering signatures to put a measure on that state's ballot to gain marriage equality. A small group in California has until May 15 to gather more than 800,000 signatures to put a measure on the ballot there to repeal Prop 8. Also, the California attorney general is expected to announce by Jan. 9 whether opponents of a new bill to include information about LGBT fig-



Lesbian U.S. Rep. Tammy Baldwin is running for the U.S. Senate. Photo by Chuck Colbert

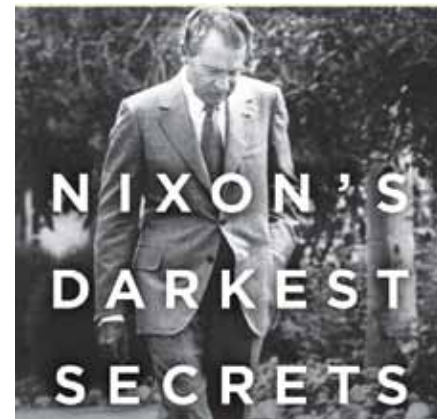
ures in history as part of the public school curriculum can begin circulating petitions to get a repeal measure on the ballot there. All of these have the potential to be big, expensive and consequential battles.

**8. Fight for freedom of religion:** The right-wing Alliance Defense Fund and others have a concerted effort underway in the courts to undermine laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Their strategy is to argue that people who discriminate against LGBT people do so because their religious beliefs require them to do so. Their question to the court is, "What rules? The First Amendment guarantee of free exercise of religion or the equal protection clause that says all citizens should be treated equally under the law?" One case has already reached the U.S. Supreme Court and failed, but many other cases are winding their ways through nearly every circuit

## Author alleges Nixon had gay affair

In the book *Nixon's Darkest Secrets: The Inside Story of America's Most Troubled President*, Don Fulsom claims that former President Richard Nixon had an affair with Charles "Bebe" Rebozo, a banker with apparent ties to the mob, the Huffington Post reported.

Nixon once said that gay people "cannot be in places of high trust."



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NATIONAL NEWS

- Rick Perry (left) blanks on gay case
- GLAAD, LGBTs get Amazon to yank anti-gay calendar
- Tenn. school bans mention of homosexuality

in the country. And their outcomes have the potential to chip away at the strength of the nation's legal mandate that all people be treated equally.

**9. A fight for the White House:** The difference for LGBT people between having President Obama in the White House and President George W. Bush has been stark. So the consequences of November's presidential election will also be profound. Either Obama stays, and things continue to improve—in law and in society's attitudes—or a new president is elected from a field of Republicans that seems, at times, to be vying for the mantle of most gay hostile candidate. In the latter case, LGBT people can expect progress to halt or backslide.

**10. Ah, the unpredictable:** One of the bigger LGBT stories of 2011 happened in February, and it was one nobody expected: The Obama administration announced it considered DOMA unconstitutional and would not argue for its defense in most cases. Another big story that no one expected: The Obama administration announced a major new diplomatic mission to push for protection of human rights for LGBT people around the world. And given that Rep. Frank said in January 2011 he'd run for re-election in 2012, it was a surprise, in November, when he announced that he would not. As Frank pointed out, circumstances change.

Circumstances change, things change, people change. And often, they change each other. But history marches on through time, and only in retrospect can any trajectory be certain as to where it's going.

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A report on the book says that Nixon and Rebozo, a Cuban-American, had men's-only vacations together in Key Biscayne, Fla., where they swam, sunbathed and ate together, according to the New York Daily News. The book also claims that they were once spotted holding hands under the table during a dinner with power brokers.

The new book also alleges that Nixon beat his wife and that his aides called him "our drunk," according to the Huffington Post.

The 304-page book is scheduled to be sold Jan. 31.

## Iowa caucus online

Be sure to read the latest on the Jan. 3 Iowa caucus results online at <http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com>.

## Correction

In the article on Ellen DeGeneres and Target in the Dec. 28 issue of Windy City Times, Sen. Kay Hagan was listed as anti-LGBT. She is, in fact, an ally of the LGBT community.

Windy City Times regrets the error.



# AHA meeting coming to Chicago; many LGBTQ and AIDS panels

The American Historical Association's (AHA's) 2012 Annual Meeting Jan. 5-8, 2012, will feature a diverse array of sessions on LGBTQ history, sponsored by the AHA Program Committee and AHA affiliate the Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History.

Offerings include discussions of the challenges and opportunities of LGBTQ oral history and public history; a curator-led tour of the Chicago History Museum's exhibit on LGBTQ life in the city; and sessions discussing queer history in the context of sexuality, gender, medicine, urban history, race and military history.

There is also an open forum sponsored by the AHA LGBTQ Historians Task Force on Friday, Jan. 6. Task force members will discuss the preliminary results of their survey of LGBTQ historians and historians who study LGBTQ topics and solicit feedback on plans for the final report they

Building Community, Combating Phobia, Part 1: The Media's Narratives on "Patient Zero" and Gay Sex during the AIDS Epidemic

Chair: Chet DeFonso, Northern Michigan University

—11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. CLGBTH Session 6  
Building Communities, Combating Phobia, Part II: LGBT Identity, Medicine, and Health

—2:30-4:30 p.m. CLGBTH Session 7  
Bodies of Evidence: Queer Oral History Methods

—2:30-4:30 p.m. CLGBTH Session 8.

Race-ing the Sexual Revolution

Chair: Cathy Cohen, University of Chicago

—5-7 p.m.: Film: On These Shoulders We Stand

Sheraton Ballroom I

Glenn McElhinney, producer, writer, and director (Impact Stories: California's LGBT History,

2009). On These Shoulders We Stand is an illuminating historical account of gay life and activism in Los Angeles, told by the people who lived it.

**Sunday, Jan. 8**

—8:30-10:30 a.m. AHA Session 229, CLGBTH Session 9, joint with the Coordinating Council for Women in History.

Sexing Up the "Long" 1950s, Part 1: New Narratives in U.S. Gender and Sexuality Studies

Chicago Marriott Downtown, Addison Room.

Chair: Vicki L. Eaklor, Alfred University

—8:30-10:30 a.m. CLGBTH Session 10

The Pleasures and Perils of LGBTQ Public History

Chicago Marriott Downtown, Michigan State Room

Chair: Lauren Jae Gutterman, New York University

—8:30-10:30 a.m. CLGBTH Session 11, joint with the Coordinating Council for Women in History.

Ending Don't Ask, Don't Tell: Lessons Learned from Integrating Minorities and Women in the U.S. Military

Chicago Marriott Downtown, Iowa Room.

—11 a.m.-1 p.m.: AHA Session 256,

CLGBTH Session 12, joint with the Conference on Latin American History.

Sexing Up the "Long" 1950s, Part 2: Urban and Transnational Narratives in the Americas and Europe

Addison Room (Chicago Marriott Downtown)

Chair: Anne Hardgrove, University of Texas at San Antonio

## Chicago-related panels at AHA

Numerous sessions at AHA will feature the history of the Windy City:

—Chicago '68: Rethinking Local Black Activism and the Battle for Urban America

—The Other Hull House Women: Female Community Building and Feminist Networking in Twentieth-Century America (CCWH)

—Walking Tour of Historic Chicago Religious Sites (ASCH)

—Multi-racial, Multi-ethnic Chicago: Social Relations in the Twentieth-Century City

—In the Shadow of Hull House: Catholic Church Architecture on Chicago's Near West Side (ACHA tour)

—Chicago, the Capital of Polish America (PAHA)

—Catholicism in the City of the Big Shoulders (ACHA)



Cathy Cohen.

will submit to the AHA Council in June 2012.

See <http://www.aha.confex.com/aha/2012/webprogram/EVENTS.html>.

## Thursday, Jan. 5

—2:30-5 p.m.: LAC Tour 4: Chicago History Museum: Out in Chicago

—3-5 p.m. Session 1, joint with the Coordinating Council for Women in History.

## Friday, Jan. 6

—9:30-11:30 a.m.: AHA Session 49, CLGBTH Session 2

Doing Queer History in the Twenty-First Century

Panel: Jennifer Brier, University of Illinois at Chicago

John A. D'Emilio, University of Illinois at Chicago

E. Patrick Johnson, Northwestern University

—2:30 p.m.: CLGBTH Session 3  
The Queer Politics of Managing Youth and Sex in the 1920s United States

—4:45-5:45 p.m., Sheraton Parlor E  
LGBTQ Historians Task Force Open Forum

Panel: Jennifer Brier, University of Illinois at Chicago

Marc Stein, York University

—7-9 p.m., Chicago Marriott Ballroom  
CLGBTH Joint reception with the Coordinating Council for Women in History and the Peace History Society.

## Saturday, Jan. 7

—9-11 a.m. AHA Session 129, CLGBTH Session 4

Twentieth Century Queer and Artistic Bohemias

—9-11 a.m.: CLGBTH Session 5

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# Cardinal's remarks ignite firestorm of controversy

BY KATE SOSIN AND TRACY BAIM

Chicago's Cardinal Francis George launched a controversy recently when, for the third time in recent days, he compared the gay-rights movement to a Ku Klux Klan (KKK) protest, this time in an official statement published on the Archdiocese of Chicago Website.

George's recent string of comments has incensed LGBT activists, Catholics and allies, many of whom have called on the archbishop to apologize. Some have also asked him to resign.

The cardinal told Fox News Chicago Dec. 22 (during a taped interview that aired Dec. 25) that he worried that changes to the Pride Parade that threatened to interfere with Sunday services at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Lakeview, mirrored protest against Catholicism by the KKK. Organizers have since reached an agreement with the church and moved the parade start time to noon to accommodate services.

However, while the cardinal seemed to soften his remarks Dec. 25, stating that he was speaking about the parade and not the people in it, George released a strongly worded statement on the Archdiocese of Chicago Website two days later.

"The Chicago Gay Pride Parade has been organized and attended for many years without interfering with the worship of God in a Catholic church," George wrote. "When the 2012 Parade organizers announced a time and route change this year, it was apparent that the Parade would interfere with divine worship in a Catholic parish on the new route. When the pastor's request for reconsideration of the plans was ignored, the organizers invited an obvious comparison to other groups who have historically attempted to stifle the religious freedom of the Catholic Church.

One such organization is the Ku Klux Klan which, well into the 1940s, paraded through American cities not only to interfere with Catholic worship but also to demonstrate that Catholics stand outside of the American consensus. It is not a precedent anyone should want to emulate.

"It is terribly wrong and sinful that gays and lesbians have been harassed and subjected to psychological and even physical harm. These tragedies can be addressed, however, without disturbing the organized and orderly public worship of God in a country that claims to be free. I am grateful that all parties concerned resolved this problem by moving the Parade's start time so as not to conflict with the celebration of Mass that Sunday."

The cardinal's initial comments incited outrage among many LGBT people and ignited calls for his resignation.

## Mount Carmel's request

The controversy began when organizers of Chicago's annual LGBT Pride Parade made the decision to reroute the 2012 parade and push the start time up from noon to 10 a.m. According to organizers, the decision was made in response to public safety concerns, after an unprecedented 750,000-800,000 people flooded Lakeview to attend the 2011 parade. The change in the route aimed to pull crowds over a larger distance and straighten out a dangerous bottleneck turn at Halsted and Broadway, while the change in time attempted to curb early public drinking. Many disapproved of the changes and argued they had been made without public consult.

Among them was Father Thomas Srenn of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, 708 W. Belmont Ave., who said the new route and time would prevent parishioners from attending mass that Sunday. He asked organizers to reconsider the



Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church. Photo by Kate Sosin

plans, and encouraged parishioners to voice their concerns.

"The Sunday morning for us is sacred," he told Windy City Times.

According to Srenn, he notified George's press team of the mounting controversy, but did not consult directly with George on the matter.

Organizers reached an agreement with Srenn in late December, when they offered to move the parade time back to its original noon start time. Srenn said he considered the problem solved.

## Cardinal weighs in

Just days before 44th Ward Ald. Tom Tunney announced an agreement with Mount Carmel, George weighed in on the issue on Fox News Chicago.

"You don't want the gay liberation movement to morph into something like the Ku Klux Klan, demonstrating in the streets against Catholicism," he said.

Asked by reporters if he felt the analogy might be strong, George indicated that it was strong intentionally.

George, who appeared to backpedal slightly over the holidays by stating that he was talking about the parade and not the people in it, then reiterated his controversial sentiments in the official statement Dec. 27.

That statement was removed from Archdiocese Website less than 48 hours after it was issued, but the cardinal has not apologized or softened his remarks since.

George is expected to submit his resignation in January, in accordance with a Catholic mandate that clergy to offer to step down when they turn 75. The pope will make the final call on whether or not George will remain in his post.

## Backlash against the cardinal grows

The cardinal has been confronted with a wave of fury since his most recent comments.

LGBT-rights organization Truth Wins Out took out a full-page ad in the Chicago Tribune, condemning the cardinal's remarks.

A Catholic LGBT leader also challenged Chicago Cardinal Francis George to a debate. Joe Murray, the executive director of the Rainbow Sash Movement (RSM), invited the archbishop to face off at the LGBT Center on Halsted on a day and time of his choosing.

"We want to encourage the Cardinal to now apologize for using an ill-advised metaphor of comparing the gay liberation movement to the KKK," RSM said in a statement. "The Cardinal only trivializes the history of Catholics being discriminated against in the past by making such an unreasonable association."

Direct-action group Gay Liberation Network

(GLN) voiced opposition to the Cardinal in a letter sent to Windy City Times. The organization has protested George in the past on Valentine's Day as part of National Freedom to Marry Day actions.

"We know that the Catholic laity are often supportive of LGBTs and our rights while the church leaders are not, and this is both threatening to the latter and a challenge," GLN wrote. "Their attacks against us are just as much an effort to win support from their parishioners as they are to score points against our movement."

As in past years, GLN will protest outside of Holy Name Cathedral, 730 N. Wabash Ave., Feb. 14.

Additionally, students at St. Norbert College (SNC), a Wisconsin-based Catholic college started a petition asking school administrators to cancel George's scheduled commencement address at the school in favor of a more LGBT-tolerant speaker. The change.org petition had picked up more than 1,100 signatures and appears to be growing rapidly, adding hundreds of signatures daily.

Megan Rousseau, a recent graduate said that she signed the petition because she does not want her peers to have to listen to someone who "hates" a portion of the study body at commencement. Rousseau entered with this year's graduating class and would have graduated this year from SNC had she not finished her studies early. She said that friends of hers who were LGBT did not talk about the school being intolerant during her time there.

"There are quite a few students at SNC that I know who are deeply hurt that SNC would impose this on them. ... I have taken multiple theology/religious courses at SNC and have never heard a teacher speak out against a specific group of people at all," she said. "Just because this school is Catholic and they want to keep in communication with Catholic leaders, does not mean that they have to have this one speak at graduation."

SNC media relations did not respond to a request to comment on the petition.

## Mt. Carmel takes the heat

Thus far, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church has not responded publicly to George's remarks. Srenn declined to comment initially when questioned by Windy City Times about George's KKK comparison. He did not respond to a more recent request to comment, but had said previously that the change in the parade start time back to noon satisfied his concerns.

Srenn had also said in past conversations with Windy City Times that his concern was for Sunday services at the church, and not with the



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content of the Pride Parade. Mount Carmel is home to Archdiocesan Gay and Lesbian Outreach (AGLO), which hosts its services on Sunday evenings.

Many have questioned why a parade of 750,000 was forced to change times for a single congregation.

Amy Rosenquist, a cantor with AGLO and with Mt. Carmel, said that she felt the request was simply for consideration and dialogue, not for a face-off with parade organizers.

"When Father Srenn brought it up, it was really just practical," she said. "It wasn't the vocabulary of protest."

Rosenquist, who travels from the suburbs to Sunday services, said that parade traffic already complicates her commute. Despite the disruption of access to the church and the noise, she said, the church has never made any attempt to stifle paradegoers.

This time around, she said, "it was really just about [access to] the parking lots."

#### AGLO and Dignity

In the wake of such controversy, two Chicago LGBT Catholic groups continued with their Sunday services, both impacted by the storm.

It was a tale of two very different Catholic gay services Jan. 1 in Chicago. Both weekly Masses were held in Lakeview and celebrated Mary, mother of Jesus, but that is where the similarities ended.

A woman gave the homily at Dignity/Chicago, while a male priest did so at the Archdiocesan-sanctioned mass at AGLO Chicago, held at Mount Carmel—the same church under scrutiny after Cardinal George criticized plans for the Pride Parade to pass by it in June.

Barbara Zeman presided at the independent Dignity/Chicago weekly services, held at Broadway United Methodist Church, 3338 N. Broadway St. Approximately three dozen people attended, which is slightly more than usual, and the services appeared to be mixed-gender and welcoming. Zeman, in her homily, said that in the face of exclusivity, poverty, war and other injustices, "even inappropriate, derisive slurs in our own mother church," people can envision it in a new light that speaks to the truth.

Dignity/Chicago will be celebrating its 40th anniversary May 19. They are also continuing to meet about the Cardinal's remarks. Board President Chris Pett said the Cardinal said the Pride Parade was "disruptive," but that his comments are what has been disruptive to the church and Dignity's ability to do its work.

AGLO resulted from a forced separation of Dignity/Chicago from the official Catholic church in 1988. That is why their masses are at a Catholic church and Dignity's are not. There were more than 100 people at the AGLO service; attendance was down at least some, but that could be because of the holiday weekend. There were a few women among the majority male congregation.

A rotating list of priests presides over AGLO, and Rev. Lawrence Choate gave the Jan. 1 homily. There were only very coded, vague references to the controversy facing the church after the Cardinal's KKK comparisons to the Pride Parade.

Choate said that "no one is born disordered or defective." He also said that faith can mean putting up with misunderstandings and confusion, finger-pointing and criticism, but that ultimately people who have faith can stand tall in their common vocation. There were no public statements about the Cardinal's words, perhaps because people feared standing up to the archbishop of Chicago.

After Mass, members of AGLO gathered for a reception. Most shied from speaking on the record, but a few did so—as individuals, not as representatives of AGLO.

One man said he was "embarrassed to be attached to" Mount Carmel, but he attended because of AGLO.

James Lux has been with AGLO for 18 years. He said he was disappointed with the cardinal's comments, especially because the cardinal was not invited by Mount Carmel to get involved in the dispute.

Santiago Toledo, who has been with AGLO 12 years, said there may never be an apology from the cardinal, but that he may say something else to redeem him. Toledo said the Cardinal did validate and affirm the existence of AGLO.

Larry Cubalchini said he feels the priests are on the side of AGLO and the gay community, but that they cannot speak in public about this issue. He said that those who minister to AGLO choose to do so and there are many who want that role. In speaking with AGLO members, Cubalchini said there was a lot of disappointment and many wish the cardinal would have apologized.

#### Organizations/activists respond:

—**Rev. Jacki Belile of Chicago Coalition of Welcoming Churches:** "The Cardinal's words reveal reckless disregard for the power of speech and the consequences of such an analogy. Tragically, it reveals the reality of the Right's distorted fears of LGBT advances for dignity."

—**Brent Holman-Gomez, coordinator of Chicago Coalition of Welcoming Churches:** "Those advances require us to challenge the institutions of power—including the Church—when they are on the side of prejudice and division. The LGBT liberation movement is no threat to religion or spiritual community that is justice-seeking, and it is inflammatory to suggest otherwise."

—**The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD):** "The Catholic leadership continues to promote positions that are severely out of touch with the vast majority of Catholics in America. GLAAD joins Equally Blessed, Dignity, Fortunate Families and the vast majority of Catholics in encouraging peaceful, faithful dissent to harmful statements from Catholic leadership."

—**Rainbow Sash Movement:** "We believe the Cardinal's harsh words undermine the Church's call of service to the young, the elderly, the poor, the marginalized and the disenfranchised. His self-serving personal bias against the GLBT Community (Pride Parade) is a knee jerk reaction to his and the Catholic Conference of Illinois recent political loss regarding civil unions, and the closing down of Catholic Charities adoption agencies across Illinois for their promotion of discrimination against Gay Couples who wish to adopt."

—**Rex Wockner, internationally syndicated LGBT journalist:** "The Chicago gay pride parade attracts 800,000 people," Wockner said. "It proceeds through a heavily congested, dense urban cityscape. Absolutely positively everything in its wake is disrupted. What on earth makes one service at one church on one day special enough to change the start time of a gigantic parade? Let alone excuses comparing 'the gay liberation movement' with the 'Ku Klux Klan'? No, cardinal, the gay pride committee is not targeting the Catholic church. 'The gay liberation movement' is not targeting the Catholic church either. Your church building is affected in no way any different from hundreds upon hundreds of buildings for miles in all directions (Lake Michigan notwithstanding). You really do need to get out more."

—**Anthony Martinez, executive director of the Civil Rights Agenda:** "Let's not fool ourselves into thinking that this man does not have a very political motive for making these statements. They are not the only church on the route, but they are the only church complaining and asking for special treatment. The Cardinal's words are hurtful to LGBT Catholics and the entire LGBT community. We renew our call for Cardinal George to issue an apology for his hurtful comments and respectfully ask him to resign."

—**Rick Garcia, longtime LGBT activist:** "His continuing attack on the community is nothing short of outrageous. He is a bitter man because he lost on the gutting of the civil-union bill. He lost tens of millions of state dollars for Catholic Charities. He keeps losing and he is not going to win on this issue, ever."

## Protest against Cardinal George planned

BY KATE SOSIN

A local LGBT activist is planning a demonstration in front of Holy Name Cathedral, 730 N. Wabash Ave., in the wake of Cardinal Francis George's comments that compared the gay liberation movement to the Klu Klux Klan.

The protest, to be held in the morning on Sunday, Jan. 8, is the first scheduled demon-



Cardinal Francis George in 2004. Photo by Tracy Baim

stration against George after he told Fox News Chicago that the gay-rights movement was at risk of morphing "into something like the Ku Klux Klan, protesting in the streets against Catholicism."

George has reiterated his controversial marks twice since the initial comment. (See the article on pages 6-7.)

Leading the charge is LGBT Chicagoan Lair Scott, who made international headlines earlier this year by demanding that Sesame Street puppets Bert and Ernie get married on-air.

Scott said that no LGBT organization is sponsoring the event. Rather, he hopes the protest will gain broad support from LGBT Chicagoans and groups.

The protest will likely begin at Holy Name Cathedral and move to George's home, Lair said. Lair has not scheduled a time but is expected to announce details shortly.

Windy City Times will update as details become available.

## Cassidy to host coffee talk at Kopi

State Rep. Kelly Cassidy, D-Chicago, will host her second coffee-shop stop Wed., Jan. 4, 10-11 a.m., at The Kopi Cafe, 5317 N. Clark St.

"My first coffee shop stop resulted in great conversations about a wide range of topics," Cassidy said. "I look forward to the second stop providing even more conversations about how we can work together to improve our community."

For more info, call 773-784-2002 or email RepCassidy@gmail.com.

## LGBT Narcotics Anon. at Haymarket

Narcotics Anonymous meetings for LGBT individuals will take place Mondays 8-9 p.m. at Haymarket Center, 20 N. Sangamon.

For more info, call Anthony Oltean at 312-208-4021.



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## HORMEL from cover

of special interest. He moved to the city in the late 1950s, and eventually he and his family moved to the north suburbs, where Hormel was almost tapped to run for an open seat in the U.S. Congress. [The seat had been occupied by Marguerite Stitt Church, who was elected to her husband Ralph's 13th District seat when he died; she served in Congress from 1951-1963.]

It was, in fact, his homosexuality that held Hormel back. Unlike other closeted political activists content with risking discovery and damaging their families, Hormel felt compelled to stay out of electoral politics while he dealt with his emotional life. He eventually divorced and started to deal with his sexuality, at first from inside the closet, but later from a very public platform. I can almost imagine the trajectory Hormel would have had as a closeted Republican politician, eventually outed and attacked for hypocrisy.

Despite the pressure to maintain a straight and narrow image for his family name, Hormel did eventually break from these constraints. He became a critical figure in the gay movement as a result of this coming out. Not only did he lend his important public name to the cause, something rare in the 1970s and 1980s, but he also gave millions to gay rights and AIDS causes over the decades. In 1995, he created perhaps his most lasting legacy, the James C. Hormel Gay & Lesbian Center at the San Francisco Public Library.

Hormel has five children, 14 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. He lives in San Francisco with his partner, former Chicagoan Michael Nguyen.

I first met Hormel through my work as co-vice-chair of Gay Games VII in Chicago in 2006. Hormel, because he had been friends with Waddell (who died in 1987), was an important supporter of the Gay Games movement, and we wanted his support of our efforts to continue the legacy of his friend. He asked a lot of questions, and wanted to make sure we knew the importance of the tradition. Hormel was kind and generous, but ever-probing to make sure we were doing the job right.

Hormel also spoke at the Opening Ceremony in Soldier Field. More than four decades earlier, when Chicago had been his home, I am sure he could never have imagined standing in the stadium of the Chicago Bears football team and making such a presentation.

I spoke via phone with Hormel, who turned 79 Jan. 1, about his new book and his legacy. He will be in Chicago Wed., Jan. 25, for a talk at the University of Chicago and book-signing in the Book Cellar.

**Tracy Baim: Thanks for your support of Chicago's Gay Games VII. We broke even thanks to people like you. Are you still involved in the movement?**

James Hormel: I am out of touch with them at the moment. I think they were very important in 1982. When you think back, this was at the start of the AIDS crisis. AIDS had not been named

yet. It was a demonstration of unity and solidarity. It brought gay men and lesbians together. It created a sense of purpose. Here we weren't worthy of the name "Olympics" [the U.S. Olympic Committee sued to force the name change], even though crabs were [there was a Crab Olympics], that made people think a little bit. I was very enthusiastic when Tom was starting it. At the outset I thought it was an impossible task, but Tom was single-minded and determined and put together a group equally so, and managed to get people—from a dozen or so countries, not just the U.S. It was a loving, graceful, gracious experience.

**Baim: In the book you discuss your accidental use of a "colored" water fountain in the South, as a teenager.**

Hormel: It was novel for me. I came from Austin, Minn.—a very, very white-bread community. I've been telling people that the old Austin diversity was that there were Catholics or Lutherans, and that was about it. That was my experience. All of a sudden there it was, staring at me. It was shocking to me; it jolted me. I don't think at the time I made the connection about various discriminations in our country and world, but it certainly brought discrimination, of a kind I had not experienced, into focus for me. It started the thought process about how things aren't right when you treat people differently.

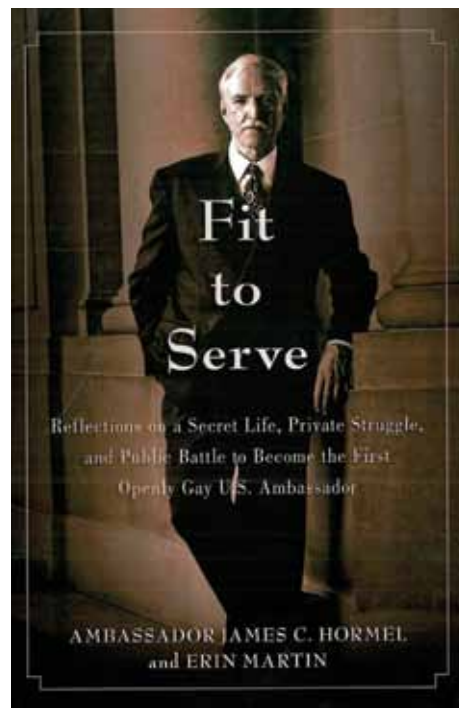
But it didn't really affect my thinking in the early years about the rights of LGBT people, because I had to come to grips with my own prejudices. With the fact I really believed there was something wrong with me. That's what psychiatrists and society said, what our criminal laws said—that didn't start to break down until 1961 when Illinois [removed its sodomy statute]. I was living in a world that made it difficult for anyone who was gay to imagine there wasn't something wrong. We didn't even have to be told. In many cases we were not told, because nobody talked about any sex to us.

**Baim: Can you address the role of being a "Hormel" in keeping you in the closet and getting married to a woman?**

Hormel: There was the factor of being sheltered and isolated, but also the reputation of the family. [There was a] craving for being one of the boys—for being like everybody else. But I could never be like everybody else. That was pointed out; I was sheltered and I was protected. That went beyond our status of family and community; there were also indications of a kidnapping threat. People took those threats seriously in the days of Lindbergh. [Charles and Anne Lindbergh's son was kidnapped in 1932, the year before Hormel was born; the toddler was later found murdered.]

**Baim: When you lived in Winnetka, Ill., in the late 1950s and early 1960s, you actually considered running for Congress as a Republican. [Hormel received his law degree from the University of Chicago in 1958, and he was dean of students during 1961-'67.]**

Hormel: Who knows what would have happened had I run for Congress? I was a moderate Republican—a supporter of Charles Percy, the



Fit to Serve, the book cover.

last Republican I did support. In the 1960s, I was approached to run—I hadn't been thinking of it. It just came at me out of the blue, and was very tempting. I was young but felt I had a sufficient background to take on that challenge.

But I thought about the possibility of being exposed, because by then I had, even though I was married, I had experiences with other men. Although they were extremely furtive and anonymous, I was in great fear of somehow being exposed—and of not just ruining my life, but my wife's and children's. It was a specter there, way beyond what I could consider.

Imagine the talent that was held back, in the government itself, once the State Department in the late 1940s started outing and going after their gay employees. I'm sure countless people who were quite bright and eager to serve just didn't even consider going into foreign service.

**Baim: You were at the University of Chicago in the late 1950s and early 1960s. What do you remember about the city's gay community back then? The bars, the Mattachine group, anything?**

Hormel: I did not know about the gay movement when I was here. The movement was hard to let anybody know about it. They met in secret. They met behind closed curtains in people's homes, and used false names, even among each other. Until the 1960s. I lived in the city from '55 to '58, then Winnetka for three years; then I moved back into the city.

I do remember some bars—Sam's, the Gold Coast. They were both on the edge of downtown. I got called "faggot" when I walked by Sam's and I thought, "My goodness, they know where it is!" There were a couple others, up further north. I don't know how I happened upon them, and they were very dark places, and people were inclined to be more relaxed, but still it was always an edgy atmosphere. People were raiding

these institutions. The Chicago police had connections with bar owners who were usually Mafia people. They were mostly not gay-owned bars, they were bars that served gay people. They were owned mostly by people who didn't give a damn.

Police would let them know about the raids. They were surprises only to the customers. The Chicago Tribune was very willing to publish people's names the next day—people who were detained. People had to do that, pay off the Mafia and police.

I was reading the Tribune one day, about a raid on a bathhouse. The names on the list included a gay guy I knew, a dentist. A couple months later I saw him at some party. He said "Oh, don't worry. My clientele has doubled."

**Baim: When the Democratic National Convention [DNC] riots happened in 1968 in Chicago, you watched them on TV in New York and then you were compelled to come back to participate in the latter part of the events.**

Hormel: It was just really, really awful. I had been in Michigan, at the family property, and had gone back to New York where I was living, and turned on the TV and saw these scenes. I talked to a friend of mine, the daughter of a judge I clerked for, and she said she was at Belmont and Lake Shore Drive and could smell the tear gas [all the way from downtown to] there. I got in touch with a friend, a delegate, and he said come see for yourself.

**Baim: What was the impact of that work, at the DNC and then in working to elect a third-party presidential candidate, Dick Gregory, on the New Party ticket?**

Hormel: There was a long-term effect. Particularly after the violence at the convention, it was like after [the shootings at] Kent State, after the church burnings [in the South], and the beatings in Selma, etc. People were exposed to something they hadn't been exposed to before. Partly it was television, it was in their homes. A new level of awareness came out of it all. It wasn't reflected in changing politics—we got Richard Nixon. Looking back he doesn't look so bad. [Laughs] Both parties were mired in their structures, and they still are.

The political stasis is set by that structure, so it is virtually impossible to get a third party going. Ross Perot got almost 20 percent of votes in 1992, which was amazing. Bill Clinton did not win either race by a majority. Differences were made, but not structural.

In order to change this system, it's going to take infrastructure changes. It is not going to happen from the kind of revolution projected in the 1960s. There were many people who were "fellow travelers" in that revolution, who were not interested in changing the system—they were interested in sexual freedom or many other things that were occurring.

**Baim: You also had disillusionment with the anti-war movement, because of the sexism, racism and homophobia—how easy was it to get out?**

Hormel: People did not force me to try and stay in. I didn't feel any pressure at all. I felt

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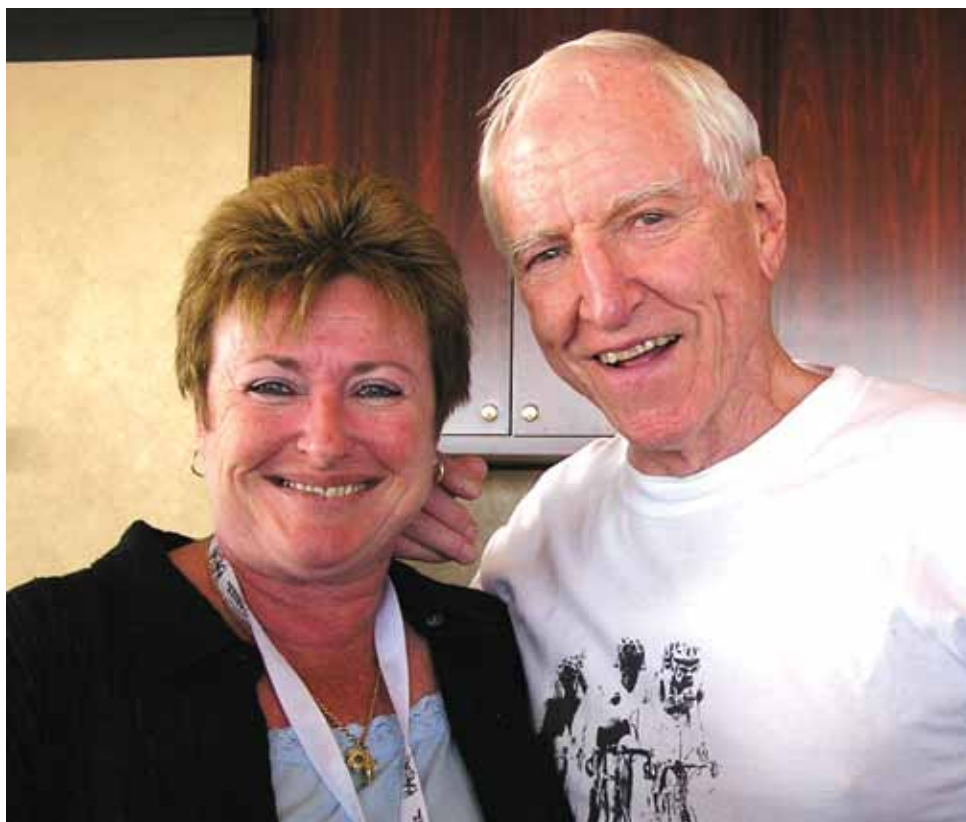
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**Left: James Hormel spoke at the Opening Ceremony for Gay Games VII, at Chicago's Soldier Field. He's pictured here with Sara Waddell Lewinstein, widow of Dr. Tom Waddell, Gay Games founder, the day after the Chicago Gay Games opened. Photo by Tracy Baim**

**Above: James Hormel is sworn in as a recess appointment as U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg, in 1999. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright did the honors, and Hormel's former partner Tim Wu held Hormel's father's Bible for the event. Press photo**

a little pressure to get in, from me, not from others. Once the 1968 election took place, and there was no money left, literally the New Party where I was, didn't have the ability to pay people salaries, people left in droves because they had to, to get jobs. After that, it was very difficult to keep some organizations together.

**Baim: You lived in New York City during the Stonewall rebellion. You were not at the rebellion, but you experienced the city in that post-Stonewall and pre-AIDS era. What was that like?**

Hormel: I think it was clear how significant it was at that time. The fact is that there are over a million people in Manhattan who never cross Hudson River, there are limits to the sophistication of New York. But yes what happened at Stonewall was dramatic, it was over three nights, and it was sustained to a point where it was again in the media—very prominently. People couldn't overlook it. By then New Yorkers couldn't be blasé. I know some non-gay people who became very much involved, who were really very upset, and leant their names and support to the gay-rights movement.

**Baim: How was it writing about your near-death experience in Cambodia—a close call with soldiers as the government was under attack?**

Hormel: There were a couple of things that were fascinating for me in looking back. That was certainly one of them. There was to me a contrast to what I had seen in Cambodia, a country about to be devastated, and a country in poverty, between that and what I saw at about the same time in the Delta area of Mississippi. What I saw in Mississippi, which I did not see in Cambodia, was starvation. [You could] drive through any small town in Mississippi and you knew exactly where you were—if the road was paved and the sewers were covered, you were in the white section. People who lived in the other section were pretty much indentured, working to pay off debts. They weren't going to go anywhere. It was pathetic. There was so little inspiration, except for people's wonderful strength and humanity.

In Cambodia there was an aura of tranquility, as it turned out it was not appropriate at that time [given the pending war]. Nonetheless, there wasn't a feeling of rejection and dejection—everybody was in the same condition. There was a sense of serenity I felt in Cambodia in the midst of poverty that was absent in Mississippi because people did not have a whole lot of time to be serene. There were older people who I met who were more philosophical, who had been through it all, all their lives.

**Baim: As you started to really see how the "establishment" was so entrenched, and you were from money and from that establish-**

**ment both in business and politically, was it ever so intense you wanted to fully drop out and just separate from your legacy?**

Hormel: I had a sense of faith that will get us through this. It is very depressing in the richest country of the world that there was this incredible maltreatment and malnourishment. You do what you can.

**Baim: You moved to San Francisco in the late 1970s, in time for the battle against the Briggs Initiative in 1978 [it attempted to ban gays from working in the public schools] and Harvey Milk's successful 1977 race for city supervisor. And then around 1980, the first people started dying of what later became known as AIDS.**

Hormel: AIDS was the most difficult to write about, primarily because I knew so many people who died in those first 10 years. It was so devastating. There's no way to tell people today how horrible it was. How we lost our leaders in their prime. How the government, at least at the national level, just stood by and did nothing for so many years.

Barbara Boxer was probably the first to speak on the floor of the U.S. House, when she was a freshman, to get some AIDS funds, that was mid-1980s.

**Baim: You were a founder of the Human Rights Campaign Fund, in 1980, with Steve Endean. How do you feel about what HRC does today?**

Hormel: I am very supportive of them. HRC has extended itself in different directions. We started strictly as a political action committee for federal candidates who would support gay-rights issues. Then it merged with the Gay Rights National Lobby, and we started lobbying activities. It has branched into supporting state organizations, and the marriage equality movement.

HRC has become Washington, D.C.-centric, as so many organizations centered in D.C. become. Which means they aren't as in touch with other groups around the country as they might be. That's true more or less of every D.C. organization, and it is certainly true of members of Congress. They haven't the faintest idea of their constituents; they talk about re-election and money. That gets my juices flowing. I'm writing a piece for the Bay Area Reporter about predictions for 2012. One thing I guarantee will happen: In 2012 more money will be spent on elections than any time before, and it will be so huge that we won't even believe the figure when we hear it. It will be more than \$8 billion in 2012, with at least \$3 billion in TV ads. ...

I am supportive of President Obama. I feel that Obama walked into a situation where he's done the best he can. I'm not sure I would have followed every path he's taken, but on LGBT issues, he's appointed more people, made more

progress than all other presidents before him combined.

The Defense of Marriage Act is in its death throes, anyway. I can't see it standing up to any constitutional scrutiny. On top of that, people don't want it anymore, except members of Congress who are out of touch with their constituencies.

The one other thing I have been saying is that these attitudes of "us" and "them" are going to change, when they start to recognize that we have not chosen to be gay. Being gay is not a choice. When people think that we chose this, they are less inclined to be supportive. Worst of all, people don't know there are these laws anymore. They think discrimination in hiring is actionable, but in 29 states it's not. That's why we need the Employment Non-Discrimination Act.

**Baim: Given Hillary Clinton's recent speech to the UN, did your work there lay the groundwork for her?**

Hormel: In a sense, but I thought that speech was really coming from Hillary. I give her a lot of credit for that. I also want to give credit to other people who were mindful of the circumstances when I was involved in this process. When I went to Geneva with the Human Rights Commission [1995-1996], the head of the delegation was Geraldine Ferraro. She was the one that said I want you to give a speech on gay and lesbian rights and HIV. She was the one who set it up. When the time came for me to give that, she came down and sat next to me. Later, I told Madeline Albright that a friend called and said she got word that Elizabeth Taylor wanted to speak to the UN on World AIDS Day, is there something we can do? Madeline said, "By all means." She said that would be wonderful, she assigned me a staff person to work on it.

**Baim: What was your experience trying to become the first openly gay person confirmed to a presidential appointment by the U.S.**

**Senate?**

Hormel: That was really awful. We put that as the first chapter in the book, as a dramatic way to draw people in. It really was awful. Pat Robertson, this guy, he is still doing it; he is unbelievable, and people pay attention to him. I wish I had said some of the things I was thinking—why not sue for libel? I didn't want to give them public attention. One person among the small group of demonstrators against me was Christine O'Donnell, who later famously ran for Congress from Delaware in 2010. ...

The ambassador appointment did have a lasting effect: It led to other ambassadors being appointed, and it may lead to a cabinet appointment in the next administration, we hope so. I don't know if I will live to see a president who is openly gay; I may not live to see a female president, but it is something to be desired.

**Baim: You are returning to Chicago to speak at the U of C. Any final words about Chicago?**

Hormel: I have been in and out of Chicago since living there. Chicago's been very kind to me, and I've been kind to it. U of C is remarkable. There is not another research institution like it that I know—the cross-topical, cross-educational, intellectual curiosity that brings the entire campus together. When you go there to be taught by top scholars, you get them, not their teaching assistants. There's a level of intellectual curiosity and stimulation that is extremely refreshing. The city of Chicago is grand and great and rough and all the things they say about it.

**James Hormel will be in Chicago Wed., Jan. 25 for a talk hosted by the University of Chicago Law School, 12:15 at a location to be announced. He will be signing his book *Fit to Serve* at 7 p.m. that day at The Book Cellar, 4736 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago, IL 60641. The Book Cellar prefers customers to purchase the book from their store, but it is not required for autographs.**

**James Hormel. Press photo**





# Community ally Merry Mary dies

BY TRACY BAIM

Longtime LGBT community ally Merry Mary, aka Mary Featherston, died Dec. 30, 2011, after a short battle with cancer. Born Jan. 4, 1934, Mary was 77 years old.

Mary was inducted into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame as a Friend of the Community in 2005. The honor was based on her dedication as a volunteer to numerous LGBT health and cultural groups, starting in 1979.

Mary was especially passionate about the city's two gay choruses, Windy City Gay Chorus (under the umbrella of Windy City Performing Arts, or WCPA) and Chicago Gay Men's Chorus (CGMC), and the Chi-Town Squares. Other groups that benefited from her volunteer work included Howard Brown Health Center, the NAMES Project, Unison, Dignity/Chicago, Archdiocesan Gay and Lesbian Outreach and Vital Bridges' Grocery-Land Pantry.

Her first volunteer work in the community was in 1979 with what was then known as Howard Brown Memorial Clinic (HBMC). In 1987, she was honored with HBMC's Friend for Life award, and in February 2005 the clinic honored her for 25 years of volunteering.

Mary's volunteer work for the NAMES Project stemmed from her own personal loss of friends she met during her community volunteerism. She created panels for gay men who died, and then gave her time when the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt first was displayed in Chicago, at Navy Pier in 1988.

Her biggest time commitment was helping work events, and attending rehearsals, for the choral and square dancing groups. Her closest friends seem to have come from those times.

"No one has attended or heard more chorus rehearsals and performances by both WCPA and CGMC than Merry Mary," said CGMC's Danny Kospelson. "For nearly 30 years, I knew I'd see her every Sunday at CGMC rehearsals at the money table. She would always cut articles out of the paper for me and others that she knew we'd be interested in reading and would be collecting and folding bags for Vital Bridges North Side Pantry. She was there for the choruses when members who were sick and losing their lives to HIV/AIDS. As an LGBT Hall of Fame 'Friend of the Community' Mary was a critical part of Chicago's LGBT history and certainly the gay choruses. Wherever Mary was, she shared her love. She was loved back and will be greatly missed by many."

One summer day in the 1970s, Mary took her children to a parade near her Lakeview home. Coming from a fairly sheltered Catholic upbringing, Mary was surprised to realize that she was watching Chicago's Pride Parade. Nobody, least of all Mary herself, would have guessed that she would eventually become one of the gay community's most devoted friends and supporters.

People unfamiliar with the name Mary Featherston are far more likely to recognize "Merry Mary," the moniker by which she was known in gay and lesbian circles across the city. After becoming involved in the community, Mary began to patronize North Side gay bars; a favorite hangout was B.J.'s, located at 3231 N. Clark (it later became the restaurant Orange, and is now called Kanela). After establishing herself as a regular and making friends with everyone—in her customary fashion—Mary would walk into B.J.'s and would be greeted by one of the other regulars calling out, "It's Merry Mary!" The nickname stuck.

A lifelong Chicagoan, Mary was born in the Wicker Park neighborhood and lived for the first six years of her life at 1327 N. Oakley Blvd. Her family then moved to Lakeview, and she remained in the same neighborhood near Addison and Southport for the rest of her life. She attended St. Alverna Catholic High School.

Mary's involvement with the gay community began when her children were still in school. One of the other parents did volunteer work at Howard Brown (then located on Halsted near Diversey), and one day he invited Mary to come along. She wound up volunteering with Howard Brown for 31 years.

At about this same time, another friend invited Mary to attend the inaugural performance of the newly formed Windy City Gay Chorus in December 1979. Mary began volunteering with WCPA, and when a faction later broke off and formed the Chicago Gay Men's Chorus in 1983, Mary volunteered with them as well. She remained an integral and valued part of both choruses until the end of her life—staffing the money table, sitting in on the weekly rehearsals, and attending the concerts. Chorus members looking out into the audience of the Athenaeum Theater knew they could always find Mary in her spot in the upper balcony center.

Mary was diagnosed with terminal cancer in the fall. During her final weeks at St. Joseph's Hospital, the steady stream of visitors to Mary's room was a veritable "Who's Who" of prominent figures in Chicago's LGBT community. But despite her popularity, Mary was a modest person who avoided the spotlight, preferring to serve and to enrich other people's lives—in a variety of different ways—behind the scenes.

"Merry Mary was a very early ally and supporter back in 1993 when we were forming the LGBT employee resource group (GLEAM) at Ameritech. She was such a force for good," said Kasey Reese, a former Chicagoan now living in Vancouver.

Bruce Besley knew Mary from her earliest days with WCPA. "We'd go out to the bars together. She used to have a 4th of July party in Wrigleyville, in her big side yard. She was unique, and she had her own bar stool at Cellblock. She was wonderful woman, involved in so many things. She was at every Windy City Gay Chorus concert, up until the last one in December," Besley said.

Bob Tuscher also fondly remembered his friend of 30 years. He's not sure where they met originally, but it could have been when they worked for AT&T, or when they both volunteered for HBMC when it was on Halsted. Mary worked more than 20 years at AT&T, including as an information operator, and later worked as a clerk for a credit union and as a vault attendant at Central Savings Bank.

"We would talk on the phone all the time," said Tuscher. "Her influence was far and wide. It is a very sad thing. She had an incredible im-



Merry Mary at her 2005 Hall of Fame induction ceremony, with Mayor Daley. Photo by Tracy Baim

pact on Windy City Gay Chorus and CGMC. She was always there as a guiding hand, and she kept meticulous records. Windy City gave her a lifetime membership a few years ago, and she didn't even want to take it. She always talked to anyone, and made them feel welcome. She helped so much around the AIDS crisis—it's so painful to remember how many people were cut down in their prime. So many friends disappeared overnight.

"She was like a sister. I don't remember a time when I didn't know her. ... She added stability to us, in a difficult time, and everyone she came into contact with her held her in such high regard. She was very low-key, yet she cut a powerful and dynamic swath through the city. ... My parents would come to chorus concerts, and Mary and my mom hit it off. When my mom said they came because they were like parents to a lot of the guys whose parents rejected them, Mary said that was how she felt, too. She felt like a mom. She was giving that love and support even when they didn't know they needed it."

"Part of the magic of Merry Mary was that in some ways she was such an unlikely friend of the community," said Jon Putnam, who met Mary when he joined CGMC in 1998. "It was sort of amazing that this straight, Catholic, working-class mom found her niche among gays and lesbians, and derived such joy from being part of our organizations and supporting our causes. She proved that you can't stereotype people."

Bob Siegel of Chi-Town Squares commented about Mary's importance to his organization.

"Mary joined Chi-Town Squares in 1990, the third year of our existence, and received her 20-year medallion at our graduation ceremonies in 2010," Siegel said. "Unknown to many, Mary did go through the lessons several times and was a Plus-level dancer. In recent years, however, she served the club as cashier when we had the class on Tuesday (because the Thursday class of course conflicted with her regular happy hour at the Cell Block!). She would occasionally fill in a square when needed."

"As cashier, she was a taskmaster. She would not be too happy if you didn't come with exact change, and God forbid if you didn't sign in the proper way. But we certainly appreciated her accuracy, dependability and warm sense of humor. Even during our last Crossfire event in September, she happily filled in a volunteer slot of watching the rooms while the rest of us were on dinner break. Mary often served as a judge for our Halloween costume contest. She also had us trained to bring in grocery bags for Open Hand, and more recently, made appeals to bring in unused hotel soaps and toiletries."

"Mary was honored Chi-Town Squares in 1999 with a plaque of appreciation, in addition in her numerous other accolades. And we will honor her again in July 2012 when her club badge in placed on the memorial panel at the International Association of Square Dance Club's annual convention in Vancouver."

Lori Cannon of Vital Bridges' GroceryLand was also a longtime friend, and fellow community ally. "There are unforgettable characters, and then there's Merry Mary, who I'm proud to call my friend and co-conspirator for over 25 years,"

Cannon said. "With a heart as big as the great outdoors, this gal devoted herself to serving the community in a special, important and selfless way. The clients and volunteers at Open Hand [now Vital Bridges] will forever be grateful for the incomparable 'Merry Mary bags' ... something that was born out of her service with the Gay Men's chorus, donating plastic Jewel bags, where upon she'd meticulously fold and re-fold, by the thousands, for use delivering meals in the early days, and then at the grocery center later on. It was just a small thoughtful and sweet gesture, that was incredibly time consuming, and appreciated by all. My fear is that she's taken the secret folding trick to the grave."

"Between her commitment to HBMC, AGLO, Open Hand and the chorus, she represented the finest example of volunteerism—always remaining loyal to the mission, along with her unique style and very definite opinions. Turns out she and I had no use for the same people—you can imagine how dynamic our conversations were! This lady had no trouble telling you the 'real deal.' She stood her ground and wasn't afraid to 'name names!' Her contributions were staggering, and she always did it HER way. What a huge and remarkable legacy she leaves."

"You know when I think of Merry Mary she was the mom you always wanted but might not be lucky enough to have," said longtime Dean Ogren. "She was always there with a thought or comment, or word of advice. There might be judgment too, but what mom does not want the best for their kids. There was not a stranger to Merry and her love for you knew no bounds. If she took your photo or found it in a paper, you would get a note in the mail to you and in there would be that picture or mention. Thoughtful, loyal, you could not ask for a better person, she lived her life the way everyone knows a person should. The skybox crowd will never be the same at Cellblock now that Merry Mary is gone. Her induction to the Hall of Fame in 2005 was one of those do-not-miss events 'cause she touched every part of the community and every part of the community touched Merry."

Mary was married and has a son and three daughters, including Roberta, who was by her side constantly during Mary's final weeks. Mary raised her children in the Wrigleyville area. In addition to Roberta Donahue and Roberta's husband Joe, Mary is survived by her children Mary Heil (Andy), David Featherston (Rosa) and Theresa Blair. She has five grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

"I love her and I am going to miss her," Roberta said. "She taught me everything I know. I think I turned out pretty good, and I thank her for that."

The tentative information on the wake and mass (subject to change): Friday, Jan. 6, 3-9 p.m. at Cooney Funeral Home, 3918 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago. Mass Saturday, Jan. 7, 10 a.m. at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, 708 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago. Please check the online version of this article prior to Friday for any updates.

Donations can be made to either of the gay men's choral groups or Chi-Town Squares.

Also see <http://www.glhallowoffame.org>.

—Also contributing: Jon Putnam

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# Legendary performer Sasha Valentino dies

BY KATE SOSIN AND TRACY BAIM

Sasha Valentino, a legendary Chicago-based female impersonation performer, passed away on Dec. 26 after a long battle with dementia. She was 40, friends said.

Valentino was a nationally known pageant performer whose titles were many and whose chosen family was extensive.

"Sasha Valentino was an icon and an inspiration to us all in the Trans world," said performer Angelique Munro.

Friends and family remember Valentino as a mentor and example to many, who regularly adopted "children" into her ever-growing family and encouraged them in their goals.

In her own work, Valentino won numerous honors for her performances. She was crowned Miss Black Universe in 1996, Miss Universo Latina, Miss Sweetheart International and Miss Liberty International.

In total, friends estimate that she carried over 40 titles.

"Sasha was tenacious," said Christian Valentino, who considered Sasha Valentino a mother figure and took on the last name to show it. "In a small pint-sized frame, she packed a punch."

Standing 5'5", usually in a gown, friends say that Valentino intimidated other performers both with her status as a living legend and a style that was copied time and again.

"She was a trendsetter, an innovator," said Takiya Valentino Wynters, who also saw Valentino as family.

Valentino grew up on the South Side of Chicago and graduated from Christian Fenger High School. In the early '90s, she began performing drag at clubs. In time, she was competing in pageants and doing her own drag shows. Her family was intensely supportive, said Christian Valentino. They came to cheer her on at pageants and took each of her losses and wins to heart.

She performed throughout Chicago over the years, making appearances at Jeffrey's Pub, Hydrate Chicago, Biology Bar (now closed), Taste Entertainment Center among other venues.

Valentino also competed in contests at Chicago's Baton Show lounge, owned by Jim Flint. She competed 11 times in Flint's national Miss Continental pageant, a title she did not live long enough to secure. She also performed at shows for local promoter Otis Mack and in benefits for LGBT and AIDS charities.

"That was her last pageant that she really wanted to win," said Wynters.

According to friends, Valentino mentored countless young trans women who wanted to break into performing, and she impacted many more by serving as a role model.

Christina Valentino, a performer herself, said that many copied her style, trying to perfect the dance moves and outfits that Valentino pulled off.

But most say, Valentino was one of a kind.

"Whatever she did, she always made sure she was going to be the best at it," said longtime friend Terrell Holman.

She performed at numerous venues in the Chicago area, but also performed at pageants all over the country.

Valentino struggled with dementia at the end of her life. She was released from the hospital recently and passed away in her Hammond, Ind., home. She is survived by her mother, brother and sister, along with a large extended birth family.

## Valentino wake held

More than 100 family and friends of Sasha Valentino attended a wake for her Dec. 31 at Barker's Funeral Home on the Far South Side. However, because of her mother's religious be-



Sasha Valentino in the Miss Continental 2001 contest. Photo by Tracy Baim

liefs (she is a Jehovah's Witness), all of the print materials and photos were of Sasha in male form, and she was even buried in a suit, not one of her fabulous gowns.

Born Raymond Jermaine Harris Dec. 21, 1971, Sasha lived her last decades as a female-impersonation performer across Chicago and the nation. Those facts were left off the obituary handed out at the funeral home.

## HIV/AIDS counselor killed in crash at office

BY JAMIE ANNE ROYCE

Local HIV/AIDS activist Fernando Blasco, 52, was killed Dec. 23 after a gang-related car chase ended in a crash into the offices of CALOR, an agency serving Latino people with disabilities, including those impacted by HIV.

The accident took place in the 5000 block of West Armitage Avenue.

Two other pedestrians were injured during the chase and taken to Mount Sinai Hospital. All three victims were attending a Christmas party hosted by CALOR, according to an email from Peter McLoyd, community co-chair at Urban Coalition for HIV/AIDS Prevention Services.

Police arrested five people in connection with the incident, but have only charged Anthony Segura, 20. He faces one count of reckless homicide with a motor vehicle and two counts of aggravated reckless driving causing bodily harm. Segura was issued a \$500,000 bond, but he is being held for violating his probation for three counts of burglary.

Police say Segura was driving a Nissan Altima west on Armitage Avenue in pursuit of a Mitsubishi, when an unmarked police car spotted the chase and turned on sirens. Trying to evade police, Segura lost control of the vehicle, jumping a curb at the intersection of Lawler Avenue. The vehicle struck three pedestrians, injuring two men and killing Lagos-Balsco, as it crashed into the CALOR office.

"Blasco was a long-time activist in the HIV and AIDS field. He was always available to help people—a very, very dedicated person," said Rosa Martinez Colon, assistant director at CALOR.

Blasco formerly served as a member of the CALOR advisory board and as a co-chair for the U.S. Conference on AIDS. He most recently served on the Chicago HIV Prevention Plan-

ning Group and worked as a peer educator at the Ruth M. Rothstein CORE Center, a clinic for the prevention, care, and research of HIV/AIDS.

Blasco was also the author of a paperback, "Gay" *Bueno, Malo y Feo* (The Good, Bad and the Ugly).

"He was a very committed person and he was very supportive of all the people he came in contact with," Omar Lopez, director at CALOR. "It's such a big loss for the community, especially when [HIV and AIDS] advocacy is so lacking. He was one of the advocates and we'll miss him a lot."

Plans for a memorial service have not been finalized, but Lopez, who is planning the funeral, anticipates scheduling it for the week of Jan. 2.

"We are deeply saddened by his passing. It's a tragedy," said Martinez Colon.

Several of Sasha's friends and family spoke with Windy City Times at the wake, about their memories of her.

"I've known Sasha for 15 years," said Finesse, who briefly dated Sasha in the late 1990s. "We kept a bond all these years. I remember her performing at East of the Ryan, the Baton, Miss Continental. She was a loving person. She said 'You control your own destiny.' I remember her as having glamour, and she said you have to have the courage to live your own life, no matter what others think of you."

Stephanie Valentino said Sasha was known as her little sister. "I admired her and looked up to her, even though she was younger," Valentino said. Her mother did accept her, Valentino said, but her religious beliefs influenced how she buried her child.

Tina Thompson had known Sasha for around 30 years, she said, from performing around town together at LaRay, CK's, Baton and Tracks in Atlanta, where Thompson now lives. "She had an international following," Thompson said. "She had glamour, elegance, sophistication, and was professional and always a lady. She was a beautiful girl."

Ruthie Mason, Sasha's great aunt, saw her perform and said she was "beautiful." She said her family accepted Sasha, but because Sasha's mother was in charge of the services, the family just had to accept it. Sasha's cousin Mable Casson said while she did not agree with how the wake was handled, it was the mother's choice.

"Performing is what Sasha wanted to do, [she] chose and lived it beautifully. [She] moved on up," Mason said.

Sasha's friend Pasion had known her for more than 15 years. She remembers her performances to Toni Braxton songs with fondness. "She was a legendary performer," Pasion said. "One of the greatest."



Fernando Blasco. Photo by Emmanuel Garcia

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# Margaret Bausch: HIV/AIDS nurse reflects on a life of caring

BY JULIA BORCHERTS

In 1990, with the AIDS crisis reaching its peak, “a lot of people didn’t want to work HIV,” said Margaret Bausch, which is why she decided, while a nursing student at Truman College, to work as a nurse aide in Unit 371 at Illinois Masonic Hospital.

“I’m gay and I wanted to put back into the community, you know?” she said.

Bausch worked in the unit for a year and remembers the lively spirit created by its atmosphere of compassionate care.

“When [nationally syndicated cartoonist and AIDS activist] Danny Sotomayor was in, he and two of his friends were laying in bed together and I wasn’t sure which one was the patient,” she said, laughing.

And while “there were a lot of gay people [working] on that unit and a lot of the attendings [physicians] who were admitting to that unit were gay,” the compassion extended to all patients admitted to the unit, regardless of sexual orientation.

“We had a prostitute who had gotten HIV from injectible drug use and she had an open area—well, it was more than an open area on her arm; I mean, you could see both bones on her arm,” Bausch said. “She had to keep it completely bandaged when she was out plying her trade. And there was a drag queen—they became good friends and when they were admitted to the unit, they wanted to be in the same room together. Admitting didn’t really want to put a male and a female patient in [the same room], so we [the Unit 371 staff] would sort of arrange for them to be together.”

But, as this was in the relatively early days of HIV and AIDS care, there were times that well-meaning support from friends and loved ones—which was welcomed in the unit—backfired.

“We had a patient that was on a heparin drip—which is a medication given as an anti-coagulant—and his friends hired a massage therapist to come up and give him a massage,” Bausch said. “And when you’re on a heparin drip and somebody gives you a deep tissue massage, you end up looking like somebody’s been beating you with a baseball bat. You just bruise everywhere.”

“The attending [physician] came up to the desk screaming at us, ‘What happened to him?’ And we didn’t know what happened to him but I guess the massage therapist just signed in like he was a regular visitor and then went in there and gave him a massage without asking.”

But despite the occasional setback, Bausch found her vocation to be fulfilling and wanted to continue working in an environment dedicated to people with HIV and AIDS. But when she graduated from Truman in 1991, there weren’t any openings for nurses in Unit 371, so she went to work in the HIV/AIDS unit at the nearby St. Joseph Hospital, which had been founded by the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic organization (and which is now owned by Resurrection Health Care). As with Unit 371, Bausch discovered that many of her co-workers in the HIV/AIDS unit at St. Joseph were gay and that they wanted to provide the same type of compassionate care for AIDS patients that Illinois Masonic had become known for.

“The Daughters of Charity were actually very, very supportive of our mission there,” Bausch said. “In fact, they sponsored us in the Gay Pride Parade twice. Once, we had T-shirts made up that had the big AIDS ribbon on the front and it said, ‘St. Joseph Hospital—Caring for Our Community’ on the back.”

The Daughters of Charity supported the mission in other ways as well, inviting community partners to help bring the outside neighborhood into the unit and offering spiritual support geared towards LGBT patients. “Ann Sather [restaurant] used to send cinnamon rolls up once a week,” Bausch said. “And the gay papers would drop off copies of the paper up on the unit. And they were fine with that. They provided a worship space for an ecumenical worship service that was geared toward gay people. They would have a program for World AIDS Day. And they were just in general very supportive—they didn’t mind us being out or anything up there. They were quite cool with it.”

Bausch worked at St. Joseph until 2001 when she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. “Then, of course, about that time, the protease inhibitors came on the market and people [with HIV and AIDS] who tolerated drugs were, in general, doing better,” she said. “And now, it’s largely treated as a chronic illness. But in the early days, it wasn’t uncommon for people to come down with PCP [pneumocystis pneumonia], discover they were HIV positive and then die—like, the first time they got sick.”

But Bausch’s concerns went beyond just the health of her patients. “We had some cases where we were trying to preserve privacy for a patient, so you can’t be completely honest with their lover about what’s the matter with them,” she said.

“We had one example where we were bringing a patient up the back door and he had a very



Bausch with Rand Schultz, AIDS Walk 1993.

common last name and a common first name, too,” she said. “And we didn’t put two and two together until somebody saw him and said, ‘Oh my god, we can’t admit him to this floor!’ because his lover was a nurse on the other unit.”

“And so we were like, ‘We’ve got to get him out of here.’ My friend was admitting him and was on the elevator with him, getting him a room on a different floor. Then, his girlfriend gets on the elevator and says, ‘Hey, why were they admitting you on 11?’ And he says nothing; he’s just shaking his head. And she turns to the other nurse and goes, ‘Why were they admitting him on 11?’ And she goes, ‘Well, he’s going to 8 now.’”

“We had a lot of cases where you want to protect the privacy of the patient but you also wonder about the safety of their loved ones, too,” Bausch said. “But it’s true—people will lie to have sex.”

“They’ll say amazing things,” she continued, laughing. “They’ll say they’re HIV negative, they’ll say they’re on birth control, they’ll say they love you.”

But she also saw evidence of bravery in the face of rejection and judgment. “I had one patient that actually had the nerve to have ‘HIV POSITIVE’ tattooed just below his belt line so

that there would be no ambiguity,” she said. “Anybody playing with him would have to know.” “Those were strange days,” she said. But in addition to struggling with the potential ramifications to sexual partners that could result from the necessary privacy code, Bausch and her co-workers also found it difficult to deal with the helplessness prevalent in the medical community at that time.

“In the early days when we really didn’t have much in the way of drugs, people would come in with very low T-cells and repeated bouts of pneumocystis or PCP or thrush, all these opportunistic infections that are typical of low T-cells,” she said. “And sometimes, they couldn’t get home health for a lot of the medications that they had to be on. For PCP, it was a 21-day course of Bactrim, so sometimes, they’d be in the hospital for the whole three weeks.”

“So, yeah, we would get to know them and their friends and their family,” Bausch said. “And a lot of them, they’d be in and out and in and out and in and out until they finally passed away. It was just a time where people’s T-cells would be hovering around a hundred for a year or two years at a time and then they’d finally succumb to something.”



Bausch with the St. Joseph Hospital team in Chicago’s AIDS Walk, 1993.



"Nowadays, I think if people tolerate the drugs, they can usually keep their T-cells up around four-or-five hundred. And that's usually enough to stop them from coming down with something fatal."

So how did she cope? "I ate and drank a lot," she said, laughing, but then grew quiet. "It was hard. I mean, we used to have a calendar and we'd write the names down of people when they passed away, you know? Sometimes, there were some months where we'd know, like, 50 or 100 people that died."

"It gives you kind of a perspective about quality versus quantity of life. And I wouldn't say you ever get blasé about death, but you really do come to understand that being dead isn't the worse thing—that there are worse things than being dead. It was hard."

Ironically, after helping so many with HIV and AIDS for so many years, Bausch's own health challenges stem from her own T-cells.

"People joked when I was diagnosed [with multiple sclerosis] that the best treatment for my MS would be to come down with a good case of HIV," she said, "because what happens with MS is your T-cells attack the myelin—the coating of your nerves—and they cause the nerves to basically burn out because their insulation is gone. They short out, sort of the same way that your wires would short out if the insulation came out of your wires."

"And so, actually, it's my T-cells that are causing my problem. Kind of weird, because 'no T-cells' is the problem with HIV, you know?"

Because she had already experienced significant symptoms by the time she was diagnosed, Bausch, who is partnered with a woman, stopped working almost immediately and applied for social security. Her years of working in healthcare proved helpful in negotiating her way around what many have discovered can be a frustrating system for those without medical insurance.

"Probably 70 percent of people who apply for social security disability do not get it the first time around," she said. "And the reason for that is because most of them are working when they apply for it. It's hard to convince people that you can't work when you are working," she added with a laugh.

Bausch was accepted, but still faced social service challenges. "You get on disability and then you still have to wait two years before Medicare kicks in," she said. "So I went to Cook



Margaret Bausch with her partner, whose name is also Margaret.

County [Hospital]. Thank goodness we have the county system here, because basically, people in Chicago do have free healthcare—it's not always the most convenient thing but at least it's available to you.

"I hooked up with them for my drugs. And also, the drug companies have a compassionate use protocol, so because I don't have money to pay for the injectable—which is \$1,700 a month—they provided it to me for free."

But because of her medical industry experience, Bausch also knew she'd have to engage in a lot of bureaucratic legwork to discover lower-cost and free options for her care.

"You have to know about these programs and you have to be proactive in navigating the healthcare system yourself," she said. At one point, when Bausch required a cystoscopy, she called several offices to compare prices and discovered after many questions that different rates were charged depending on the patient's insurance company or—as in Bausch's case—lack of insurance.

"I finally just said to one place, 'I'm not going to buy as many of these things as Blue Cross Blue Shield buys. But at the rates you're quoting me, I'm not going to buy any of them.' So she [the office assistant] said, 'Well, we'll give you the price that we give Blue Cross Blue Shield if you pay it up front.' And I said, 'Well, now you're talking!'"

"If you don't know that you can negotiate with the healthcare system like this, you don't," Bausch said. "I mean, most people just pony up the bucks—whatever their doctor tells them they owe, that's what they pay."

"And some procedures are much more expensive if they're done in the hospital than if they're done in the doctor's office. And a lot of people don't know that either."

But she doesn't believe that doctors or their administrative aides purposely hide the information from prospective patients.

"It's kind of off their radar, too," she said. "When you think about it, we require a lot of our doctors. I mean, not only are they supposed to know all this medical stuff but they're supposed to know how to run a small business too? And they're also supposed to navigate the government regulations about safety, confidentiality and the pricing codes for the DRGs (diagnosis-related-groups). It's very difficult for them. And so I can't necessarily blame the doctors for the mess that is the healthcare system."



Margaret Bausch in 2010. Photos courtesy of Bausch

## Michael McColly: Spiritual activism

BY MICKI LEVENTHAL

Michael McColly, HIV-positive author of the Lambda Award-winning book, *The After-Death Room: Journey into Spiritual Activism* (Soft Skull Press, 2006), began his own journey of acceptance and treatment in 1996 when he tested positive.

A bisexual, McColly was closeted about his sexual identity, was deeply depressed and he engaged in unsafe sex. At the urging of a close friend he entered therapy. He also got tested for HIV, and found out he was positive for the virus associated with AIDS. He began treatment and continued counseling. He also had a very strong and dedicated yoga practice, which helped keep him physically healthy and offered a path for spiritual grounding. McColly slowly began to come out to friends and family. He emerged from his depression and tapped into the inner resources needed to deal with his new life state. McColly, a journalist, attended the 13th International AIDS Conference in Durban in 2000. He was there to teach yoga and to learn. He got his first serious glimpse into the scope of HIV and AIDS in non-western countries and the different way in which individuals in these cultures dealt with the disease. He was also witness to the range of government responses, and non-responses, to the devastation of AIDS.

It was eye-opening and life-transforming—McColly decided to sell all his belongings and set out on a "spiritual quest" to deeply explore the AIDS crisis internationally. *The After Death*

Room and McColly's conception of "spiritual activism" was the result.

McColly now teaches creative writing at Northwestern University and workshops on yoga and the creative process at Kripalu Center. Below, he reflects on spiritual activism and AIDS:

Spiritual should be implied in activism, in my thinking, marked by courage, deep commitment, amazing reserves of energy and resolve with higher aims and deep faith in one's work. But, the word "spiritual" has such baggage these days with so many people throwing it about to describe themselves, their products, and actions that it has understandably lost any real meaning.

"Spiritual activism" has been used in the past to describe the work of people like Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Albert Einstein—people who have sought to link their beliefs and actions on behalf of political or social justice to principles that transcend the limits of human reason and specific contemporary political situations. In other words, an activism that is not limited to a narrow focus for a set or group of people alone, but in activism grounded and aimed at propounding justice or law or equality or health or freedom or compassion or planetary ecological health because of its necessity for life and for the future of life.

The other aspect of spiritual activism is that the advocate is linking their work and advocacy in a spiritual practice and belief that their work is a logical out growth of this spiritual foundation.



Margaret Bausch in 2010. Photos courtesy of Bausch



# Friends of the Global Fight plans for an AIDS-free generation

BY CHARLSIE DEWEY

*Last week we profiled the Global Fund to Fight Against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. This week, we look at a supporting group to their efforts.*

Recent speeches given by President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton could not have come at a better time for Friends of the Global Fund to Fight Against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Since its founding in 2004, the organization has served as a funding advocate in the United States for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

"Simply put, our main goal is to ensure that the Global Fund continues to receive the funding it needs to do its lifesaving work from the United States," Natasha Bilimoria, president of Friends, explained. "Our relationship, while it is separate, we are not part of the Global Fund, we work on their behalf and are their eyes and ears here in Washington, and also critical strategic advisors to them."

The organization has worked successfully for nearly 10 years, seeing the United States' contribution to the Global Fund grow from \$300 million to more than \$1 billion. To achieve this incredible growth Bilimoria said a great deal of education has been needed. The staff of less than 12 individuals works closely with policy makers and their key staff on sharing the Global Fund's success stories as well as sharing information on scientific advancements in treatment of HIV/AIDS.

When the organization first began, political leaders from both parties as well as former Presi-

dent Bush were working together to build strong bipartisan support for HIV/AIDS funding. Each year the United States' funding grew and prevention and treatment efforts expanded around the world.

Today, as countries deal with the global economic crisis, Bilimoria and other leaders in the HIV/AIDS fight worry that funding from some of its largest donors could be reduced. It is especially important for the U.S. to continue its leadership role and funding levels as every \$1 contributed from the U.S. is leveraged to garner \$2 from other countries.

That is why she said Obama's and Clinton's remarks were so critical. Obama reiterated his administration's commitment to AIDS funding and challenged other countries to keep their promises and give the money they previously pledged. She hopes that members of Congress will be equally committed.

"We've got a much more difficult economic environment, and we've got a very complicated political environment. The people that were here when the Global Fund and PEPFAR were created, the members of Congress, many of those people are gone now. In this year especially, we had a whole new crop of people that needed to be educated. The bottom line is that most of the people that were elected into Congress last year were not elected because of foreign policy issues," she said.

Bilimoria said that Friends is focused on trying to create new "champions" to help continue bipartisan support. She said that her organization has really had to start back at square one in educating the new policy makers on the Global Fund and HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention advancements.

"We need more people to understand how critical United States support is for these programs. Again, it is a very difficult budgetary time and we have less money and more things to do. But, the pot of money that this stuff comes out of is a miniscule part of the budget. It is less than 1 percent of the entire U.S. budget, and what we are seeing is really just phenomenal results, millions of lives have been saved because of the generosity of the U.S. government and its taxpayers, both through the Global Fund and the Presidents Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief [PEPFAR]."

"I think that if people know about this and really understand how this funding has been so critical, not only have we saved these lives, but by saving lives we have also allowed communities to rebuild themselves and to become stronger. With stronger communities, we get stronger economies. It has really created this incredible domino effect of positive development," she said.

UNAIDS recently released its annual report, which stated that the number of people dying of HIV/AIDS complications had fallen from a peak of 2.2 million to 1.8 million in 2010.

Andy Seale, senior advisor for gender and sexual diversity at the Global Fund, reported, "We reached 100 percent of our targets for people receiving anti-retroviral therapy [in 2010], we exceeded the targets we'd set ourselves for HIV testing and counseling, and also around support to orphans and other vulnerable children and we did very well, around 94 percent of our targets, when it came to some of the HIV prevention initiatives like prevention of mother-to-child transmission and condom distribution. When you look at what we've been able to achieve

since 2002, it's been fairly significant."

Bilimoria agrees. "We really are at an incredibly critical moment in time right now ... there is a huge amount of science that has come about, very much in the past several months, and I think the science is giving us this incredible opportunity to have this very strong impact on the disease," she said. "This whole idea and concept of an AIDS-free generation is a real possibility and I think the science is telling us that."

"We have all of the tools to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV, we know how to do it, but we need that continued support to make sure countries are able to continue that work and expand the work so we can ensure that no baby is born with HIV by 2015. These continued investments are critical, because global health is really something that needs to be sustained so that we continue to not only see the progress we've had, but also reach these very achievable goals."

Despite real threats to funding, Bilimoria is hopeful that the President's recent commitment, a historic multiyear pledge, and call for others to continue their support, will allow HIV/AIDS programs to turn an important corner in the effort to achieve an AIDS-free generation.

"We are absolutely capable of having an AIDS-free generation," she said. "That depends on continued political will and sustained funding, and it is a hard time to do that because of the global economic crisis, but, again, I think with both the president and the secretary of state putting out that commitment so publicly, I think that's an incredibly important step forward. I am optimistic that we will be able to continue to achieve some really great things."



Natasha Bilimoria (back row, center), president of Friends of the Global Fund to Fight Against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in Zambia. Courtesy of Bilimoria



## MCCOLLY from pg. 13

Consequently, the actions or compassionate work or demands for justice are the practice itself. The actor concerns him/herself with the practice, not the results. Sure, they want peace or justice or health or opportunities but they are not concerned when, or if, they might come. The attitude and the work of embracing the wrong and speaking out or caring for those left behind is the point.

The *Boddhisattva* [Buddha of compassion] is committed to liberating all. Christ chose to work with the poor and dispossessed to teach that the kingdom of heaven is here now in this orientation of selfless love. MLK battled the ignorance and smallness of mind behind racism and economic injustice. He felt for the suffering of all—those who support injustice and those who feel the injustice because the system supporting racism and economic injustice is destroying all as it's a selfish and fear-based political and economic system.

Struggles still persist in trying to speak directly about the complex public health crisis of HIV and AIDS and confronting the fears, ignorance and closed-mindedness that still profoundly shape the responses to this very pernicious virus. This comes from so many quarters—not just the right-wing ideologues, African officials and various religious leaders. It exists in policy makers, non-profits, health professionals, governments officials, academics and gay leaders.

HIV affects mostly poor and powerless people who have little awareness of their bodies and self-care, little access to health education or care and few avenues of economic agency. They often do not know where they will get food or where they will find money for the basic needs of themselves and their children. Their life is precarious.

The persistence of HIV in the world reflects economic, political and cultural structures and beliefs. The people in power who largely control these structures have never really been threatened by the disease—or they don't perceive that they have.

The tremendous strides on behalf of those with the disease by activists, health care professionals, researchers, artists and social scientists is still not loud enough to make much change. In fact, the will has declined somewhat in the past few years as the economic downturn and other social factors have made it less of a priority.

Nevertheless, HIV and AIDS has been a disease that has inspired profound emotional and spiritual responses. People who are affected or infected must confront a whole range of questions and conditions about their bodies, their behaviors, their relationships and their religious and political beliefs. The past 30 years of suffering and education and scientific discoveries has given the world more understanding and maturity about just how important public health is for a community or nation.

It was HIV that brought us, and continues to bring us, awareness about the vital importance of education, access and affordability of treatment. Breast cancer awareness, addiction, emotional and mental health treatment, other STDs, obesity and a host of other public health issues all followed the awakening of HIV and AIDS. It is hard to make the case anymore that public spending should be cut for public health, the health of the society.

Michael McColly's essays have appeared in the *New York Times* and *The Sun*. Read his work at [www.mikemccolly.com](http://www.mikemccolly.com) and <http://www.footpat-terns.blogspot.com>

## Dec. 1, 2031: AIDS at 50

BY MAX SMITH

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke eloquently in November of the promise of a future generation free of AIDS. Her optimism was noted in the Nov. 27 *Chicago Tribune* by David Ernesto Munar, president and CEO of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago.

Clinton, Munar and many other leaders in the fight against HIV/AIDS propose a continuation of the "get tested, use condoms" mantra with greater emphasis on lowering costs and expanding availability of antiretroviral medications.

They focus much hope on pre-exposure prophylaxis medications, abbreviated as PrEP. The PrEP approach is to give antiretroviral drugs to HIV-negative people for use with condoms. Sorry, but I do not believe the hype. On Dec. 1, 2021 AIDS at 40 will be an epidemic, as it is today: with a disproportionate impact on poor people and African-American men who have sex with men, abbreviated as MSM.

Once every six months since 1989 I've tested negative for HIV in the Howard Brown Health Center's Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study, called MACS (now run by Northwestern University). My identification number is 23075 and my mother's maiden name is Moore. I joined this study more than 20 years ago because I'd swallowed semen of HIV-positive partners and wanted to know the long-term results. On Dec. 7, 2011 I tested negative for HIV again, at age 57.

Nothing in my upbringing prepared me for witnessing 158 deaths of family, friends and acquaintances I knew and loved during this epidemic. More than 80% of those loved ones were lost to HIV/AIDS. HIV caused me to live with emotional depression for long periods of time. 1987 to 1996 was the worst decade. Some years featured a funeral a month, four and five months in a row.

To witness very close and dear friends go through bouts of extreme nausea and prolonged fatigue (some at 6-foot tall weighed 125 pounds) gave me extreme fear of AIDS by 1983. Before 1983 I thought AIDS was a problem for European-American gay men in California and New York. I was hopeful that medical science would isolate HIV and end the epidemic by 1985.

In the 1970s I came out to everyone in my family. My father and two uncles did not speak about my dating men with each other. Yet, each responded to my coming out by re-affirming their love for me, by telling me not to have anal sex, by telling me to continue to go to church and to encourage my lesbian and gay friends to become activists, viewing gay rights as a civil-rights issue.

By 1986 I'd read in several books and in credible magazine articles that the wafer-thin mucous membrane lining of the anus is subject to microscopic tears by pubic hair. While not necessarily painful or visible, those tears provide the virus direct access to the blood stream.

A fan of fellatio, I'd always thought intercourse to be for emotionally bonded monogamous partners. As the HIV/AIDS epidemic didn't end, but got far worse in 1986, my fear of AIDS grew. With no lover, with knowledge that anal intercourse is the most efficient way to sexually transmit HIV and with sincere advice from my uncles and father, I made a personal commitment. To stay negative for HIV I've kept 100% disciplined to this mantra: "No anal sex in any position, no exceptions."

For sure, condoms are 97% to 99% effective. But if the auto dealership that services my car said, "Your brakes will fail 1% of the time," then I'd have them keep the car until the brakes were fixed to work at all times. You never know when

a drunk driver will dart in front of you on the expressway with traffic going 65 miles per hour! A 1% brake failure rate is an unacceptable risk.

In the darkness of the bedroom that 1% failure rate for condoms is an unacceptable risk, when a virus you must live with until you die is lurking.

Frottage, also known as grinding to orgasm and outercourse, allows semen to cover waterproof skin. Yet people supposedly interested in prevention of HIV transmission, even those in well-regarded HIV-prevention groups and organizations funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, rarely affirm and promote the erotic pleasure and safety of frottage. President Bill Clinton's Surgeon General Dr. Joycelyn Elders actually was fired in the 1990s for saying masturbation is good for HIV transmission prevention.

If HIV/AIDS groups supposedly working for the prevention of the spread of HIV were serious about having a future generation free of AIDS, they would forcefully advocate among gay and bi men the erotic pleasure of mutual masturbation and frottage. And they would target gay and bi males with the mantra, "no anal sex in any position, no exceptions." Like me, they would run into a stone wall of resistance from men who have loved anal sex for years. Therefore men born in the 21st Century who will come out over the next 10 to 20 years will rarely get the message that a very enjoyable sex life does not have to include penetration, even with a lowered 1% risk for HIV that condoms provide.

In recent years my applications to work inside the system, at three HIV/AIDS prevention groups, have been turned down. The interviewer at the Chicago Department of Health thought I wasn't sufficiently concerned about the health of women. I responded that it is African-American men who have sex with men who are far more, indeed, most disproportionately impacted by HIV. That insistence on treating all people equally regarding risk of HIV transmission is one of many reasons why HIV is a permanent epidemic.

I perceive that supposed HIV/AIDS prevention agencies are bureaucracies. Bureaucrats tend to maintain the status quo. To them, "no anal sex

in any position, no exceptions," would be too radical a position to adopt and to promote to gay and bi men. To them, anal sex is a pregnancy prevention method for heterosexuals.

Pharmaceutical companies have made HIV-positive people a colony ripe for long-term economic exploitation. Now they want to add in more gay and bi men who are negative for HIV.

From 1981 to 1987 Republican President Ronald Reagan ignored HIV/AIDS. In 2011-2012 all the Republican candidates for president, and many running for Congress, state and local office are under conservative Tea Party pressure to seek the repeal of President Obama's healthcare act. Many favor gay marriage, as long as the gay person marries a partner of the opposite sex. They even want to reinstate the failed "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" military gay ban, and don't forget to give more tax breaks to millionaires and billionaires to solve all problems of society.

The social forces responsible for conservatives to be prejudiced against LGBT people are social forces that cause too many LGBT people to accept and to internalize self-defeating social pressures. Often rooted in 19th Century religious misunderstanding of same-gender love, too many people find it easier to accept tradition than to challenge and change it. Taken to the extreme, "bug chasers" seek to become HIV positive, sometimes to get what they think are benefits like social-security income, subsidized housing, etc. A more mainstream thought is that you do not really have sex unless there is penetration. Frottage, fellatio and mutual masturbation are dismissed as mere foreplay.

From the start, considering HIV infection primarily to be a medical issue—with the emotional, cultural, racial, economic and religious forces minimized—has kept HIV on steroids and on stilts. Additionally the fear of fully disclosing "personal" information about "private" sexuality and drug and alcohol use make me a true believer that come Dec. 1, 2031 AIDS at 50 will be a permanent epidemic.

**Max Smith is a long-time gay activist and he can be reached at [MaxsonnCS@aol.com](mailto:MaxsonnCS@aol.com)**



Max Smith. Photo by Hal Baim



## VIEWPOINTS

## WINDY CITY TIMES

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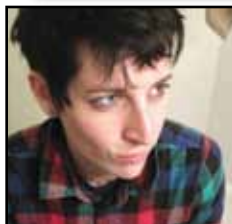
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"Windy City Media Group generated enormous interest among their readers in this year's LGBT Consumer Index Survey. Out of approximately 100 print and online media partners who participated in the survey, Windy City was the best performing regional media in the U.S. Only survey partners with a nationwide footprint were able to generate a greater number of responses." —David Marshall, Research Director, Community Marketing, Inc.

 Community Marketing, Inc.



KATE SOSIN

## Confronting the 'T-word'— a task for us all

Lance Bass joined the ranks of some of our best-known gay and gay-friendly celebrities recently. On national television, the former boy-bander repeatedly said the word "tr\*nny," setting off a firestorm of bad press.

Bass apologized in a Huffington Post column, and argued that reports of the slip-up overshadowed his past good deeds.

"I am not defending any of us for the misuse of the word, but I am disgusted with how the gay media has pounced on us as though they have been waiting for us to misbehave and spun it to make us look like the bad guys," Bass wrote.

All who have ever had a foot-in-mouth experience like this can empathize with Bass, to an extent. Bass feels that the rules changed on him overnight, and that rather than healing old divides, the LGBT press used his blunder to corral traffic to their sites.

Dan Savage, Kelly Osbourne and Neil Patrick Harris have all been criticized for using the word in recent weeks (although Osbourne's slur appeared to be less playful than angry, and Savage claimed his most recent use was to explain why

it should not be used).

Many gay people have dismissed those controversies as a media obsession with "political correctness," touting the contributions of Bass, Savage and others who were immediately slammed for slurring, despite their past LGBT advocacy.

Bass argued that the LGBT media is irresponsible in its coverage here.

"People do need to be held accountable for the words they use, but the rules of political correctness by which you are and aren't allowed to use them have become so confusing that often we should be relying on common sense and taking into consideration the person's purpose behind using the word," Bass wrote on the Huffington Post.

Bass represents a growing class of gay and gay-friendly celebs who use the word on air and apologize, while simultaneously listing the reasons they should be promptly pardoned. Bass criticizes the LGBT press like the Advocate, Instinct and Queerty for calling him out before reaching out.

However, what is perhaps intended as a call for unity from Bass can come off as a dismissal of the real problem at hand, which is far bigger than Bass, Savage, Harris or any other single offender.

The "T-word" is one with a pretty serious history. That word has historically been used as a precursor to unthinkable physical and emotional violence, especially against transgender women. Not all trans people have a problem with the term, but those who have experienced its violent intent deserve our respect and hesitancy here.

Many gay people will argue that such a word should be fair game to all LGBTQs. After all, gen-

der rules are at the heart of all our struggles as queer people, and gay people understand the pain of such slurs. The reality, however, is that few use the word with the weight and humility it deserves, and fewer will understand the many ways that transgender people continue to be marginalized within the LGBTQ community.

Given the invisibility of transgender issues and lives within the gay movement, it is hardly surprising that our celebs feel entitled to use the slur or worse yet, don't even know it is a slur at all.

The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), an organization whose name doesn't include transgender identity, jumps at these celeb slip-ups and calls on them to correct themselves. However, GLAAD is as complicit as all of us (Bass included) until it works against the invisibility its name preserves. It is not enough to reprimand offensive statements. All of us in media should be explaining not only what words are slurs, but why. More than that, we must work against the invisibility that allows many in our own community to go through the world unaware that they are using anti-trans slurs.

The "T-word" is not a new slur, nor have transgender people recently been dropped from the sky into the LGBTQ movement. Transgender women were on the front lines at Stonewall, and trans people have stayed on the front lines ever since, despite the fact that many mainstream gay wins hardly advance trans rights at all ("Don't Ask, Don't Tell," for example).

Look to our own Boystown, where you can buy a T-shirt that reads "Hot Tr\*nny Mess," and you will see that Bass is not the only one to blame here. The fault lies with each of us.

## LETTERS

By George

Letter to the editor:

In asserting that LGBT-rights activists are akin to fascists, Chicago's Catholic Archbishop Francis George has crossed the line from the intemperate to the outrageous. His recent remarks would be silly if they weren't so dangerous, coming from a highly placed and influential prelate.

In what is presumably an attack on the Gay Liberation Network (GLN), which has demonstrated several times against him, he asserted that "some in the gay liberation" are the equivalent of the KKK because they are "anti-Catholic." Further, he maintained that if the Pride Parade next summer passes a Catholic church during service, it will be an attack on Catholicism. Really? (It's instructive that George has never made this complaint about the huge Chicago Marathon crowds, which gather annually on a Sunday morning when the race passes several Catholic churches during services.)

George's anti-LGBT animus is well known, and he never misses an opportunity to attack our movement. It should not need mentioning that George, who plays the victim card and continually paints us as the aggressors, chooses time and again to ignore the inconvenient fact that Gay Liberation Network's argument is with the anti-gay bigotry of the Church hierarchy—the spiteful rhetoric and advocacy of anti-gay discrimination by people like George and his minions.

We know that the Catholic laity is often supportive of LGBTs and our rights while the church leaders are not, and this is both threatening to the latter and a challenge. Their attacks against us are just as much an effort to win support from their parishioners as they are to score points against our movement.

We oppose the Catholic hierarchy because it promotes bigotry against us, both from the pulpit and in the media. We oppose it, and have demonstrated in the streets against the hierarchy because it has steadfastly stood in the way of every advance for LGBT rights in Illinois for more than a decade, from the Illinois Human Rights Act and the Chicago and Cook County anti-discrimination ordinances to the civil-unions bill passed last spring.

Despite these gains, LGBTs still lack full legal equality in Illinois, like the right to marry and the attendant benefits and recognition that this entails. Beyond legal equality, we lack LGBT-affirming education in all of our public schools and programs addressing the unique needs of homeless LGBT youth.

In the battles for these gains, if the past is any guide, George and the rest of the Catholic hierarchy will be our steadfast enemies. Therefore, unlike the Democratic politicians who try to appease the Catholic leadership and LGBTs at the same time—ending with muddled support for LGBT rights, at best—we will clearly denounce George's anti-LGBT bigotry at every opportunity. That is why this next Valentine's Day, we invite all who support LGBT rights and liberation to join GLN at our annual Freedom to Marry Day demonstration in front of Holy Name Cathedral. (More info is available at <http://www.gayliberation.net>.)

Gay Liberation Network

By George, part two

Dear Archbishop Cardinal Francis George:

You lost more than you gained by insisting the 2012 Pride Parade not interfere with one Mass at one church. The parade participants celebrating

on that day are also God's people (albeit inherently sinful people according to your doctrine).

Apparently, you never even considered the option of changing the time of the Mass in order to accommodate a much larger contingent of God's people who wanted to use the public street in front of your tax-free property. Why you think one religious service once a year could not be rescheduled or (gasp!) cancelled is the height of arrogance—a characteristic you seem to have in abundance.

It's hard for me to imagine that your God gives a crap about this minuscule inconvenience to your empire, but probably does give a crap about your deplorable conduct in this matter. We are supposed to enjoy both freedom OF and freedom FROM religion. Your considerable clout makes freedom from you and your religion an enormous challenge.

What if it had been a St. Patrick's Day parade on that same route, day and time? Or a veteran's parade? Or a MLK observance? I doubt you would have objected at all; or if you had, you would have chosen language far less inflammatory and offensive than you used against the GLBT community.

Sincerely,  
 Jim Kelly  
 Oak Park

Send letters and viewpoints to [Andrew@WindyCityMediaGroup.com](mailto:Andrew@WindyCityMediaGroup.com). Items may be edited for length or clarity.



# GOINGS-ON



WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



Photo courtesy of Lifetime

## CLOTHES CALL

Project Runway: All Stars will kick off Jan. 5 on Lifetime. WCT talks with contestant Rami Kashou (back, right) on page 24.

### DISH

Simply the best.  
Page 26.

Photo by Ed Negron



### THEATER

'mother's'day.  
Page 18.

Photo from 'the word progress...' by Michal Janicki



### SPORTS

Top guns.  
Page 30.

Photo of Cameron Turner courtesy of Turner



### SCOTTISH PLAY SCOTT

# More sketchy than before

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

In the run up to the 11th annual Chicago Sketch Festival, its executive producer Brian Posen is mostly concerned with what he calls "traffic patterns."

Posen also wears the hat of artistic director of the recently renovated Stage 773, previously known as the Theatre Building Chicago. And though Posen had produced the Chicago Sketch Festival (a.k.a. Chicago SketchFest) in the venue before, this the first time he's been able to produce everything in the venue following its almost \$2 million transformation in 2011.

"It's like a brand new theater—smells like a new car," Posen joked, explaining how the complex changed this year from three 150-seat theaters to four spaces: two 150-seat venues (nicknamed "The Thrust" and "The Pro") with an 80-seat black box (nicknamed "The Box") and a 70-seat cabaret (nicknamed "The Cab").

So essentially there's the expansion of four comedy troupes performing at the same time, plus all the logistics of when and where to program them and getting them all on and off without any major clogs or accidents—hence Posen's

"traffic patterns" analogy.

"Our first night of Thursday, Jan. 5, will reveal a lot to us and we'll be like, 'Oh, this works, that doesn't and we need to change that,'" Posen said about the Chicago SketchFest, which runs through Jan. 15.

Another challenging bit of planning for Posen was selecting which sketch comedy troupes would be performing out of nearly 250 submissions (the festival's highest number the ever received). Making the cut were 138 local, national and international sketch comedy groups that will offer up 162 total performances.

"It kills me to turn away groups, but at the same time we had a great pick of such awesome groups," Posen said. "The bar is higher and the quality is excellent so that if anyone comes off the street and picks any one of the 138 groups, you're going to have a good show."

Posen admitted that in the early years of Chicago SketchFest, there weren't so many sketch comedy troupes around so every group got a performance slot, even if their shows were just thrown together. But in the ensuing years, Posen said the art form of sketch comedy has only grown in quality and popularity, so he's happy



Kevin Posen.

now that Chicago SketchFest gets to pick and choose the best of the best.

Early on in Chicago SketchFest's history, there was plenty of diversity thanks to Posen reaching out to troupes like Stir-Friday Night! (Asian-American sketch comedy), Salsation Theatre Company (largely Latino sketch comedy) and GayCo Productions (LGBT sketch comedy). These three troupes are back again this year, while other diverse troupes have also helped fill the ranks of Chicago SketchFest.

Seth McCormick is a member of Quixotic, which bills itself as a "gay themed sketch com-

edy company with a multi-orientation perspective." McCormick and his fellow Quixotic troupe members are super excited to be making their Chicago SketchFest debut after applying for the past two years and not making the cut.

"Both for me as a performer and for our company, it's a level of recognition," McCormick said. "This is kind of a nice cap to our most successful year."

Throughout the history of the Chicago SketchFest, Posen has insisted that all the performers can get in for free to see each other's shows, even though he has to repeatedly fight with his fellow board members on that financial sticking point. However, Posen said this aspect of Chicago SketchFest partially explains why the festival is so strong—because the sketch artists can learn and grow from watching each other's work. Also, how else to explain why so many talented troupes come to Chicago in the dead of winter?

"Some of these groups are dropping a couple grand just to come here just to be part of this festival," Posen said. However, he reasoned that "we have this great complex and we have this vibe that is so welcoming and is so much fun."

In addition, there's the sheer variety of sketch comedy forms out there that are all gathered together under the roof of Stage 773.

"You can see every form of funny," Posen said, noting how some troupes can be overly political while others dabble in musical cabaret, pantomime and puppetry, too. "We offer hours and

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Million Dollar Quartet.  
Photo by  
Doug Blemker

## THEATER REVIEW Million Dollar Quartet

Title: Million Dollar Quartet

Playwright: book by Colin Escott and Floyd Mutrux

At: Apollo Theatre, 2540 N. Lincoln Ave.

Phone: 773-935-6100; \$25-\$77.50

Runs through: May 31

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

From the first chord struck, it was clear that this was something special—and not just because the Goodman doesn't rent out its Owen Auditorium to just any old road company, or that transfer-house owners were conferring in the lobby barely seconds after the final curtain. It wasn't the nostalgia factor, either, nor was it the score of blues-country songs today comprising standard repertoire in their respective genres.

First, the facts: In December 1956, Carl Perkins—composer of "Blue Suede Shoes" and "Matchbox Blues"—scheduled a recording session at Sun Studios, a tiny independent label operating out of a former auto repair shop in Memphis, Tenn., under the auspices of Sam Phillips. The sidemen included Jay Perkins on string bass, W.S. "Fluke" Holland on drums and a swaggering piano man from the Louisiana swamps named Jerry Lee Lewis. It being close to Christmas, one of Phillips' early headliners—Elvis Presley—stopped in for a howdy-doo on his way home to introduce his lady friend to Mom. Then

Phillips phoned another of his clients, one living nearby—Johnny Cash—and suggested that he sit in on the session. When they were all assembled, Sam made a few tapes.

What distinguishes this fictionalized docudrama from other anthology-based revues is the occasion replicated in Colin Escott and Floyd Mutrux's scenario: More than a half-century ago, none of these groundbreaking artists knew what lay ahead for themselves or the music widely vilified as "satanic," even as its popularity burgeoned. (The play's text takes advantage of hindsight irony—as when Presley declares that he hates Las Vegas and will never play there.) What invokes our sympathies beyond simple voyeurism, however, is the knowledge that each of these hungry young artists is poised on the brink of a career path that will change their fortunes forever.

It's hard work portraying icons, making for replacements in the ensemble currently playing at Lincoln Park's Apollo Theater where Million Dollar Quartet has run continuously for nearly four years. Gabe Bowling's Perkins is a little cleaner-cut than previous incarnations, and James Scheider's Lewis more physically subdued, but Sean Sullivan's Cash displays a commanding presence (and astonishing vocal range), Brandon Bennett's Presley reflects the singer not yet enslaved to greedheads, and Heather Marie Marsden, in the easily dismissed role of kibitzing Dyanne, breaks with sex-kitten mannerisms to deliver a rafter-raising "Hear You Knocking." Who says a history lesson can't rock the room?

## SPOTLIGHT



If you're nursing any post-holiday doldrums, why not take in a performance of the rocking performance art extravaganza **Blue Man Group**? The long-running Chicago production put in new material early last year, plus the audience participation aspect of Blue Man Group guarantees that each and every show will be different. Blue Man Group continues in an open run at the Briar Street Theatre, 3133 N. Halsted St. Tickets are \$49-\$69; call 773-348-4000 or visit <http://www.blueman.com> for more information. Photo by Ken Howard

## THEATER REVIEW

### the word progress on my mother's lips doesn't ring true

Playwright: Matei Visniec

At: Trap Door Theatre,  
1655 W. Cortland Ave.

Tickets: 773-384-0494;

<http://www.trapdoortheatre.com>; \$20-\$25

Runs through: Jan. 21

BY JONATHAN ABARBANEL

Playwright Matei Visniec and director Istvan Szabo K (sic) are from Romania, but neither has a Romanian name. Such personal histories are common in Europe, especially as you move south and east. When you reach the Balkans, the rich stew of nationalities and ethnicities too-often has boiled over into horrendous violence and genocide, essentially along tribal lines. In the softly forested killing fields of Serbia, Kosovo and Bosnia lie bones not only from the recent, savage ethnic wars but also of Germans, Turks, Bulgarians, Albanians, Italians and more, going back to Roman legionnaires and Philip the Great's Macedonians.

Visniec's play is a generic eulogy to the Balkans dead of many ages, populated with ghosts and survivors, but never specific about where we are or who was on which side. We know only that Mother and Father are grieving for a son killed in the vast forest, and are seeking any trace of him that might provide closure. They have returned to a ruined home with a poisoned well, both literally and figuratively, and with neighbors—perhaps recently on the opposite side—cheerfully offering help for a price. A coterie of prostitutes, some transvestite, provides counterpoint in a juxtaposition I didn't fully comprehend, except in the ethnic insults of their scabrous badinage. The sweetest one sings a haunting, mournful song in an Eastern European language I didn't recognize. It would have helped to understand the song (Ovidiu Iloc,

composer), or at least know its language.

As usual, Trap Door offers a first-rate production in its tiny space. The absorbing design concept (Mike Mroch, scenic, Richard Norwood, lighting, and costumes by Bisa Dimitrova and Tonette Navarro) uses a square of white sand upon the black stage to define a forest. Two dozen wires rise as trees, each wire hooked to a metal war remnant such as a pot, lantern or (mostly) land mine. As Father searches for his son's remains, his costume uniquely intertwines with the scenery. The beautifully physicalized performances often pay homage to the European clown tradition at its most solemn and profound, especially Wladyslaw Byrdy and Beata Pilch as Father and Mother.

Still, I didn't see anything intellectually new despite this production's theatrical and emotional qualities. Every conflict produces a body of novels, plays and films authored from national perspectives. Ireland produced an outpouring of literature in response to "The Troubles" of the 1970s-1990s. Eventually, the next generation of Irish writers, such as Martin McDonagh, Conor McPherson and Enda Walsh, put the conflict to bed and moved on. It may be a bit too early for that to happen in the Balkans, but—having seen at least a dozen plays inspired by the Balkan Wars—I'm ready for it.



the word progress... Photo by Michal Janicki

## THEATER REVIEW

### Displays of Affection

Playwright: Terry Horan

At: Horan Productions at

Live Bait Theatre, 3814 N. Clark St.

Phone: 773-960-7881; \$8

Runs through: Jan. 13

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

It's not unreasonable for fledgling comedians, lacking experiences gleaned from extensive travel, to look to their childhood environments for material, nor can they be faulted if the behavior of their elders provides the basis for much of their humor. It is customary in our society for adults to ignore young people to the point of rendering the latter nearly invisible, but those who lurk unrecognized also often find themselves privy to observing their elders behaving in less-than-circumspect fashion.

Among the personalities to be found in Terry Horan's roster of American eccentrics are a seen-it-all cook whose patter has yet to acknowledge the expanding gender diversity of his financial-district clientele. There is also a curmudgeonly senior citizen taking a solitary meal who vociferates over the manners of the affectionate couple at the next table. Then there's the incontinent driver stopped for speeding on his way to the nearest rest-stop.

(It's not ALL geriatrics, however: The show's title inspires a musical interlude set to "Kiss You All Over," in which a lonely dancer's fantasy of his imaginary partner reaches graphic extremities.)

These themes are not without their universality. Unfortunately, in his haste to immerse himself in the character under scrutiny, Horan frequently rushes his set-ups, leaving spectators to locate themselves within sometimes-unfamiliar scenarios. The sketch about a moviegoer encountering culture shock at the concessions counter, for example, is easy enough to comprehend—but why is it so important that we know that the young cineaste is short and his date, vertically overendowed? Our enjoyment of the burger-slinging chef's stream-of-conscious monologue, too, is impeded by Horan's barely registering the customers' responses. It doesn't help, either, that the scenes are separated by pop-tune bridges that ran too long on opening night.

Horan is at his best when his fancy is grounded, not in hostile caricature, but in proportions no bigger than real life—like the discomfort of a freshly absolved sinner at Sunday confession as he wonders if the next penitent has overheard his recitation of unholy deeds, or a father's misgivings on a bird-watching trip with his young son. Observations such as these, defining themselves clearly and quickly, are of far better service to a comedic artist looking to appeal to a greater diversity of audiences than those of his peers at this stage of his career.



## OPERA REVIEW

**The Magic Flute**

Score: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart;

Libretto: Emanuel Schikaneder &amp; Carl Ludwig Giesecke

At: Lyric Opera of Chicago, 20 N. Wacker Dr.

Phone: 312-332-2244 Ext. 5600; \$49-\$254

Runs through: Jan. 22

BY SCOTT C. MORGAN

It's understandable for long-time Windy City opera fans to grumble about The Lyric Opera of Chicago's revival of The Magic Flute. This is the sixth time the Lyric has produced the late German director August Everding's 1986 staging of Mozart's popular 1791 singspiel opera, so it's forgivable when they might be clamoring for something new.

Personally, it's only my second go-round with Lyric's Magic Flute, so I'm not so impatient. Also, Everding's production, enchantingly restaged by Matthew Lata, unquestionably brings a lot of fun and whimsy to one of the most accessible and delightful works to introduce newcomers to the glories of opera.

The Lyric hasn't stinted on vocal or musical talent to bring Mozart's final opera to life, which is a strong reason for paying another visit. That's even if you already know all of set designer Jörg Zimmermann's visual staging surprises.

Conductor and Lyric Music Director Andrew Davis leads the Lyric Opera of Chicago Orchestra in a fleet and breezy account of the uncut score, which teems in a variety of moods ranging from deep solemnity to very catchy folk tunes.

Tenor Charles Castronovo made for a sturdy Prince Tamino (Alex Shrader, a Grand Finals winner of the 2007 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, takes over the role starting Jan. 9), while soprano Nicole Cabell offered up a plucky and gorgeously sung Pamina, the royal daughter of the sparring Sarastro (Günther Groissböck) and The Queen of the Night (Audrey Luna).

French baritone Stéphane Degout injected in plenty of comedy as the not-so-brave "everyman" bird catcher Papageno. Also ramping up the humor were tenor Rodell Rosel as the green-

skinned servant Monostatos and the Queen of the Night's trio of "henchwomen," nicely sung by Elisabeth Meister, Cecelia Hall and Katherine Lerner.

One could quibble with Luna's take on the villainous Queen of the Night, even though she hit all the right notes of the notoriously difficult role on opening night. Instead of vocalizing with the anger of an otherworldly force, Luna sounds more like an angry teenager who didn't get her way.

As many veterans of the Lyric Opera's Magic Flute know, the final duet between Papageno and his future wife Papagena (soprano Jennifer Jakob) always features some kids wearing a Chicago sports team's jerseys, typically a team that has won a recent national championship. This time around the Chicago Blackhawks, Chicago Bulls and Chicago Bears were all represented, which makes you wonder whether this might be a last chance to feature as many teams before the production gets retired. If this conjecture is true, then it's certainly a fitting hurrah for such a durable Chicago production that still stands up well even after the sixth time around.



The Magic Flute. Photo by Dan Rest

## CRITICS' PICKS

**The Caretaker**, Writers' Theatre, through March 25. You simply won't find a better staging of Harold Pinter's quintessential 1960 Comedy of Menace, set in a tough London hood where an old bum nearly comes between two vastly dissimilar brothers. It features beautiful acting and direction. JA

**The Jackie Wilson Story**, Black Ensemble Theater, extended through Feb. 19. The best post-holiday gift that Chicago playgoers could ask for is this revival of Black Ensemble's biggest hit musical in a shiny-bright new theater. "Higher and Higher," brothers and sisters! MSB

**Late Nite Catechism**, Royal George Theatre, open run. Amid all of the controversy over Cardinal Francis George's analogy of Chicago's Pride Parade organizers to the KKK, why not see this long-running show that has been frequently featured on a float in numerous Pride Parades? After all, with Sister's involvement in the parade, what could George possibly object to? SCM

**Pump Boys and Dinettes**, Theo Ubique at the No Exit Café, through Jan. 15. You're right there in the room celebrating with the humble Americans who wear their names embroidered above their hearts in this intimate musical revue. MSB

—By Abarbanel, Barnidge and Morgan

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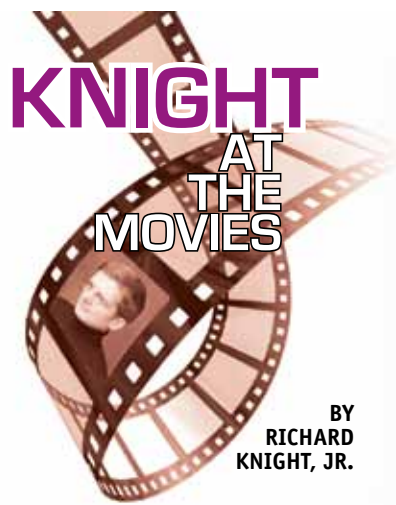
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BY  
RICHARD  
KNIGHT, JR.

## Pariah; Angels Crest; film notes

You can count on one hand—literally—the number of out African-American female film directors working in the industry. Given that rather sobering statistic alone, writer-director Dee Rees' feature debut, *Pariah*, is cause for celebration. Also, it's a tremendous bonus that the movie, a hit at Sundance, lives to its advance buzz and offers audiences a fresh take on the stereotypical coming-out story.

In many ways, 17-year old Alike (played with marvelous intuition by the young actor Adepero Oduye, in her feature debut) is a typical teenager—sullen and secretive around her parents; and dismissive and verbally abusive to her younger sister, Sharonda (Sahra Mellese) when the quartet is assembled around the dinner table. What Alike's mother, office worker Audrey (Kim Wayans), and her father, police officer Arthur (Charles Parnell), don't know—but increasingly suspect—is that she might be a lesbian.

Audrey is having none of it—insisting that her daughter change into more feminine attire, pushing hard for her to go to prom, and giving the stink eye to Alike's friend Laura (Pernell



Adepero Oduye (left) and Kim Wayans in *Pariah*. Photo courtesy of Focus Features

Walker), who is unapologetic about her dyke identity. We know from the outset that Audrey's worst fears have already been realized—that Alike has been sneaking out to dyke clubs with Laura and visiting late night dyke raves with her, too.

Although Alike tries to withstand her mother's pressure, Audrey is a force of nature. The struggle over Alike's identity—along with other problems—is causing a huge strain in her parents' marriage so she finally gives a little when her mother insists that she pal around with a "suitable friend" she has handpicked. Said friend is Bina (the sassy Aasha Davis), who turns out



Thomas Dekker in *Angels Crest*. Photo from Magnolia Pictures

to be an artistic (the girls bond over music and writing poetry) and sexual mentor for Alike. (A seduction scene between the two has a tenderness reminiscent of the one between Whoopi Goldberg and Margaret Avery in *The Color Purple*.) Bina also inadvertently provides Alike the key in giving her the courage to embrace her dreaded "pariah" identity.

The camerawork by Bradford Young—drenched in deep shades of burgundy, emerald, midnight blue and other primary colors—gives the film a sparkle and deep sensuality that adds to the powerful intensity of the story. Rees keeps the camera very close to Alike, whose face runs the gamut of emotions, and the result is somewhat like being given entry to a secret, primal world.

It's a confusing world of no absolutes where definitions—especially when it comes to budding sexuality—are ever-changing. The dark camerawork and pulsing, intoxicating music (it's a very hot soundtrack) emphasize the secretive nature of what we're privy to seeing.

Rees, who wrote *Pariah* based on her own coming-out experiences, has crafted a moving and powerful first effort (an extension of her 2007 short) that is a welcome edition to the lesbian film canon. Aside from a talented cast of fresh faces and a clearly dedicated crew, she has had the good fortune of working closely with her own filmmaking mentor, Spike Lee (who exec-

utive-produced)—not to mention her producer and personal partner, Nikisa Cooper.

Actor Thomas Dekker, a TV hunk making the transition to indie films (such as Gregg Araki's *Kaboom*) goes the tragic route in *Angels Crest*. He plays Ethan, a young father who makes a fatal error in judgment one snowy morning while out in the woods with 3-year-old son Nate. Distracted when he spots a herd of deer, Ethan leaves Nate alone in his pickup truck. When he returns, the young boy is gone and is later found dead, a victim of the elements.

The inhabitants of the tiny hamlet of Angels Crest, situated at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, take sides as to whether Ethan was negligent. The group includes a lesbian couple (Elizabeth McGovern and Kate Walsh); the owner of the town diner where folks convene daily (Mira Sorvino); Nathan's hottie best friend (Joseph Morgan), who is schtupping his ex-wife (Lynn Collins); the town tramp; drunk; and the little boy's mother. Oh, and Jeremy Piven is a young prosecutor who is determined to put Nathan away for a good long time.

All these folks have their own set of problems that are touched on but are never really explored. Although director Gaby Dellal gets some good performances out of her talented cast (with Dekker and Collins, along with McGovern and Walsh as the tender and tough dyke couple, getting top honors), nothing sticks for long in this strangely muted, depressing drama that blows from one scene to the next without any particular rhythm like one of the pretty snow drifts in the film. The scenario is incredibly tragic and when Ameko Eks Mass Carroll, as little Nate, is on camera your heart about breaks—not only at the fate of his character but for the missed opportunities inherent in the material.

### Film notes:

—Queer pioneer, author, cultural and political activist Paul Goodman is the subject of director Jonathan Lee's documentary portrait, **Paul Goodman Changed My Life**. The film is having its Chicago premiere at the Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State St., on Saturday, Jan. 7, and screens subsequently on Jan. 9 and 12. <http://www.siskelfilmcenter.org>

—**The Chicago History Museum**, 1601 N. Clark St.—in support of its yearlong exhibition about the city's queer history, "Out in Chicago" (continuing through March 26)—is presenting a series of LGBT-themed shorts, documentaries and features throughout the month of January. The series, titled *Anything But Straight*, plays every Saturday, 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m. The cost is free with museum admission. The line-up:

Jan. 7—Free to Be You and Me, Hell Divin' Women, Two Spirits, The Strange History of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Milk

Jan. 14—It's Still Elementary, Hannah Free, Small Town Gay Bar, Go Fish, Imagine Me & You

Jan. 21—Daddy & Papa, Becoming Chaz, Out and Proud in Chicago, Philadelphia

Jan. 28—Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin, I Am the Queen, If These Walls Could Talk, The Kids Are All Right

Further information is at <http://www.chicago-history.org>.

—The popular Chicago Filmmakers, 5243 N. Clark St., is hosting the Dyke Delicious series for a ninth season Saturday, Jan. 14, with an evening of shorts by South East Asian lesbian filmmaker Sonali Gulati. The filmmaker, whose documentary *I Am* screened at last fall's Reeling fest, will participate in a Q&A following the screening via Skype. The evening, co-sponsored by Chicago Filmmakers and Black Cat Productions, begins with a 7 p.m. social hour followed by the 8 p.m. screening. Call 773-293-1447 for further information; reservations can be made at [dykedelicious@chicagofilmmakers.org](mailto:dykedelicious@chicagofilmmakers.org).

**Check out my archived reviews at <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com> or <http://www.knightatthemovies.com>. Readers can leave feedback at the latter website.**

# Talking with Dee Rees and Adepero Oduye of 'Pariah'

BY RICHARD KNIGHT, JR.

It's taken out writer-director Dee Rees more than five years to get *Pariah*, her feature-length debut, in front of audiences. However, from award-winning screenings at Sundance and other festivals to critical raves, the movie—a gorgeously photographed and telling coming-of-age story of a closeted African-American teenage lesbian living in the Bronx (based on Rees's own experience)—the rewards have been worth the years of effort. Rees (whose partner, Nikisa Cooper, produced the movie) and star Adepero Oduye, who plays the 17-year-old Alike, chatted with *Windy City Times* about the journey. *Pariah* is in theatres Friday, Jan. 6.

**Windy City Times: I think right at the top we have to talk about the paucity of not only out African-American filmmakers, but female filmmakers as well. That may be one reason why seeing Alike's world seems, at times, like a passage into a secret country. It's not a world we often see in movies.**

Dee Rees: I wanted to tell a story about identity in *Pariah* that transcends race and that transcends sexuality. It's about a woman who's trying to be, and we were really trying to capture the nuance of sexuality. Alike loves women and is really clear on, but her struggle is just trying to learn how to be; she's got this über-butch friend who's pushing her to be hard and that's really not her, and her mother's pushing her to be ultra-feminine and that's not her style, either. She falls somewhere in between and so there's a range of gender identity, and it's okay not to have to check a box—and I wanted to have that layer to this film.

It's a very specific world, but within that world we get a cross-section of people and their experiences. Everybody's different and speaks differently, and I think it's important to point out that as much as these women help to transform Alike, she transforms them, too.

**WCT: I'm a middle-aged gay white male and it might seem surprising that I would be so moved by the experience of this teenaged Black girl, but that speaks to the universality of the movie. Is this the reaction you've been getting from audiences?**

Adepero Oduye: That's been the cool, rewarding, overwhelming part of this whole thing—that we've screened it for many, many different audiences and it's safe to say that most of the audiences have been mostly white and perhaps straight—not sure—but that people have gotten something very specific from the story. It does have a universal appeal. I think Alike's story shows how we are more similar than different.

**WCT: Dee, you've mentioned that all the characters are pariahs—does that also refer, in a larger sense, to the African-American experience in the predominantly white culture?**

DR: It's not meant to be a generalization of the African-American experience necessarily, but within the specific world of these specific characters. They all feel isolated at times. Everybody's just trying to find their place.

**WCT: I love that you wrote this script while working on a movie with Spike Lee—during**

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Adepero Oduye in Pariah. Photo courtesy of Focus Features

**down times on the set. [Laughs] Talk about a good use of your time!**

DR: Yeah, that was my first time on set. (Rees was the script supervisor on Lee's Inside Man.) I was inspired by him to have that kind of experience on my own set. He really took me under his wing and answered my questions and gave me advice. And I have to tell you—on his set I met more Black queer people than I've ever seen on a movie, and I'm very thankful for that experience and opportunity.

**WCT: I think Spike Lee has gotten a bad rap sometimes in that area—particularly back when he made She Hate Me—so I'm glad to hear you address that.**

DR: He has a lot of people who are Black and queer on his sets. I was just coming out at the time so it was great for me to see other Black queer faces every day working in the film business. It was an inspiration to me.

**WCT: Let's talk about the actual nuts and bolts of filming. Did the money just magically appear when Spike Lee signed on as executive producer?**

DR: Spike Lee came on in 2009 right before we shot, and Nikisa Cooper actually did the heavy lifting—raising the money and negotiating the crazy deals that you have to negotiate. Although



Dee Rees in Pariah. Photo by Jenny Baptiste

we had the Sundance pedigree and the front-page raves, a lot of people just saw this as a Black lesbian film and put it in a box, so we had to really fight to get out of that box. Ultimately, the people Nikisa found to invest believed in the story first; They believed in the social bottom line.

Our first investors were a Black lesbian couple we met at OUTfest who had never invested in a film before but believed so strongly in the story. That's why this press tour has been so affirming—to find that the movie is not just this small, gay, Black film as it was being tagged, but that it really is universal in scope and is relatable to all audiences. Having Spike was a really reassuring, affirming thing; he gave us feedback on everything—the budget, the script, the editing—you name it. It was great to have such a master as a mentor. He picked up the phone when a lot of people wouldn't.

**WCT: Did the success of Precious break**

**down a few doors?**

DR: I think it made people aware that there was room for a range of stories and, although our film is not like that, I think it made people feel differently about film. Audiences are savvy and are ready for all different kinds of stories.

**WCT: Some of the scenes with Kim Wayans as your mother are pretty emotionally intense. As an actor, are those the kinds of scenes you look forward to getting to—"the meat" of the story?**

AY: As an actor, it's wonderful if you just really let go and throw yourself in. At the same time, it's challenging because you have to go to places that are not comfortable and, depending upon the week, I might have had a long day of "going there" and being really open and vulnerable and there were certain times I wondered if I had any more to give—if I could continue to go deeper. But that's where a great director like Dee comes in. She created a safe place in order for that to happen. Those scenes were intense and rather thick.

**WCT: Dee—those scenes must have resonated, having gone through them in your own life.**

DR: When I first came out my parents weren't accepting and I went through some tough times with them but in watching those scenes I was just loving the performances and loving the hurt that Kim was showing—she wants to reach out to her daughter, but can't emotionally do that yet. As a director, I was really moved and proud and happy that the actors "went there," and I was excited by the work.

**WCT: Adepero, aside from your work as an actor in the film, watching all the work that Dee and Nikisa did to make this movie happen must have been very inspiring to you.**

AY: They're the reason that I do know for sure that anything is possible. They had this vision for Pariah and it's not been an easy road and they stuck with it—they believed in the beauty of their dream for this project and they never compromised. In spite of everything they kept moving and to be a part of that journey from beginning to end has been inspiring to say the least. I wish there was a bigger word than "inspiring." I owe a lot to Dee.

**WCT: Conversely, Dee, you trusted a lot to this young actor with "your baby," so how do you feel about the result?**

DR: I mean Adepero had it and I couldn't be happier with the result. It's even better than I thought it could be. The movie makes people fall in love with her and it's been beautiful to see her bring this character to life.

**WCT: Is there something you'd like to say to your queer audience here in Chicago?**

DR: I'd really like to thank them for staying with us and we hope that this film will be an affirmation for somebody and when they see it they'll know its okay to be themselves.

AY: Absolutely.

**Artemis to present 'Near & Far' Jan. 21**

Chicago lesbian feminist chorus Artemis Singers will present "Near & Far" Saturday, Jan. 21, 2012, at the Irish American Heritage Center, 4626 N. Knox Ave., at 8 p.m.

Founded in 1980, the 22-member Artemis Singers specializes in music written or arranged by women.

"Near & Far" will feature many songs about social justice and matriarchal culture. Artemis Singers will showcase choral pieces from South Africa, Japan and Sweden. There will also be First Nations (Aboriginal people in Canada) music; a Jewish song in the Nigun tradition; and a Belgian anti-apartheid song.

Artemis Singers will spotlight the work of Chicago composers, too. Artemis member Karen Mooney wrote the chant "Peace in our Time—Obama @ Nobel." Mooney is a chaplain resident for Rainbow Hospice.

Advance "Near & Far" tickets cost a suggested donation of \$15 for adults and \$10

for children age 12 and younger. At the door, tickets are a suggested donation of \$20 for adults and \$10 for children. Visit <http://www.artemissingers.org>.

**Golden Globes viewing party at Icon Jan. 15**

The Showplace Icon Theatre, 150 W. Roosevelt Rd., is broadcasting the 69th Annual Golden Globe Awards television program Sunday, Jan. 15, at 7 p.m.

Movie lovers can view the awards show on five 50-inch HD-TVs located throughout the lounge while sipping on an exclusive "Evening Gown" cocktail (Voli Lyte, sour, triple sec and Sprite; \$12 and 110 calories) and the "Black Tie" (Hennessy cognac, Canton ginger and ginger ale; \$12).

The entrance fee is \$12; see <http://www.showplaceicon.com>.



Artemis Singers. Photo by Kat Fitzgerald (MysticImages Photography.com)

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# Hal Sparks: Man on the move

BY CARRIE MAXWELL

Actor, musician, comedian, radio host and Chicago native Hal Sparks recently talked with Windy City Times about his career, activism and what drives him as a performer.

**Windy City Times: How did your Saturday radio show for WCPT come about?**

Hal Sparks: I was doing a Ustream show every Saturday that was growing in popularity. WCPT approached me about doing a weekend show so I took my Ustream show and easily modified it for the radio. They wanted my show to be a lead in for a new show from the Center on Halsted. (That show is currently not on the air but still in the works. Spark's show is followed by Dick Kay's show at the moment.)

**WCT: Tell me the genesis of the Sexy Liberal tour with Stephanie Miller and John Fuglesang?**

HS: John and I talked about touring together since our material was similar in content (they performed together previously). Also, people wanted to see Stephanie live, so we had to make this tour happen. I agreed to it, John got the thing rolling and Stephanie jumped on board. We started booking locations and it became a phenomenon shortly after that.

**WCT: How has the tour gone so far? What message do you hope to convey to your audiences as you travel around the country? Will the tour make its way back to Chicago?**

HS: It's great to see the response from people as well as how successful it's been. People want their voices heard and our tour is a response to that because right-wing radio shows get more airplay than left-wing radio shows. At our shows people start looking around and realize there are a lot of people out there who think like them.

As for our message: We want to let liberals/progressives know that they are being heard and their voice matters.

Also, we will be coming back to Chicago on March 3 at the Chicago Theater.

**WCT: What was it like to come back to Chicago last June for the Sexy Liberal tour and the Pride parade?**

HS: It was amazing. Chicago is my favorite city in North America. There is the hustle and bustle of NYC and the relaxed open-mindedness of California fused together in a midwestern mash that is healthy and has a sensibility that I really like.

**WCT: Tell me about the WCPT broadcast you did with Miller and Fuglesang during the Pride parade.**

HS: It was hilarious because one of the floats broke down right in front of our booth so they probably got more press than any other float in the entire parade. That was the funny, silly upside of the parade but the downside was some floats were vandalized—but they got fixed and the parade still happened. What happened to the floats was a good example of how a few idiots can ruin something that took a lot of work, hope and heart to create.

The Tea Party is similar to the vandals that destroyed the floats. They aren't good at building things because it takes too much work. Their mission is to bring the government back to zero because they think that is the magic cure. It's the lazy, slacker way of doing something.

What I also find interesting is what catches the media's attention. Thirty Tea Partiers can be outside Congress saying, "Get your government hands off my Medicare" and that gets wall-to-wall coverage on CNN, but 800,000 people watching the Chicago Pride Parade this past June barely gets noticed by the national media.

**WCT: You took a break from the Sexy Liberal tour in August [The Talk's Aisha Tyler filled in**



Hal Sparks. PR photo

**for him] to go to Scotland for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. What was that like?**

HS: It was the first time I've been in one city for a month straight in six years so that was a social experiment for me. On top of that you are in an incredibly old city with a lot of history. When there isn't a festival Edinburgh is a quiet, genteel, highly cultured city and then once a year festival-goers roll in and the place is transformed into a party. Doing shows in the same city for a month was interesting because the same people came to see me over and over again.

Since I don't drink the festival didn't take a toll on me like it did to the other performers. Personally, I think there are enough crazy things in the world that can make you feel drunk like watching a Republican debate. ... Everything in alcohol that makes you feel sick seems to be in the Republican platform these days.

**WCT: What drives your liberal/progressive activism?**

HS: Politicians, corporations and individuals who want to take away people's rights. I want to find out what their motivations and political ideals are so I can stop them from doing what they are doing. It takes a lot of work especially if you want to do it in a non-hostile way.

**WCT: You are a big supporter of the LGBT community. What do you think the next thing that the LGBT community should do to continue the march towards equality?**

HS: Vote. No one in the LGBT community can afford to stay home on election day, ever. During the 2010 mid-terms some LGBT activists convinced liberal/progressive voters to stay home and what we got were legislators who want to reinstitute sodomy laws. People also stayed home because they felt President Obama was moving too slow on Don't Ask Don't Tell but they were proven wrong. The president got DADT ["Don't Ask, Don't Tell"] repealed in the right way through Congress so the next president can't just reverse it with an executive order. It's also important to vote in local and state elections to make sure that the republicans aren't sneaking anti-gay people onto the school boards, for example. ... If you don't vote you can't complain about anyone who gets elected that will work against you as an LGBT person.

**WCT: Tell me about your new show, Lab Rats 2012. [He is currently shooting episodes for the first season, which will debut in early 2012 on Disney XD.]**

HS: Lab Rats is lovely. As a new dad (his son is named Camden) it warms my heart to do programming aimed at kids that is healthy, smart, funny and silly that my son will be able to watch when he gets older. It's a science oriented series with jokes that make kids smarter in the process.

I play a motorcycle-riding billionaire inventor who is treated like a rock star. My new show is a really smart way to promote science with young people since our society doesn't celebrate scientists and science in general.

**WCT: Technology is very important to you. Why?**

HS: If there is a singular drive in the human soul it seems to be towards higher and more complex technological systems. ... Communications technology is shrinking the world and bringing people together in a way that was impossible even 10 years ago. These connections are healthy because ... it makes us realize that humans aren't that far apart in their thinking which is a good enough reason for technology to exist.

A platform like Ustream [where anybody can put on a TV show that looks good] was an impossibility four years ago. Technology has a democratizing effect on society and having the ability to do this all around the world is fantastic.

**WCT: Explain what you mean by "happy ending."**

HS: We talk about some tough stuff on the radio every week but it's important to give people good news. ... So at the end of my show I tell the listeners about positive developments in so-

ciety, for example green technology. We do that so the listeners will have something to think about or look up online that isn't negative.

**WCT: What are your other professional plans for the future?**

HS: I have two Chinese movies that will be shot in China next year [an action movie and a romantic comedy]. Richard Hunter and I are working on a show and I'm working on a book.

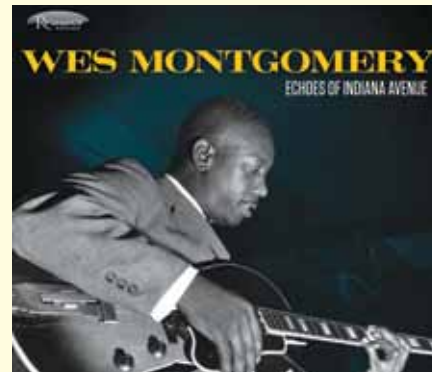
**WCT: You are very passionate about your sponsors. Why is that?**

HS: I chose the companies I wanted to promote. With Threadless, I like their positive business model which gives independent artists a way to pay their rent by selling their designs to the store so they can be made into tee-shirts. I support Steaz, the energy drink company, because it is vegan, fair-trade organic and a low CO2 output company. As for Honda, I went to their safety classes [Sparks drives a Honda motorcycle] and saw the great things they are doing including greening their vehicles. Contrary to what Republicans say about liberal/progressives, I don't have a problem with businesses doing well—but I want them to do well in an ecological and ethical way.

**Sparks will be back in Chicago to perform with his band, ZERO 1, at the Mayne Stage (http://www.maynestage.com) in early 2012. To buy tickets for the Sexy Liberal March 3, visit http://www.sexyliberal.com. For more information on all of Sparks' activities and to connect with him via social networking, visit http://www.halsparks.com.**

## Montgomery CD has Strayhorn song

Resonance Records will release Echoes of Indiana Avenue—the first full album of previ-



ously unheard Wes Montgomery music in more than 25 years—on March 6, 2012, which would have been Montgomery's 88th birthday.

Some consider Montgomery to be one of the greatest jazz guitarists ever. The album showcases Montgomery in performance from 1957-1958 at nightclubs in his hometown of

Indianapolis, as well as rare studio recordings.

Among the songs here are renditions of Erroll Garner's "Misty" and openly gay composer/pianist Billy Strayhorn's "Take the A Train" as well as jazz standards "Darn That Dream" and "Body and Soul."

## Idina Menzel special Jan. 9 on WTTW 11.1

Idina Menzel Live: Barefoot at the Symphony—featuring the Tony-winning actress/recording star—will air Monday, Jan. 9, from 9-10:30 p.m. on WTTW 11.1.

Menzel's concert was taped recently at the Royal Conservatory's Koerner Hall in Toronto. Idina will be live in WTTW's studios for this wide-ranging journey through the Broadway classics, Idina's personal catalogue and fresh musical spins on contemporary songs. Also appearing is her husband, Taye Diggs (Rent, Private Practice, Grey's Anatomy), with Oscar-, Emmy-, Grammy- and Tony-winning composer Marvin Hamlisch ("The Way We Were") leading the orchestra.

## SKETCHY from page 17

hours of laughter, which is so important nowadays that we come together that way."

The 11th annual Chicago Sketch Festival runs Jan. 5-15 at Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont Ave. Tickets are \$14-\$15; call 773-327-5252 or visit <http://www.stage773.com> or <http://www.chicagosketchfest.com>.

### Even more laughs

The Chicago area recently welcomed two new venues for comedy.

The Second City has opened the new Up Comedy Club, which is located at Piper's Alley in the space formerly occupied by the long-running interactive dinner comedy Tony 'n' Tina's Wedding.

Second City President Diana Martinez said there's a lot of potential in this lushly appointed cabaret-style "hybrid comedy club" that seats nearly 300. Martinez said she

hopes the Up Comedy Club will be a multi-use home to standup comedy, children's theater, improvisational comedy troupes, comedy podcasts and some daytime programming to cater to large tour groups.

"The space sort of evolved out of need to find a place to do all the things we loved to do for our amazing talent," Martinez said. "I think it's going to be revolving, changing content that comes out of that space."

The Up Comedy Club is located on the third floor at 230 W. North Ave. Call 312-662-4562 or visit <http://www.upcomedyclub.com> for more information.

Also new to the scene is The Laughing Chameleon, a 75-seat variety club that recently opened in at The Glen Town Center in Glenview. The venue books comedy, magic and variety acts and also offers a bar and small-plate restaurant service. For more information, call 888-685-2844 or visit <http://www.thelaughingchameleon.com>.



## NUNN ON ONE: TELEVISION

# Watch out as 'Tabatha Takes Over' salons, gay clubs



BY JERRY NUNN

Our favorite lesbian hairdresser from Queensland, Australia, is back with a new season on the Bravo Channel. Tabatha Coffey returns to reality television. This time, she just doesn't take over salons but small businesses from a yogurt shop to a bed-and-breakfast.

Being executive producer to the newly re-named show (Tabatha Takes Over) and running her own salon in New Jersey keeps Coffey one to watch. We discussed the fourth season of the program that is still a cut above the rest.

**Windy City Times: Hey, Tabatha. How have you been?**

Tabatha Coffey: I have been very well, thank you.

**WCT: Busy, huh?**

TC: It has been a very busy year but I am not complaining. I love it.

**WCT: We have talked in the past about how your show could apply anywhere, and now you are going all over the place.**

TC: I know! See? Be careful what you wish for...

**WCT: The first episode has the owner living inside her salon, called Jungle Red, in Minneapolis.**

TC: It does.

**WCT: That is crazy.**

TC: Yes, it was disturbing. She really just put everything that she owned into the business. She did it thinking she would be able to save it. She just couldn't get it together to get the money that she needed to not only keep her business afloat but also get herself a life, a home, and all of those kinds of things. It was crazy but understandable. She's a woman who wanted to get it together but went on a downward spiral and couldn't get out.

**WCT: Many business owners sometimes don't know where to draw the line between personal life and work life.**

TC: It happens a lot, especially with small businesses. People stop taking paychecks for themselves and start putting everything they have personally into their business. They sometimes don't realize that although it is noble and great to make those sacrifices if they put everything into it personally if it goes belly up then you really have nothing left. That is the case with Suzanne. If she could not get things back on track she literally would have nothing left.

**WCT: I love it when the group is all excited to see you. Then you come on like gangbusters and their faces just drop.**

TC: [Laughs] It is always, "The bitch is here!" You can see the wheels going in the eyes. Like "Oh, what have I done?"

**WCT: You went to a gay dance club to help there, also.**

TC: I did and it was fabulous!

**WCT: Well, it got fabulous after you took over, right?**

TC: You know what? It was great going. Club Ripples has been an institution in Long Beach for 40 years. They were actually the first gay dance club in Long Beach. They were really the place to go. It was the case of "times have changed, consumers have changed, gays have changed, and everything has changed."

The owners were still very stuck in their ways and wanted to play disco. They didn't want to let people in that had baggy pants because they didn't like that or have a drink on the dance floor. They were so stuck in their ways and enforcing those rules not only on their staff, but on the clients that were coming in, that it wasn't fun anymore. They hadn't changed with the times so it was really getting the owners to realize everything was different, including the gay community. Now you really want people talking about a great Sunday tea dance or a great night out at Club Ripples.

**WCT: I know gay club owners in Chicago that complain about people meeting online and not in the clubs like they used to. It is a different world now.**

TC: I think it is a very different world now but the fact is we still like to go out and socialize. We still like to go meet our friends, have a drink, listen to music and have a great time. You only want to do that when you can have a great time, not when you are not allowed to put a bag on the bar or a drink on the dance floor or you just paid \$3.50 for a bottle of water and they won't give you a glass of tap water. That doesn't work anymore.

**WCT: You also went to the doghouse this time.**

TC: Yes, I did. I took over a doggy day care.

**WCT: Do you have pets?**

TC: I do. I have a dog. I am actually a big dog lover, although walking into a doggy day care with 40 dogs jumping on you was very different than my little puppy at home.

It was really fun for me and will be fun for everyone to see the diversity of businesses out there. They are all really relatable. Anyone out there that has a dog has had their dog's haircut or dropped them off at a day care facility for some reason. You have a certain expectation of how you want your animal to be treated or be taken care of.

All of us, gay or straight, have gone to a bar at some point and had a drink. So we all know what we expect from a good night out, what we will pay or not pay for and how we want to be treated. It has been great going into all of the different businesses, although they are all very diverse—that has been part of the fun. It is something that is very relatable because every single business I have taken over I have been a patron at a business like that.

**WCT: Did you think about taking over a restaurant?**

TC: We did go to a frozen yogurt store. I think anything is a possibility in the future of moving forward, going into businesses and taking them over. It wasn't like we had a list and we said we will go there and not go to that. It is more about finding the right businesses with problems that we can hopefully help. As you will see sometimes we do and sometimes we don't. It is, hopefully, interesting for everyone to watch at home as well.

**WCT: I just went to Provincetown and visited Dougie from season three. He is still fol-**



Tabatha Coffey. Photo courtesy of Bravo

**lowing your advice but was standing out in front of his store.**

TC: Of course he was. I do stay in contact with a lot of the people from episodes of all three seasons. I actually ran into someone the other night who is a friend of Dougie's and spends summers in P-town. Dougie has changed. He may not have gone a hundred percent but he has changed and that is a lot for Dougie because he has been there for a long time and has been stuck in his ways. Any kind of change will help him and help his business.

**WCT: I hope you come back to Chicago next season.**

TC: Not in winter! I hope to come back to Chicago, too, but lately every time I come there for business or personal stuff I am stuck in a snowstorm.

**WCT: We hung out last time you were in town after the hair show. Do you still carry a Blackberry and an iPhone that you work at the same time?**

TC: Of course I do. They are right here with me now. While I am talking to you I am right here on my Blackberry. Now I have added the iPad into the mix.

Watch what happens weekly as a new episode of Tabatha Takes Over businesses every Tuesday premiering Jan. 10. Visit <http://www.bravotv.com> for listings and details.

## Old Town School of Folk Music to hold 55-day celebration

Chicago's Old Town School of Folk Music announces will hold a grand opening in the new East Building, 4545 N. Lincoln Ave. (across from its current Lincoln Square home), with a ceremonial ribbon-cutting and ritual blessing of the bricks Monday, Jan. 9.

The grand opening kicks off a celebration of the school's 55th anniversary, starting Jan. 9 and continuing for 55 days. All three locations in the Old Town School campus (the pair on Lincoln Avenue, and the original site at 909 W. Armitage Ave.) will participate in the 55-day celebration, which features specially priced concerts as well as free classes and workshops.

The new East Building offers a variety of improved amenities, including 16 new classrooms; Szold Hall, a flex-use 2,100-square-foot, 150-seat convertible space; and three large dance studios.

See <http://www.oldtownschool.org> for more information.

## CLICK TO WIN!



**Barry Manilow  
Fri., Feb. 3  
@ The Chicago Theatre**

Singer-songwriter Barry Manilow will perform three shows at The Chicago Theatre on February 2, 3, & 4, 2012.

The announcement of these special concerts coincides with the release of 15 MINUTES, Manilow's first original album in 10 years.

<http://www.thechicagotheatre.com/events/manilow-chicago-0212.html>

ENTER TO WIN one pair of tickets by sending an email with "MANILOW" in the subject line to

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by Mon., Jan. 9 to be entered.

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## TELEVISION

# 'Project Runway' alum Rami Kashou on 'All Stars,' private life

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Rami Kashou had many admirers during his initial run on the reality-competition show *Project Runway*, which Christian Siriano won. However, Kashou is back on *Project Runway: All Stars*, which starts Jan. 5 on Lifetime. Kashou talked with *Windy City Times* about his return to the series; his private life; and the LGBT scene in this country versus the one in the Middle East.

**Windy City Times:** When did you know you wanted to be a designer?

Rami Kashou: It was early, early [in my life]. I don't even really remember. (My mother passed away when I was 3.) My grandmother told me that I used to pull her to the closet. She wore black forever—for what seemed like decades, honestly. She said that I would pick things for her to wear, and they would always be bright colors. [Laughs]

So from an early age I had this interest in clothes, and that eventually led to sketching in my early teens. I would have notebooks and notebooks of sketches. Where I grew up—in the West Bank—my mom's friends would buy fabrics, and I would design looks for them. Then, the local seamstress would make the dress from the design.

**WCT:** It's great that you knew what you wanted to do at an early age.

RK: It is. That's why I came to the States. My goal was to be a designer; it was clear to me even when I was in school.

**WCT:** What are the hallmarks of a Rami Kashou dress?

RK: The first thing is that I think my clothes are romantic. They exude femininity and there's this attention to detail. There's always that visibility of a touch to the dress. In the end, it's also elegant.

**WCT:** I recently interviewed a local designer, Boris Powell; one of his dresses was worn at the 2011 Oscars. When I asked him who his favorite *Project Runway* alumnus was, he said it was you.

RK: Oh, wow—that's amazing! [Laughs] I love that.

**WCT:** He said your designs have "gorgeous silhouettes and beautiful lines."

RK: Oh, that's really nice.

**WCT:** But now I'm wondering what designers make an impact on you.

RK: There's Valentino—I think his designs reflect elegance and timelessness. I also love the free way of imagination and creativity epitomized by Alexander McQueen. The minute you thought you saw it all, he showed you something you'd never seen before. I have tremendous respect for someone like him; losing him was very sad. And I love the craziness of Galliano. They all have inspired me. All of these artists are amazing people who will always be remembered.

**WCT:** You've dressed many celebrities—Penelope Cruz, Heidi Klum and many others. Who's been your favorite?

RK: Honestly, the first one who was a thrill for me was the queen of Jordan, Queen Rania. When you see someone who's so exposed to the world and so beautiful, you expect that person to be so intimidating—except she was the extreme opposite. When I met her, she was one of the most humble person I'd ever seen and I'm thinking, "Wow. She's royalty. She's a queen." But I felt like her best friend. She was very open and



Rami Kashou. Photo courtesy of Kashou

supportive, and she commissioned me to design nine looks for me. That was a surreal moment when I wanted to pinch myself and ask, "Am I really here?"

Secondly, it has to be Heidi Klum. She's always open, and always fun. Right after the taping of the last episode, she walked up to me and said, "We should do a fitting. I want to wear your dresses." I designed eight dresses for her, and she wore each one. She even had me with her in *Forbes* magazine, wearing an outfit made out of [fake] \$100 bills. She's playful, and has been very supportive.

**WCT:** Obviously, you've taped "All Stars" already, and I know you can't tell me what happened. However, are you satisfied with how you performed?

RK: Absolutely; I definitely am. I walked away feeling that I was proud of my work. That's the most important thing.

**WCT:** The first time around, I wondered how you all could compete week after week. Why go through this again?

RK: It's an intense process but, for me, it was about the timing of launching several things. I wanted to gain exposure and showcase my work. As we all know, in this day and age, PR is a huge part of what we do, as is talent. You need to show your work to a larger group of people.

**WCT:** Along with that exposure, there's a flip side. When I Googled your name, a situation came up that involved you at [the West Hollywood, Calif., gay bar] The Abbey [in 2010]. Does that throw you off in any way?

RK: Well, you never expect to be hit in the face with a beer bottle. [Laughs] That's been the only negative experience I've had since competing in season four; everything else has been positive. At the same time, you understand that everything comes with a price—and part of the price is that you lose a significant amount of privacy. But I think that's where you have to be focused on the bigger picture, which involves my business.

**WCT:** Having never been to the Middle East, I'm wondering if there are any similarities between the LGBT scene in the United States

and the scene in the Middle East.

RK: No! [Laughs] You don't have as many options there. There are no LGBT centers, and there aren't really official clubs or meeting spots. It's an underground community; it functions differently than here. It's obviously not a very accepted subject—yet—and I think in some countries, like Lebanon, things are more lenient. It depends on where you are in that part of the region.

**WCT:** What, to you, is the difference between fashion and style?

## BOOKS

## Eleanor Lerman: From mysticism to Occupy Wall Street

BY SALLY PARSONS

Eleanor Lerman has published five acclaimed books of poetry. She has been nominated for a Lambda Literary Award and was, for *The Sensual World Re-emerges*, a finalist in 2010 for the Audre Lord Award for Lesbian Poetry from The Publishing Triangle. In 2011, she received a Guggenheim Fellowship.

In *Janet Planet*, her first novel, Lerman builds on the story of the '60s spiritualist Carlos Castaneda as a metaphor for what happened to many people of that generation. We spoke with Lerman about the Woodstock generation, mysticism, and the Occupy Wall Street movement.

**Windy City Times:** You had stated once that you're not a novelist. Now, here's *Janet Planet*, a novel. What happened?

Eleanor Lerman: While poetry seemed to come naturally to me, fiction writing did not. So it took a long time for me to realize that the poems I was writing really were stories. ... I'm still learning, but I do feel much more comfortable, now, working in all sorts of different writing forms.

**WCT:** *Janet Planet* is based on the life and influence of Carlos Castaneda. Why him?

Eleanor Lerman: His ideas, that there really was magic afoot in the world, that if you applied yourself to gaining spiritual knowledge and being a spiritual warrior, you could break on through to the other side ... and access whatever alternate realities and alternate universes must exist somewhere, really resounded.

But Castaneda's life ended badly and he did a lot of damage. ... When he died, I think the women [who lived with him] were so lost that ... probably at least one and maybe all committed suicide. (It's unclear.) When I read about all this, I was angry at him for letting everyone down and I decided that I would sort of rewrite his life to give him another chance.

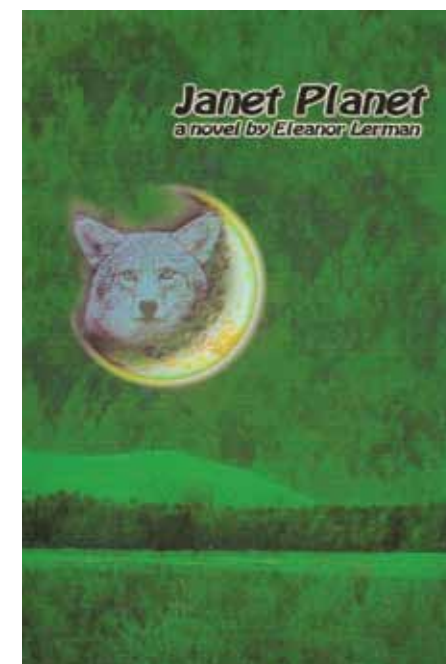
I also wanted to explore how people my age—many of whom devoted a lot of time, thought and energy to spiritual searching when they were younger—lost that path as life took over and we all had to get "real" jobs. ... It becomes clearer and clearer, as we get older, that we're heading towards some sort of portal at the end of life and we're going to go through it, like it or not. It helps, and it's comforting, to try and form some belief about what will be on the other side of that portal. Maybe nothing. Maybe everything. Who knows?

**WCT:** What are the themes in *Janet Planet* for you?

EL: One of the main themes has to do with how people who are disappointed reconstruct

RK: Fashion is something that constantly changes. It's the trend of the moment. I feel that style is timeless, in a way. People who are not necessarily fashionable have a sense of style. Style is a way of expressing oneself; fashion is of that actual moment.

**Project Runway: All Stars premieres Thursday, Jan. 5, at 8 p.m. on Lifetime Television. For more info, visit <http://www.mylifetime.com/shows/project-runway-all-stars>.**



their lives. Janet Harris [called Janet Planet by Castelan, the fictitious Castaneda] was a member of Jorge Castelan's inner circle; for a long time she believed in him and believed in his teachings. But when that all fell apart, she had to remake her life. So she finds herself living on the margins of society, trying to get by without really fitting in. ... So the book also focuses on that idea: How do you survive when you're a bit of a misfit? How much do you compromise? How much do you go on trying to shape your life the way you want, even when it doesn't fit with the structure of society around you?

**WCT:** Congratulations on your Guggenheim Fellowship. Those award funds must be a great help, giving you some space to work. Can you say what are you working on now?

EL: Yes; I'm finishing another novel. ... The whole idea of the mysteriousness of life, and what comes next has taken hold with me. It's going to sound like sci-fi although I don't mean it to be. The theme [is] that, if there are aliens and they have been here, probably they are really interested in the same way we are—or some of us, anyway—in finding out what God is.

And then with Guggenheim Fellowship I will write another collection of poetry. ... I wrote a poem called *We Have Our Dogs and Their Ancestral Blessing*. And my brother and I worked on a video together [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RanN7CO0g5s>] to make that sort of an homage to Occupy Wall Street. That poem will be the linchpin of the next collection of poetry.

**Read the full interview online at <http://www.WindyCityMediaGroup.com>.**



Did you ring in the new year? Wrung out? Well, at least you may have made it into the Nightspots New Year's 2012 collage. Thanks for making it a safe, fun and bat-shit crazy night.

# nightspots

Check out our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/nightspots](http://www.facebook.com/nightspots)) for expanded photo galleries. And stay tuned for the next actual issue of Nightspots, hitting stands January 18, 2012.



**JACKHAMMER** Photos by Pubert



**SIDETRACK** Photos by Dave Ouano



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## WEEKLY DINING GUIDE IN WINDY CITY TIMES



ZED451's charcuterie. PR photo

## SAVOR

BY ANDREW DAVIS

### High points of 2011

Last year provided the opportunity to sample some truly outstanding restaurants, but some truly resonated with this writer. Here are a few of the more incredible eateries I visited in 2011:

—**Hendrickx Belgian Bread Crafter** (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Hendrickx-Belgian-Bread-Crafter/128113613870120>): I still find myself going to this place, 100 E. Walton St., at least once a month. Among the delightful items are brioches, croissants (including brandy and chocolate ones), muffins, country bread and the sinful white-chocolate bread; there is even Belgian coffee. The interior is delightfully sleek, with warm orange hues contrasting with black.

—**La Taberna Tapas** (<http://www.lataberna-tapas.com/>): Nestled just off the University of Illinois at Chicago campus, La Taberna Tapas, 1301 S. Halsted St., serves items with Mediterranean influences—and there isn't a bad item in the bunch. I couldn't even complain about the octopus in the pulpo a la plancha—an animal that is hard for many chefs to cook well.



Chicago Q's mac and cheese. Photo by Steve Johnson

—**Chicago Q** (<http://www.chicagoqrestaurant.com>): For those who think the best barbecue comes through a bulletproof window, this restaurant is proof that “upscale BBQ” can be accomplished. Chef (and reality-TV veteran) Lee Ann Whippen can whip up a Kobe brisket that melts in your mouth; however, the bruleed mac-and-cheese isn't bad, either.

—**ZED451** (<http://www.zed451.com>): This restaurant, at 739 N. Clark St., has something amazing for every palate. The harvest tables are stocked with charcuteries, artisan cheeses and dishes such as tuna and shrimp poke, but there's also a nonstop selection of meat and seafood. Plus, there's an unbelievable rooftop deck. Plus, there's even a shuttle to transport you after the food renders you comatose. Plus ... OK, that's enough, for now.

—**Wildberry Pancakes & Café** (<http://www.wildberrycafe.com>): I've been recommending this place, at 130 E. Randolph St., to various people—and everyone has raved about it. This place surprised me the most of the eateries I visited last year, mainly because of the fantastic dishes and reasonable prices. In addition, I have five words for you: red velvet cake French toast.

### Orange

I went to Orange recently with a couple of friends, and I'm happy to write that my first time at the restaurant was a thoroughly enjoyable one.

The eatery has lunch items, including various sandwiches, salads and soups. (I'll have to return, by the way, to try out the strawberry-blue cheese salad.) However, Orange is known mainly for its breakfast/brunch offerings, and it doesn't disappoint.

Items has divided into “sweets” and “savory” categories. In the former, you'll find everything

from a pancake flight to French-toast kabobs. One of my friends had the cinnamon-roll pancakes—and the smile on his face told me all I needed to know.

Under “savory” are some of the familiar (huevos rancheros) and the different (peppercorn-raspberry egg sandwich). My other friend was apparently in a Dr. Seuss state of mind and had the green eggs and ham (eggs scrambled with basil pesto). I highly recommend the chorizo hash, which has just the right amount of kick.

Orange has four locations in Chicago, with restaurants in River West, River North, Roscoe Village and Lincoln Park. See <http://www.orang-restaurantchicago.com>.



Photo by Andrew Davis

### Charlie Trotter's closing

According to the Chicago Sun-Times, Charlie Trotter is closing his world-famous restaurant in August after a quarter-century in the business.

Trotter, 52, has called this a “sabbatical,” as he plans to travel the world with his wife and go back to school to study philosophy and political theory.

For those who think the closing is for financial

reasons, Trotter said that's not the case. “We've always been profitable, that's for sure,” he said. “We've certainly slowed down like a lot of high-end restaurants, but we've always been able to make money. We've always been busy.”

Among the items on the restaurant's current grand menu are steamed Alaskan sable with crosnes, sunchokes and peekytoe crab; and 72-hour braised shortrib with tamarind, pickled kohlrabi and crispy lotus root.

Trotter's To Go, 1337 W. Fullerton Ave., will remain open.

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chicago  
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## LOCAL NEWS

# Gay-bashing at Queer Social event launches uproar

BY ERICA DEMAREST

The community is abuzz following a Dec. 8 gay-bashing incident at Queer Social Club (QSC) at Archie's Iowa Rockwell Tavern, 2600 W. Iowa St. Held the first Wednesday of each month, QSC is a low-key neighborhood gathering for West Side LGBTs.

According to eyewitness accounts, three men walked into Archie's sometime after midnight and began calling patrons "faggots" upon realizing an LGBT event was taking place. When Archie's staff and several customers asked the men to leave, a physical fight erupted.

Several guests said they experienced severe bruising as a result of being shoved, beaten and tossed into furniture. At least one patron called 911.

The Chicago Police Dept. (CPD) dispatched officers to Archie's at approximately 1:15 a.m. to answer a "battery in progress" call, said Police News Affairs Officer Daniel O'Brien. By the time officers arrived, the three instigators had already left, allegedly vandalizing patrons' bicycles as they went.

No official police reports were filed at the time. O'Brien said it was likely that those present did not wish to file or that their injuries were not severe enough to necessitate official

documentation. No ambulances or medical personnel were ever called to the scene.

In the days following the Dec. 8 incident, many community members grew increasingly angry with Archie's perceived indifference. The family-run bar never issued an official statement or filed a police report.

"You need to issue some kind of statement to the patrons of your bar just explaining to everyone what happened," said Paul Hartman, one of the patrons injured in the scuffle. "That's a responsibility you have. You need to take action and file a police report... My question to [Archie's] is: Why aren't you doing anything? This just doesn't make any sense to me."

On Dec. 21, several community members created a "Pink Panther Justice Bureau" Facebook page that details the Dec. 8 events and criticizes Archie's "minimal response."

Archie's issued an official statement on its own Facebook page the following day. Katrina Prorock, whose family owns the bar, said it was never her intention to keep Archie's regulars in the dark.

"It never occurred to us to issue a public statement because we were more interested in cooperating with the police department on the investigation," Prorock said. "Our first thought wasn't PR. Our first thought was cooperating."

Prorock said she's spoken with the police and would gladly share security footage if the CPD requested it. To date, no such request has been made.

Although some patrons have pushed Prorock to file a police report, she doesn't plan to do so since Archie's didn't experience property damage as a result of the incident. Prorock does, however, support victims of the attack as they file individual police reports for injuries sustained.

"There are accusations on Facebook that the bar prevented people from talking to the police," Prorock said. "That is wholly untrue. I don't even know how to defend myself against that because it's blatantly untrue."

Prorock said events that transpired were isolated and completely unprecedented for the small bar, which she describes as having a Cheers-like atmosphere.

"We are so sad that something like this happened," she said. "We want to be a community bar where the neighborhood comes together. For this to happen to any one of our customers—gay or straight—it hurts us because we don't run that kind of establishment."

Archie's has been hosting QSC gathering since March 2010; the bar plans to increase security measures at upcoming meetings.

"It's a risk when you take a queer party and put it in a straight bar," said Erik Roldan, a Chances Dances co-organizer. "It's a risk that's definitely worth taking, but it comes with responsibilities with regards to making sure that if you're trying to carve out a safe space for the LGBT community, that it's actually safe."

Roldan, whose monthly Chances Dances events are comparable to QSC events, said much of the backlash against Archie's can be attributed to the slow speed with which the bar responded.

"Targeted violence against the LGBT community happens everywhere and all the time; sometimes we can forget that," Roldan said.

"The queer community in Chicago is really solid. We look out for each other. To have something like this happen and not know, not have it publicized, that's crazy. I think that's what the initial concern was."

## Cocktail prepares to reopen

BY KATE SOSIN

Boystown mainstay Cocktail bar is readying to reopen after a month of being shuttered to due tax problems, according to owner John "Geno" Zaharakis.

Zaharakis said that the bar will reopen in early January and throw a grand reopening party in mid-January, the details of which will be announced after New Year's.

Cocktail has been closed since Nov. 28 after losing its liquor license due to overdue sales taxes owed from an audit last year. Similar problems caused the bar to close for three days in September.

Zaharakis said that the bar has secured a loan that will allow them to reopen in the new year.

A combination of factors set the bar behind on its overdue payments, he said. Cocktail underwent major renovations in recent years, while the bar was audited and the economy slowed.

Sue Hofer, spokesperson for the Illinois Department of Revenue (IDR), confirmed that Cocktail's license could be restored as soon as back taxes are paid. Hofer said that the money owed is from sales taxes, just like those that all businesses collect and are required to forward on to the IDR.

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### MOVERS

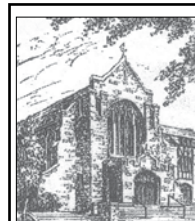
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# calendar

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## Wed., Jan. 4

**3D Karaoke and \$1 Drinks** Join Velvet Rope for \$1 drinks, dancing, and karaoke hosted by Lyndon! 5pm, 708-358-8840, Velvet Rope, 728 W. Lake St., Oak Park, <http://velvetropelounge.com>

**Neighborhood Night** Every Wednesday evening is Palette Bistro's local neighborhood night. Anyone with a 60614 or 60657 zip code gets 15 percent off the bill; 6pm-11:30pm, Palette Bistro, 2834 N. Southport Ave.

**Gay Liberation Network organizing meeting** Join with Chicago's LGBT direct action group at their monthly organizing meeting—new members welcome! 7pm-9pm, 773-209-1187, Berger Park Cultural Center 6205 N. Sheridan Rd., <http://www.gayliberation.net>

**\$1 Drink Night** Enjoy \$1 cocktails, and beer drafts and wine all night long! Free entry before 9pm, \$7 cover after; 8pm, Spin Nightclub, 800 W. Belmont Ave., <http://www.spin-nightclub.com>

**You're The Star Karaoke with Honey West** Take your place in the spotlight as hostess, Honey West entertains throughout! An evening and a diva not to be missed! 9pm, Roscoe's, 3356 N Halsted St., <http://www.roscoes.com>

## Thursday, Jan. 5

**American Veterans for Equal Rights (GLBT veterans)** Monthly meeting first Thursday of each month. 7pm, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted, <http://www.averchicago.org>

**Sara Levine reading Treasure Island** When a nameless narrator in a dead-end job and a passionless relationship, complete with

## TIM WILL REVEAL Saturday, Jan. 7

Timothy Stewart-Winter (right) will lend a queer perspective to the American Historical Association conference.

Photo courtesy of Stewart-Winter



a bad attitude, reads Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* on a whim, she decides to turn her life around by following in the footsteps of Jim Hawkins. 7:30pm, Women & Children First, 5233 N. Clark St., <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

**The Ultimate Open Mic - LIVE music karaoke** It's open mic done like no other. Acoustic LIVE music karaoke. You can use Lloyd's guitar or he will play for you. 100's of songs with word sheets to choose from. Take the next step after karaoke. Be in the band. You are the star. 9:30pm, 773-871-8887, Charlie's, 3726 N. Broadway, <http://www.facebook.com/events/315969498424292/>

**SIN Thursdays** Hosted by Mistress Mercedes with the sexiest burlesque, fetish, and sideshow performers. Featuring alt/indie/rock videos with VJ Bobby Marley and all House with DJ Ron G on the Dancefloor; 10pm, Roscoe's, 3356 N Halsted St., <http://www.roscoes.com>

## Friday, Jan. 6

**Women Veterans: Art Show** Art Reception Group exhibit of art by women veterans on display through Feb. 18, 2012. \$5. donation at the door is suggested. 5pm-9pm, Liz Long Gallery, Urban Art Retreat, 1957 S. Spaulding Ave., <http://www.urbanartretreat.com>

**First Friday Networking Social** Join Equality Illinois PAC for the super-popular monthly First Friday Networking Social. A big crowd always comes out for First Friday, so please stop by for the fun, cocktails, and prize drawings. For a \$10 donation to the Equality Illinois PAC, you receive two drink tickets and a ticket for a door prize drawing. 6pm-8pm, Sidetrack, 3349 N Halsted St, <http://eqil.org/events.html>

**Bi-Polar Fridays at @mosphere Bar** Every Friday the ONLY place to be is @mosphere Bar in Andersonville for Bi-Polar Friday's. Hosted by Regina Upright; 10pm, 773-784-1100, @mosphere, 5355 N. Clark St., <http://atmospherebar.com>

## Saturday, Jan. 7

**Burning Bowl** A longstanding Affinity tradition involves purging the previous year's challenges and negativity, writing down affirmations, goals, and focus areas for the current year, words of inspiration, special performances, and fellowship. The event is also a great place to learn about the organizations accomplishments, direction for the new year, and upcoming events. Co-hosted by Amigas Latinas! 1pm-3:30pm, Hyde Park Union Church, 5600 S. Woodlawn Ave., <http://www.affinity95.org>

**American Historical Assoc. confab: Timothy Stewart-Winter session** Presentation of paper on two features of the late 20th-century metropolitan landscapes: the rise of new, more visible queer enclaves, and the persistence of an extraordinary degree of racial segregation. 2:30pm, Chicago Marriott Downtown, Michigan State Room, <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/gay/lesbian/news/article.php?aid=35301>

**9 to 12 No Tap Bowling League** Longest-running GLBT Bowling League in suburban Chicago 191 South River Road (just north of Rand Road) in Des Plaines; 9pm, 630-567-7196, River Rand Bowl, Des Plaines

**CAKE Chicago** Inclusive, eclectic queer music events; 14 bands for \$5. Come dressed as your favorite Prince moment and win a prize! 9pm, Red Line Tap, 7700 N Glenwood Ave, <http://https://www.facebook.com/kechicago>

## Sunday, Jan. 8

**Taverna 750 First Call Brunch** Come sample the amazing food and drink of Taverna

750. Spruce up your Sunday as Taverna 750 unveils its tasty creations and wonderful libations. \$20 packages to meet your Sunday Brunch goals! 11am-3pm, Taverna 750, 750 W. Cornelia Ave., <http://www.taverna750.com>

**3rd Annual Shelter Shiver** Help raise money with Chicagoland animal lovers by doing something a little different - take a dip in Lake Michigan! Register now and join ALIVE Rescue for their first fundraiser of 2012! 11am-1pm, 773.913.8100, North Avenue Beach, 1600 N. Lake Shore Dr., <http://www.aliverescue.org>

**Asians and Friends Chicago** Second stop Crew, 4804 N. Broadway, where, dresses as superheros, we'll run around the block for a free shot. This is the third year in a row AFC has enacted this event, with each year getting bigger and bigger. 12:30pm, Furama, 4936 N. Broadway, Chicago, <http://www.afchicago.org>

**Chicago Prime Timers** January Open Social, 6pm social hour/7pm dinner. \$20. members, \$25.guests; 1:45pm, 773-844-1005, Ann Sather - Belmont, 909 W Belmont Avenue

**Karen Doornebos reading Definitely Not Mr. Darcy** Motivated by a \$100,000 prize, a struggling divorced mother auditions for a trivia quiz about Jane Austen, only to find herself unexpectedly cast in a public television reality dating show set in 1812, where competitors vie to win the money and heart of Mr. Wrightman, the heir to a fabulous estate. 3:30pm-4:30pm, Women & Children First, 5233 N. Clark St., <http://www.womenandchildrenfirst.com>

**Ferron with Bitch** Concert; 7:30pm-10:30pm, The Ark, Ann Arbor, Mich., <http://theark.org/3051.html>

## Monday, Jan. 9

**Lillstreet Art Center's winter 2012 classes** Hundreds of popular five- and 10-week long courses at Lillstreet Art Center's recently renovated and expanded 40,000 square-foot space with courses ranging from ceramics, metalsmithing and jewelry, to painting and drawing, textile arts, printmaking and glass flameworking for all skill levels. Second session begins the week of Feb. 13. Registration for Winter 2012 classes open now. 9am-10pm, Lillstreet Art Center, <http://www.lillstreet.com>

**Salsa lessons** Join the Velvet Rope for open Salsa Lessons with Anna Marie every Monday. Stick around for open salsa dancing. Bring your partner or come alone; 7pm-11:30pm, 708-358-8840, Velvet Rope, 728 W. Lake St., Oak Park, <http://velvetropelounge.com>

**Recovery Over the Rainbow** New Narcotics Anonymous sponsored/governed meeting, geared toward GLBTs and open to the public. Questions to Anthony Oltean; 8pm-9pm, Haymarket Health Education, 20 N. Sangamon St.

**LGBT Grief Support Group** Offered the second and fourth Mondays of every month. Monthly Support group for members of the LGBTQ community who have experienced a loss through death and are seeking support in the grieving process. Pre-registration is required. This group is offered in collaboration with Rainbow Hospice. To register or receive more information, please contact Melisa B Bailey, PsyD, Manager of Mental Health Services at 773-472-6469 x 466 or [m Bailey@centeronhalsted.org](mailto:m Bailey@centeronhalsted.org); 8pm-10pm, Center on Halsted, 3656 N Halsted, <http://www.centeronhalsted.org>

**United House: A Night of Unity in House Music** Join Hydrate Nightclub, ChicagoPride.com, and host Cyon Flare for United House: A Night of Unity in House Music, featuring Resident House DJ Semaj; 9pm, Hydrate, 3458 N. Halsted St., <http://www.hydratechicago.com>

**Idina Menzel Live: Barefoot at the Symphony** The Tony-winning Broadway star and television, film, and recording artist



## JAN POWER

Tuesday, Jan. 10

"Ask Jan Schakowsky" will take place at 1818 Dempster, Evanston.

Official head shot

Idina Menzel (*Wicked*, *Rent*, *Glee*) in the world premiere of a concert taped recently at the Royal Conservatory's beautiful Koerner Hall in Toronto. Idina will be live in our studios for this wide-ranging journey through the Broadway classics, Idina's personal catalogue, and fresh musical spins on contemporary songs, threaded together by her irresistible charm and wit. Also appearing is her husband Tye Diggs (*Rent*, *Private Practice*, *Grey's Anatomy*), with Oscar, Emmy, Grammy, and Tony-winning composer Marvin Hamlisch ("*The Way We Were*") leading the orchestra. 9pm-10:30pm, WTTW-TV, Channel 11, <http://www.wttw.com>

**Live Band Karaoke with Amy Armstrong** Every Monday night at 10PM in the Front Bar, hosted by the one and only Amy Armstrong; 10pm, Roscoe's, 3356 N Halsted St., <http://www.roscoes.com>

## Tuesday, Jan. 10

**Ask Jan Schakowsky** Come with questions. Refreshments will be served. 6:30pm-8:30pm, 1818 Dempster St., Evanston

**Pow Wow Tuesdays** Bring your poetry every Tuesday. \$5 cover, food at 7:30pm, open mic at 8:30pm. 7:30pm, Jeffery Pub, 7041 S Jeffery Blvd

**Bottoms Up Bingo!** Join Miss Tajma Hall every Tuesday as she hosts Bottoms Up Bingo! The balls start rolling at 9:30 weekly. 9:30pm-11:30pm, 708-358-8840, Velvet Rope, 728 West Lake Street, <http://velvetropelounge.com>

**Drag Race with Frida Lay** Chicago's only amateur drag contest, hosted by Frida Lay! A hit at Roscoe's since its premier in 2000. 10pm, Roscoe's, 3356 N Halsted St, <http://www.roscoes.com>

## Wed., Jan. 11

**You're The Star Karaoke with Honey West** Take your place in the spotlight as hostess, Honey West entertains throughout! An evening and a diva not to be missed! 9pm, Roscoe's, 3356 N Halsted St, <http://www.roscoes.com>

## Thursday, Jan. 12

**In the Life** This episode: First Class Citizens. Inspired by Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of equality, we look back at how LGBT rights intersect with the broader movement for civil rights in this country: A Day In The Life of Honorable Judge Deborah A. Batts; A conversation with Jonathan Capehart & Julian Bond; and Gay Pioneers, two of the earliest gay rights organizers, Frank Kameny and Barbara Gittings. 11pm, WTTW-TV



## WICKED FUN

Monday, Jan. 9

Idina Menzel, star of the original Broadway production of *Wicked* and currently on the TV show *Glee*, is featured in "Idina Menzel Live: Barefoot at the Symphony" on WTTW.

PR photo



# BILLY MASTERS

"I asked him if he's elected, how does he plan to engage gay Americans. How are we to support him? And he told me to support Obama."—Scott Arnold, adjunct professor of writing at William Penn University, talks about his encounter with Newt Gingrich. Of course, I wasn't really planning on voting for him, anyway.

I always hate launching into how I feel about the new year because, only a few hours in, it seems much like 2011. So far, there are no big surprises. As usual, Ryan Seacrest ably assisted Dick Clark's drooping ball. By the by, Dick is now down to five minutes of the live broadcast. Then he was hurriedly whisked away ...probably to some underground cryogenics holding tank (which probably has a spray-tan attachment). Meanwhile, on CNN, Kathy Griffin (who could have used a spray tan) stripped for Anderson Cooper (ditto) and made him giggle like Kendra Wilkinson—something he agreed with! And I watched two Lindsay Wagner films with dear friends. If the rest of 2012 is this predictable, it's gonna be awfully dull. Thank God for the Mayans!

Alas, my holiday season wasn't all so dull, as I bade farewell to one of my favorite people in the world. Lynn Samuels, a radio broadcasting legend, passed away unexpectedly on Christmas



**Patti LuPone (above) and Glenn Close: Clash of the titans?**

Eve. This is almost poetic since Samuels, who was raised in a Jewish household, loved Christmas more than anyone I knew. She'd play Christmas carols on her radio show every year, singing along at the top of her lungs in her trademark off-pitched tones, which delighted (and horrified) listeners. Lynn was outspoken, blunt, brilliant and passionately loyal. But most of all, she had the quality I admire most in people—she was unapologetically unique. She held firm to her convictions, even when they resulted in professional (and personal) limitations. In these days when everyone wants to conform and play the game, Lynn was true to one thing—herself. She truly lived exactly the way she wanted to. You can listen to some of her classic moments and join in the remembrances of her life at [www.LynnSamuels.com](http://www.LynnSamuels.com).

Adam Lambert was dealing with some drama of his own while in Finland with his boyfriend, Sauli Koskinen (a Finnish reality star). Apparently, the two were out partying at a Helsinki gay bar, Don't Tell Mama, when they got into a fracas (which, I believe, is a Finnish version of a fight). They were thrown out of the club and continued their contretemps (a Finnish version of a brawl) outside.

The couple had been clubbing with former Miss Helsinki, Sofia Ruusila. (Can I just interrupt this story to say I really wish I were famous enough to be hanging out with a Finnish beauty queen? Even an ex-one. Or, frankly, anyone who spells their name with two U's in a row!) Any-

hoo, the police were called and the boys were arrested at 4 a.m. But no one has said what happened to Ruusila! The next day, Adam Tweeted, "Jetlag+Vodka=blackout. Us+blackout=irrational confusion. Jail+guilt+press=lesson learned. Sauli+Adam+hangover burgers=laughing bout it. :-)" Me+this story=YAWN!

Then there is the tumultuous love life of Marc Jacobs. I dunno about you, but I was sitting on the edge of my seat waiting for him to marry sexy Lorenzo Martone when they got engaged back in 2009. Sometime last summer, Martone reported that the two were no longer together. Since then, there have been a few names floated about in alleged relationships with Marc. Recently, Marc became romantically linked with porn star Harry Louis who, like Martone, is Brazilian. The rumors started after Harry Tweeted a photo of the two of them and said, "What a great weekend thanks to the sweetest guy on earth, Marc Jacobs, see you soon in Paris baby." The two of them allegedly met in London. Harry later Tweeted a photo of himself in Paris, saying, "See you soon Paris...Love every single minute of it, and yea, I'm in love again... It feels nice, and I'm so happy!!"

Not one week later came photos of Marc and ... *quelle surprise* (as they'd say in France), ex-fiancé Martone, strolling along the beach in Saint-Tropez. So what is going on? Is Marc with Lorenzo? Harry? Both? Neither? Who knows. The only thing we know for sure is that Harry and his enormous appendage are no longer on RentBoy ... and that usually means love—or a conviction. Often it's hard to tell the difference!

I must acknowledge one of my favorite annual events—the Kennedy Center Honors. I would like one year to go by without mentioning that Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg lumbered out like Chaz Bono doing the Argentine tango, but, alas, this was not the year. I won't even discuss her rockin' out to Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline" in her burqa-esque gown. No, I want to talk about the tribute to Barbara Cook. Right onstage, for all to see, was the unlikely duo of Patti LuPone and Glenn Close—the Norma Desmonds of London and Broadway. I harkened back to Patti's memoir, where she repeatedly mentions her feelings about her replacement with quips like, "Oh, did I mention Glenn Close never, ever called me?" To have been a fly on the wall backstage in D.C. ...

Our first "Ask Billy" question of the year comes from Luis in Mexico City. He asks, "Do you know about twin Brazilian brothers who are doing porn? They're SO hot!"

Márcio and Marcos Patriota got quite a bit of attention when they turned up in the Brazilian magazine *Las Mag* in a shoot called "Ménage à 3." Shortly thereafter, they did a pictorial for *FantasticsMag* that was even more sizzling—probably because it was just the two boys (no offense to our female readers, of course). Their work is reminiscent of the early work of the lovely Brewer Twins ... except this is a pair of rippling Latino boys. The Patriotas are certainly gorgeous and ... well, uninhibited. They haven't actually done porn, but there's a hot behind-the-scenes video from this shoot. I'll be happy to christen the New Year by posting it on BillyMasters.com.

When I'm getting all bilingual on you, it's definitely time for me to end yet another column. Of course, I wouldn't be surprised if Anderson is checking out [www.BillyMasters.com](http://www.BillyMasters.com)—he'd love those Brazilian twins! If you have any questions, concerns, or resolutions you want to share, drop a note to [Billy@BillyMasters.com](mailto:Billy@BillyMasters.com) and I'll get back to you before Patti and Glenn sing "Anything You Can Do (I Can Do Better)"! So, until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

2012.  
See Sidetrack Turn  
XXX.

(that's 30...where's your dirty mind at?)

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# Turner, Sexton local LGBT athletes of the year

## SPORTSMAN OF THE YEAR

### Cameron Turner: A 'Menace' in several sports

BY ROSS FORMAN

Cameron Turner, in his seventh year playing gay sports in Chicago, managed five sports in 2011: softball, basketball, volleyball, flag football and dodgeball.

Turner, 39, who is partnered and lives in Chicago's Ravenswood neighborhood, is a partner at Segal McCambridge Singer & Mahoney.

He was the captain of the Spin Menace, Chicago's only top-tiered A-Division softball team. He also in 2011 played recreation division basketball, volleyball in the BB division, and B-Division football for the Futbol Boys. His dodgeball team was the Evil Empire.

Turner's commitment to the local LGBT sports community earned him the 2011 Male Athlete of the Year honor, chosen by a select group of fellow LGBT athletes.

Turner is a softball outfielder, basketball forward, volleyball middle hitter and multi-position football player.

"I like playing softball the most, probably because I play it better than other sports," Turner said. "I like watching college football and basketball because I am a huge Notre Dame fan."

"Our 2011 softball team won both the regular-season and the playoffs in our straight league

in Elmhurst. We placed third at the NAGAAA Cup Tournament and fifth in the Gay Softball World Series, held in Chicago in late-summer. In spring volleyball, we placed second in the regular-season. In spring football, we placed first. In dodgeball, we placed first during the regular season and second in the playoffs.

"Sports are the center of my social life in the community. The vast majority of my good friends are through sports. In 2011, I just had a lot of fun and met even more great people through the sports leagues."

Turner said the softball showing in the straight league in suburban Elmhurst was, "really impressive." After all, the team didn't lose a game all season.

"It was yet another amazing year in 2011 on the local LGBT sports scene," Turner said. "Softball is the focus of my sports participation, and 2011 was particularly special with the [Gay Softball] World Series [being held] in Chicago."

His sporting goals for 2012 are simple: "To fare better in the World Series and give soccer a shot."

Turner's LGBT sports career highlight was winning the World Series championship with the Spin Cougars in 2009.

—Favorite professional team: Chicago Cubs

—Favorite professional athlete: "Can't say I have one."

—Cubs or White Sox: Cubs

—Final quote: "It was another outstanding year in 2011 ... can't wait for 2012."



Cameron Turner and Emily Sexton. Photos courtesy of Turner and Marcela Haber-Bishop, respectively



## SPORTSWOMAN OF THE YEAR

### Emily Sexton: Outstanding in her fields

BY ROSS FORMAN

Emily Sexton was a four-sport standout in 2011, mixing basketball, softball, flag football and dodgeball in her ninth year playing gay sports in Chicago.

Sexton, 32, is a fifth- and sixth-grade science teacher who lives in Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood. She is married to Jennifer Hostetler.

Sexton's commitment to the LGBT sports scene earned her the 2011 female athlete of the year honor, nominated by a select group of fellow LGBT athletes.

In 2011, Sexton played basketball for the Knockers in the Recreation Division, and for the Knockers in softball, too (C-Division). She also was the quarterback for Spin Blue (Recreation Division) and played dodgeball for Spin Average Janes.

Her favorite sport is softball.

"I like the summer sun," Sexton said. "I can't stand winter, so I enjoy the chance to be out and active in the warm weather. I think college softball is exciting to watch and I love the skill level that softball takes. There's so much strategy involved that most people don't realize. It's not just hitting a ball and running bases."

In 2010, Sexton played for the Knockers, who were the C-Division softball champions. The team finished in second-place in 2011 with one loss. Her basketball team also finished in second-place.

"It's great to have an organization, [the Chi-

cago Metropolitan Sports Association, CMSA] that gives us the opportunity to participate in so many sports," Sexton said. "I don't think I have many personal highlights from 2011. I had a few nice diving plays in softball or amazing passes in football, but, most of 2011 was about team accomplishments for me."

"It's great to see how CMSA is expanding and offering new sports and options each year. As a CMSA softball board member, it's been really great to see the number of teams and players increase each year."

In 2012, Sexton's softball team is moving into the B-Division, "so a goal would be to continue to do well," she said. "My goal for [flag] football would be to win a few more games. I was a new quarterback on an established team, so it took most of the season to get our timing down and for me to fully learn the plays. [Things] will be better in 2012."

Sexton said her LGBT sports career highlight was when the Knockers won the championship in 2010 or the Bushwackers winning the C-Division football championships a few years ago, probably 2007.

"We only had seven players show up most of the season and I broke a finger on my throwing hand," she said. Still, "we beat PYT and Raw Energy in the playoffs after winning only one game all season."

"Another [career] highlight would be our Chicago Thunder T's winning three of four pool-play games in the World Series in Las Vegas. Sadly, the rest of the tournament didn't go as well."

—Favorite professional team: "I'm not a huge fan of professional sports. I'd rather watch college sports. I'm an Iowa Hawkeye fan."

—Favorite professional athlete: Brian Urlacher  
—Cubs or White Sox: Cubs

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## A SHORT SALE CAN HELP SELL YOUR HOME

**Q.** I have been trying to sell my house as I can't afford the payments anymore. My realtor suggested that I do a short sale. Will it benefit me?

**A.** A short sale is a sale of real estate where a lender takes less than the amount owed on their note/mortgage and, in exchange, releases their lien on the property. Anyone can attempt a short sale. However, an attorney usually has better results in dealing with lenders than a person acting for themselves. In completing a short sale, the seller of the real estate is able to convey the real estate without having the full amount necessary to payoff the liens on the property.

Step one is contact the lender. Call the lender and request the department that handles short sales. Large lenders can have many departments and require many phone calls to locate the proper person. Make sure you get names and phone numbers for follow up and future reference.

Typically the lender knows the market conditions and fair market value of the real estate. You will have to convey your problem, e.g. "It's been on the market for six months and this is the first and only firm offer." The lender may ask you for comparables or a market analysis, which you can get from the real estate broker.

Next, the lender will want a copy of the contract to know the transaction and to be sure that it is legitimate. It is also possible that the lender will request a copy of the listing agreement so that they can be sure there is nothing shady about the commission percentage and relationship with the broker.

The lawyer should prepare a draft closing statement for the lender. The lender will want to know—to the closest dollar—the amount of money they can expect from the closing. Too know this your lawyer will have to do a draft closing statement with every known amount (taxes, title fees, attorney fees, tax stamps, etc.) except the lender's payoff figure. The payoff figure should be the NET amount left over. You will not get any of the proceeds.

Most importantly request a Waiver of Deficiency: This is not an automatic. The lender may be happy to give you a short sale depending on the parameters of the market. However, don't assume it's also a waiver of possible deficiency on the loan. You should request it. The lender may require a Financial Statement to substantiate the rationale for a waiver of the deficiency.

If approved, the lender will prepare a letter for the Title Company listing its requirements from the closing. Also, a closing letter with a range of acceptable amounts for the lender is best, though not always something they will agree to do.

Finally, make your contract contingent on lender approval. This protects you as seller from claims by the buyer.

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## CMSA women's basketball sign-ups

Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association women's dodgeball and basketball leagues are having signups soon.

The women's basketball league will be on Saturdays starting with an open gym Jan. 7; the first games are Jan. 14. It is a 10-week regular season with one day of playoffs March 24. Games are at Pottawattomie Park, 7340 N. Rogers Ave., with the first game starting at 10:15 a.m. and continuing until 4:15 p.m.

There are two divisions, competitive and rec. (Those who played college ball in the past 10 years must play in the competitive division.) The team fee is \$400 and the player fee is \$45. All fees must be paid online on the Chicago MSA website.

For more info email Marcia league com-

missioner at womensbb@chicagomsa.org or visit [http://www.chicagomsa.org/cmsa\\_new/Leagues/Basketball/BasketballWinterWomensLeague.aspx](http://www.chicagomsa.org/cmsa_new/Leagues/Basketball/BasketballWinterWomensLeague.aspx).

## Chicago Sky gets All-Star player

The Chicago Sky added three-time WNBA All-Star Swin Cash and Le'coe Willingham to its roster through a trade with the Seattle Storm, according to ESPN.com.

The Storm will receive the Sky's first-round pick (No. 2 overall) in the 2012 WNBA draft while Chicago will also get a second-round pick (23rd overall) from the Storm. Pokey Chatman, the coach and general manager of the Sky, said in a statement, "With the additions of Swin and Le'coe, we have gained tremendously skilled players and leaders."



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Ray is a legal authority on all of his practice areas, which include probate, trusts, guardianship, estate planning, and elder law, including the litigation of those areas. He is a longtime advocate for and member of the LGBT community, and is involved in several charitable groups, community associations, and professional organizations. Ray is a member of Clark Hill PLC, a full-service law firm consisting of a diverse team of attorneys and professionals committed to our clients and our communities.

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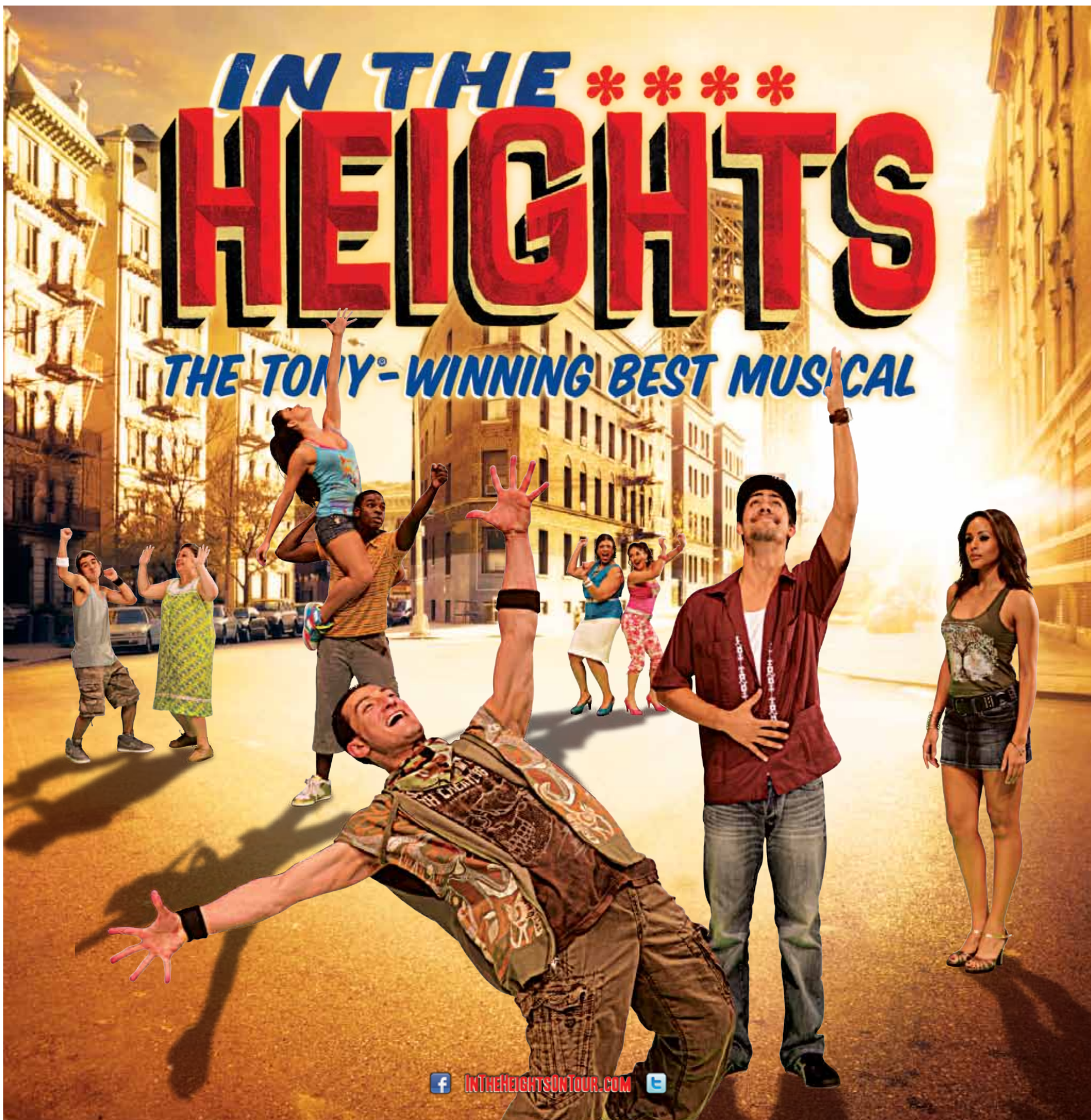
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