

# Dare

FROM THE HEART OF THE AMERICAN SOUTH

FREE

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 12

THE GAY AND LESBIAN NEWSPAPER

JUNE 8-14, 1988

## AIDS Commission Releases Report

### Activists Applaud "Balanced" Approach

By JEFF ELLIS  
News Editor

Some \$3 billion will be needed annually to fight AIDS, according to the draft report released last Thursday by the President's Commission on AIDS.

Recommendations from the commission, in a 300-page report, will go to President Reagan by June 24.

The report calls for a public health emergency to be declared, but experts fear any action on the report's findings will be delayed for the next administration.

"We're very nervous that the Reagan administration will put the report aside," said Urvashi Vaid, spokesperson for the Washington-based National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "We'll also be curious to see what Vice President Bush's reaction to the report will be."

Vaid praised the report's "strong language" on anti-discrimination legislation and a need for better efforts directed at intravenous drug users.

"Overall, it is a very solid and positive report," she said. "By and large, it is an excellent report."

White House AIDS expert Gary Bauer refused comment about the report. However, President Reagan's options are clear: shelve the report, or attempt to implement all or part of the recommendations. Many of the recommendations will require approval by Congress.

"This report could help to educate members of Congress, who have shown an appalling lack of guts," Vaid said.

Among recommendations needing Congressional approval is a proposed \$3 billion annual budget to fight the disease. The money would be earmarked for research, education and medical care.

"To the average person, that sounds like a lot of money, but we probably need to spend more if we are to effectively do battle with AIDS," said Dr. Sandee Potter, director of Nashville CARES.

"It's hard to imagine that much money when you're involved in an organization that operates on a shoestring."

Among the major issues addressed by the commission in its report:

**Discrimination.** A presidential executive order that AIDS is a handicap, thus banning discrimination.

**Health Care.** Creating home health care paid for by the government. Permanent, enforceable rules enacted within a year to

protect health care workers and others whose jobs involve exposure to blood and blood-contaminated fluids. A national hot line and central data base for people with AIDS and health care professionals.

**Blood Supply.** Creating a scientific panel to monitor blood banks. Uniform standard of screening donated blood at all blood banks.

**Education.** Requiring AIDS education from kindergarten through high school by year 2000. One-to-one prevention programs aimed at minorities.

**Crime.** State criminal penalties for knowingly engaging in behavior that risks transmitting the AIDS virus. Requirement that AIDS-infected people disclose their condition to sexual partners, obtain partners' consent and use necessary precautions.

"We feel any criminal statutes could lead to new types of discrimination," Vaid said.

**Testing.** Proposes limiting mandatory testing, alling instead for increased voluntary testing by persons in high-risk groups. Mandatory screening would be limited to persons donating blood, organs and tissue.

"I would oppose mandatory testing of any group. Voluntary testing is up to the individual," Potter said. "The psychological impact of finding out one is HIV-positive is sometimes too much for some people to handle. Each individual must evaluate his or her own emotional make-up before making that decision."

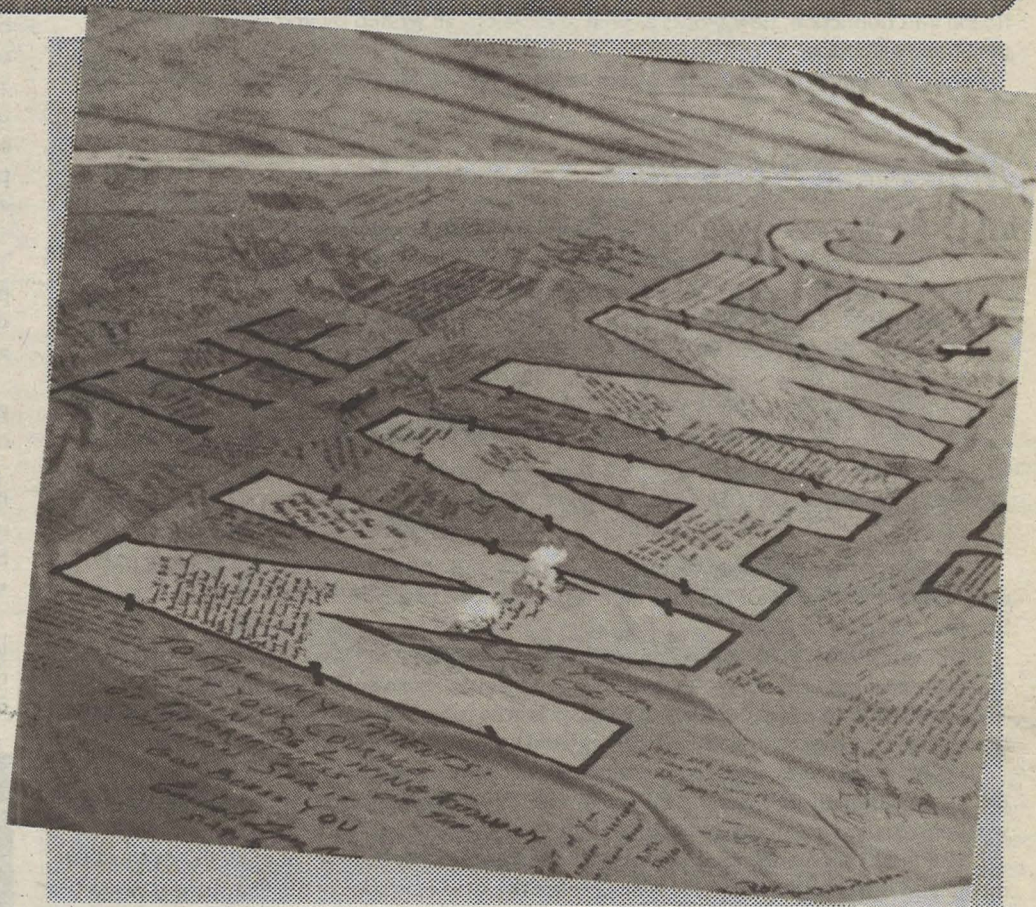
**Research.** Recommends a Nobel Prize be awarded for research. However, there are no drug breakthroughs on the horizon and "little hope" that AIDS vaccines currently being tested will work.

"Some physicians say a vaccine, or a cure, will probably not be found in our lifetime. It is altogether possible that it will be 40 to 60 years before a vaccine is developed. That's not an unrealistic scenario," Potter said.

According to the report, the government's definition of AIDS is too narrow with some 62,740 cases reported under current criteria. However, every person in the country who is HIV-positive-as many as 1.4 million people-has a disease and "the vast majority" will develop AIDS, the report says.

"Those already diagnosed seem to have been forgotten. I'd like to see them given the same amount of attention that is given to other topics," Potter said.

The commission was empaneled a year  
**Continued on Page 4**



Viewers of the NAMES Project's National AIDS Quilt in Atlanta were encouraged to leave behind their own messages. Story on page 6.

## Pride Week Set for June 22-26

By JEFF ELLIS  
News Editor

Nashville's gay and lesbian population will "show their pride" later this month as locals prepare for Music City's celebration of nationwide Gay and Lesbian Pride festivities.

Pride Week '88, a week-long festival of "food, fun, music, crafts and celebration," is slated for the week of June 20-26 with organizers predicting a large turnout for events.

"It will probably be like the March on Washington - we won't really know how many people to expect until the events take place," said Diane Easter, one of the week's organizers for the Tennessee Gay and Lesbian Alliance (T-GALA).

According to Easter, the "most public and probably most exciting" event will be the first gay and lesbian pride parade on Saturday, June 25. The parade route, which begins at Fannie Mae Dees Park (Dragon Park) on Blakemore Avenue, will wind eastward along West End Avenue to Centennial Park. The parade will start promptly at 12:30 p.m.

Once revelers reach the Centennial Park Bandshell, an afternoon of celebration will begin with keynote speaker Jeffrey Levi, president of the National Gay and Lesbian

Task Force. Other speakers and festivities will follow, Easter said, with the line-up still to be finalized.

Saturday's events will be preceded by a film festival at Vanderbilt University's Sarratt Cinema Monday through Wednesday nights. Monday's film will be the critically-acclaimed *My Beautiful Laundrette* starring Daniel Day-Lewis. *Parting Glances* is Tuesday's offering and *I've Heard the*  
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## Briefs

From STAFF REPORTS

### Women's Book Discussion Group Forming

Did you just finish a stimulating lesbian novel but lack the opportunity to discuss it with others? Would you rather read than play softball? Is receiving *Women's Review of Books* your favorite time of the month?

Then, perhaps the new Women's Book Discussion Group is for you. An organizational meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 9 at 6:30 p.m. at Green Hills Public Library, according to Deborah Burks.

Tentative plans include meeting once or twice each month, Burks said, to review both fiction and nonfiction, new works as well as classics - all written by and about women, particularly lesbians.

Further information is available by contacting Burks at 298-9931 or Sherre Dryden at 383-4986.

### MCC Plans Art Auction

Nashville's Metropolitan Community Church will host its "major fundraising event of the year" - an art auction - Saturday, June 18 at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 1808 Woodmont Boulevard, according to the Rev. Paul Tucker, MCC pastor.

The evening's festivities begin at 6 p.m. with an exhibition of the art works which will be offered at auction. Hors d'oeuvres and beverages will be served prior to the auction which will begin at 7 p.m.

According to Tucker, a wide variety of art will be offered for auction. He applauded the efforts of MCC members who have spearheaded efforts to make the auction a success.

### Ellis Elected to GLPA Board

Members of the Southeastern caucus of the Gay and Lesbian Press Association (GLPA) elected *Dare* News Editor Jeff Ellis their representative to the international organization's board of directors.

Ellis was chosen at the group's annual convention Memorial Day weekend in Chicago, and will represent members of the lesbian and gay press in seven southeastern states.

As Southeastern Director Ellis will be responsible for fundraising and recruitment efforts in the region, and announced plans for a regional conference in Nashville this September.

"We'll present nationally-prominent members of the press as well as seminars on layout, design and journalistic writing," Ellis said, "There will also be a major event during the weekend of the conference to benefit GLPA."

GLPA is a professional trade organization devoted to "the betterment of all the gay/lesbian media and the people who are responsible for the very existence of the lesbian/gay press," according to the group's statement of purpose.

The group encourages broad-based general membership in three categories: institutional membership, open to gay or lesbian periodicals, publishers, and mass media businesses and institutions; individual memberships; and nonvoting affiliate memberships, open to newsletters of lesbian/gay organizations.

### Booklet Makes Way to Nashville

Nashvillians last week found *Understanding AIDS*, the informational booklet from the United States government, in their mailboxes.

The eight-page booklet, with its introduction written by Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, was developed by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Public Health Service of the Centers for Disease Control.

Included in the booklet is such basic information as "How Do You Get AIDS?", "Can You Become Infected?" and "How Do You Get AIDS From Sex?"

"No matter what you may have heard, the AIDS virus is hard to get and is easily avoided," the booklet states.

Information is also given regarding blood supplies and the differences between giving and receiving blood are explained. Blunt and plain-spoken language is used to explain risky behavior and safe behavior.

Comments from counselors, scientists, doctors, volunteers and people living with AIDS are included as is discussion of the merits of voluntary testing.

To determine the extent of one's knowledge about the disease, a quiz "Do You Know Enough To Talk About AIDS?" concludes the booklet's informational and educational quest.

The booklet is part of the America Responds to AIDS program under the direction of Otis R. Bowen, Secretary of Health and Human Services.

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## Gay/Lesbian Activists Testify Before Platform Committees

By JEFF ELLIS

News Editor

Dallas gay rights advocate John Thomas, representing the Human Rights Campaign Fund, testified for lesbian and gay civil rights and a responsible AIDS policy before the Republican Party platform committee meeting in Kansas City last week.

Thomas' history-making appearance, the first such testimony by a gay and lesbian rights activist before the Republican Party, followed the mid-May testimony of Vic Basile before the Democratic Party platform committee.

Basile, executive director of HRCF, called upon the Democratic Party to take a more aggressive stand on AIDS issues in its 1988 positions. HRCF is the ninth largest political action committee in the country.

In his testimony to the Republican body, Thomas, an HRCF board member, asked the party to support gay and lesbian anti-discrimination legislation, thereby rejecting anti-gay bigotry.

"I am here to ask you to recognize us as part of the pluralistic society we, as Republicans, champion," Thomas said.

"Gay men and lesbians have traditionally been denied equal treatment within our society. Because we are not treated equally by so many people, we have been forced to struggle for relief."

Keeping AIDS at the forefront of campaign issues was also urged by Thomas: "With respect to AIDS, we seek a national commitment and urgency toward conquering this

epidemic that is commensurate with the rate and extent of its devastation of human life."

Further, Thomas called upon the Republicans to help eliminate anti-gay exclusionary policies in immigration and the armed services and to push for legal recognition of gay domestic partnerships.

"We seek the right to have our domestic partner and family units recognized and afforded the same protections as traditional family units," he said.

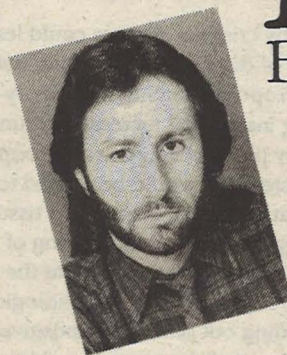
"For millions of voting-age gay men and lesbians, the route of attainment for these goals is through the Republican party," Thomas continued, alluding to a growing number of gay Republican clubs and openly gay Republican office-holders throughout the U.S.

Basile, in testimony before the Democratic Party platform committee, exhorted the party to reaffirm its commitment to the civil rights of minority groups, including the country's estimated 20 million lesbians and gay men.

Basile also complimented Democratic candidates who have sought to include lesbians and gay men in their campaigns as the "highest possible tribute...that of including us, as opposed to singling us out."

"Gays and lesbians do not wish to be singled out. We simply wish to be included in the vast quilt of American society."

Traditionally, larger numbers of gay men and lesbians have affiliated with the Democratic Party which has included gay and lesbian rights as part of its national agenda.



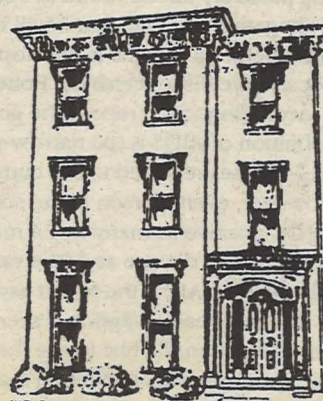
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# Tennessee Plans Anonymous Testing of New Inmates

By JEFF ELLIS

News Editor

All new inmates in the Tennessee state prison system will be anonymously tested for AIDS beginning July 1, according to Correction Commissioner Steve Norris.

The testing process, slated to continue for at least six months, will give corrections officials some indication of the number of potential AIDS cases to expect in coming years.

"The policy will provide for some testing - both for individualized diagnosis and to give us some basis for future decision making," Norris told reporters at a press conference last Friday.

Tests for new inmates will be anonymous, thus prison officials will be unable to identify which inmates have given an AIDS-infected blood sample. According to Norris, the anonymous testing will allow prison officials

to more accurately determine a future course of action for dealing with cases of AIDS.

The testing of new inmates is being funded by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. Such a program was among the recommendations to state Health and Environment Commissioner Jim Word from the Tennessee Advisory Committee on AIDS.

In addition, the new policy calls for confidential testing of inmates whom medical personnel suspect may have AIDS-related complex (ARC) or who are suffering from AIDS. Inmates with a history of homosexual or bisexual behavior or who are known to have used intravenous drugs may also be tested.

Inmates who are suspect, or who are members of a high risk group, will be isolated from the rest of the prison population to protect them from possible harm at

the hands of fearful prisoners.

"If you put him (an inmate with AIDS) in the compound, he'd be dead - they'd kill him," Norris warned. "The other inmates would be afraid of him."

Inmates who are diagnosed as HIV-

condoning sexual activity among inmates, which is illegal in Tennessee prisons.

The commissioner indicated that intravenous drug use is probably the greater culprit in the state corrections system.

"Needles are a contraband item in the

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*"If you put him (an inmate with AIDS) in the compound, he'd be dead - they'd kill him."*

---

positive will remain in the general prison population, Norris said, because a positive test does not mean they are necessarily infectious. The commissioner did indicate, however, that the policy is subject to change as more facts are learned.

"We are trying to develop a data base to give indication of what the problem is," Norris said.

Norris reiterated his steadfast refusal to issue condoms to prisoners, as has been done in other state prison systems, saying that such distribution could be interpreted as

prison system. Once you get one in the system, they tend to use it over and over," Norris said.

An education program, including written materials, videotapes and group discussion, will be developed for inmates, as well as corrections system staffers.

Of the state's some 7,500 state prisoners, 11 inmates have been diagnosed as having ARC and are currently being held in isolation at the Tennessee State Penitentiary Hospital. One inmate died of AIDS some months ago, Norris said.

## Michele Crone Proposes National Agenda for Lesbian Rights

By DEBORAH BURKS

Staff Writer

Lesbians fuel the major social and political movements in this country, according to activist Michele Crone, organizer of the recent civil disobedience at the United States Supreme Court.

Crone presented a workshop at the 5th annual Southern Women's Music Festival.

Praising the organizing skills of lesbians, she said, "take for example the March on Washington. Dyke energy propelled that March."

As a consequence of involvement with other causes, lesbians give little attention to their own concerns, Crone said. Recognizing that lesbian issues are also neglected by heterosexual feminists and gay men, Crone feels it is time to "organize for ourselves."

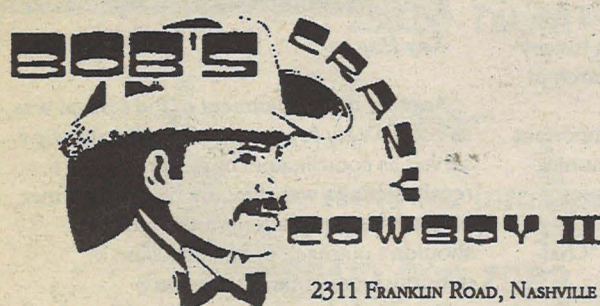
"We need something totally ours - not gay

but lesbian. We need to feel it's okay to focus on us," Crone contended.

Crone also noted that lesbian visibility is declining: "Fifteen years ago we were much more visible. We were starting land developments, shaving our heads and being separatists, but at least we were doing something."

To establish a lesbian issues agenda and to develop a national communication network, Crone is organizing a lesbian conference for the fall of 1989. She hopes the conference will be a "grassroots uprising," bringing together women from all walks of life.

Though no definite plans for the site of the conference have been made, Durham, N.C., is a strong possibility. Tentative agenda items include couples rights, aging, lesbian parenting, compulsory heterosexism, lesbian recovery and internalized oppression.



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# Commentary: Southern Women's Music Festival



The Atlanta Feminist Women's Chorus performs at the Southern Women's Music Festival.

By **DEBORAH BURKS**  
Staff Writer

Approximately 2200 women attended the 5th annual Southern Women's Music Festival held Memorial Day weekend in northern Georgia.

Gathered in a private camp surrounded by beautiful woods and a lake, women came to hear lesbian musicians, attend workshops on lesbian issues, buy woman-made crafts, but most of all, to relax in the safety and comfort of women-only space.

Main stage performances ranged from comedy to jazz. Lesbian sex was a hot topic for the comedians. Jo Ann Loulan, author of

*Lesbian Sex*, encouraged us to be more comfortable discussing sexuality. Her humorous discussion of lesbian sex included such questions as "most of you can name your best friend's favorite foods, but how many of you know what she likes in bed."

As emcee of the festival main stage, Lea DeLaria, known to Nashville audiences for *Das Lesbos*, pondered safe lesbian sex, "Mutual masturbation? Aren't those contradictory terms?"

Obviously, women's music was the emphasis of the festival which featured such longtime favorites as Cris Williamson, Alix Dobkin and Rhiannon. As a first-time festival

attendee (or "festie virgin"), it was delightful to finally hear Williamson perform one of my favorite songs, "The Waterfall."

Olivia Records' newest artists Deidre McCalla and Nashville's own Dianne Davidson were well-received at the festival. McCalla's performance of songs from her new album *With a Little Luck* was captivating.

Davidson's soulful music was one of the real Southern aspects of the festival. Her new album is scheduled for release this fall.

Other new performers included The Blazing Redheads, an energetic jazz band from California.

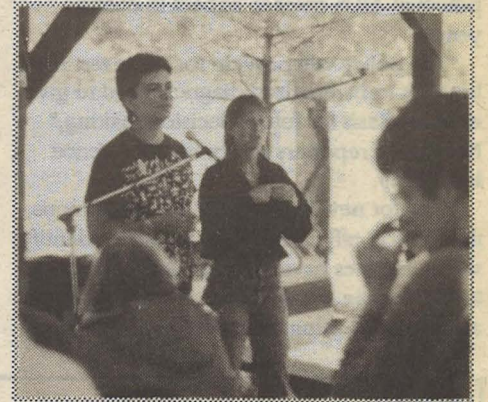
Also featured on main stage was a slideshow of the March on Washington, photographed by JEB. JEB's work surpasses all other documentation of the March; it was more accurate, more inclusive and more exciting than any I've seen. The show not only provided a view of the March but also included a review of gay and lesbian history in this country that helped put the March in context.

Workshops at the festival are an important opportunity for education and communication about lesbian-related issues. Topics ranged from Sue Hyde's "Lesbian Visibility and Political Action" to Kay Hagan's "Challenging Internalized Oppression."

While the festival offered a glimpse of woman-identified culture, it wasn't perfect. The festival is produced by Robin Tyler who also does the West Coast Women's Music Festival.

Consequently, most of the festival organiz-

ers were women from California and the northeast and only seven of the main stage performers were Southerners. The festival was definitely lacking in Southern flavor. Since it is, after all, the Southern Women's Music Festival, shouldn't more women from the South be involved in planning the festival?



Kay Hagan

Another disappointment of the festival was its color. Very few women of color attended, served as coordinators or performed. As I recall, McCalla was the only black performer on main stage. As a feminist venture, shouldn't outreach to and inclusion of minority women be emphasized?

Despite these apparent political flaws, the festival was an empowering experience for those who attended. For most women this event was a rare opportunity to escape the oppressive patriarchy and experience sisterhood for a weekend.

## Pride Week Festivities Announced

Continued from Page 1

*Mermaids Singing* will be shown Wednesday. Showtimes all three evenings are 5 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Ralph's Rutledge Hill Tavern on Second Avenue will host a beer bust Tuesday night. And on Friday night, a Women's Alliance Coffeehouse featuring Jamie Anderson and Martie Van Der Voort will be held at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 1808 Woodmont Boulevard.

Saturday, June 25, at 8 p.m., the Metropolitan Community Church will present and Church and Community Forum, "Homosexuality and the Bible" at the church at 131 15th Avenue North.

Concluding the week's activities will be the "Pride Picnic" Sunday, June 26, at Edwin Warner Park, site 9. The "family potluck" will begin at noon at the park on Highway 100.

## Commission Report

Continued from Page 1

ago and immediately became embroiled in controversy, leading to the resignation of the committee's first chairman. Adm James Watkins, chief of naval operations, 1982-1986, took over the chairman's job and has gotten high marks for his efforts to focus the commission on its goals.

"Admiral Watkins has demonstrated that he is a very fair and open-minded person," Vaid said. "We were afraid the report would be politicized."

Other members of the commission include Colleen Conway-Welch, dean of the Vanderbilt University School of Nursing. Conway-Welch, attending hearings for the state's nursing board, was unavailable for comment.

Organizational meetings for Pride Week '88 continue Sundays through June 19. Towne House Tea Room is the site for the 2 p.m. meetings.

Local sponsors of the Pride Week celebration, in addition to T-GALA, are the National Organization for Women (NOW), the Gas Lite, Ralph's Rutledge Hill Tavern, the Cabaret, Warehouse 28 and the World's End.

National Pride Week celebrations commemorate the June, 1969, riots at the Stonewall Inn, a small gay bar in New York's Greenwich Village. The June 29 riot, and the subsequent altercations on the two following nights, are considered by many to be the impetus for the current lesbian and gay rights movement in this country.

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## Sociables

### All That's Fit to Print (and Some That Isn't)

By **JAAN STURGIS**

Staff Writer

Chiffon and tuxedos were everywhere on Saturday, May 21, at the Marriott Marquis in Atlanta for the largest gay fundraiser in the Southeast for the Human Rights Campaign Fund. Richard Harrod was awestruck as his view from the escalator revealed 660 gay men and lesbians dressed to the nines at this \$150 a plate affair - the cream of gay and lesbian society in Atlanta and the southeast.

Emcee for the evening was lesbian comic Kate Clinton who provided welcome relief between the intense speakers and awards presentations.

Earlier that day - in Nashville - Barbara Coe and Diane Neel opened their backyard for T-GALA's benefit barbecue for Paul Tucker after the devastating break-in at his east Nashville apartment. The sunny, temperate and breezy afternoon was enjoyed by, among others, Caron Petersen, Gail DuBois and Wanda Mathis. My, the festivities did go on (!) and the fundraiser netted \$115 to aid in the restructuring of Paul's apartment. A big thanks to all who attended.

Social climbing Dare big cheeses Stuart Bivin and Jeff Ellis were in Chicago over Memorial Day weekend for the Gay and Lesbian Press Association convention. A madcap, whirlwind weekend of workshops and seminars were capped off with cocktail parties and dinners for the more than 150 journalists attending. Among those sending greetings Nashville-way were lesbian cabaret performer Lynn Lavner and her manager Ardis Sperber who are looking forward to a planned performance here in September.

The other day I was talking to Robyn Kevlin - come to think of it, I'd always heard her name was King - and she decided to tell me about what's required to change your name.

First off, what's the motivation? Well, she and Terry Kevlin - whoops, the former Terry Levelsmier - decided to make their relationship more permanent, in a legal sort of way. Because Terry had not gotten along with her daddy dearest for some time, she wanted to change her name. This fact, couple with the cumbersomeness of a hyphenated last name of Levelsmier-King or vice versa, they both

sat down one day and put on their thinking caps. (Remember Captain Kangaroo?) I betcha wonder how Terry and Robyn came up with Kevlin. Simple! They decided to use the first three letters of each of their names and there 'tis - Kevlin.

About the first of April Terry called the county clerk's office and asked what the procedure was - a fairly simple one where a three-page document (similar to every other name change) is originated. A lawyer can be used, but it really isn't necessary. You present the petition to the court, and a date is set for you to appear. The judge asks if you are attempting to defraud anyone or evade your creditors, and if the response is appropriate (No, dearheart, you can't say you don't want to pay your HBO bill this month!) then the judge normally grants your petition for a name change. Now that's where the fun begins because legally there is no Robyn King or Terry Levelsmier and every document that carried those names must be changed to reflect that new name - drivers' licenses, real estate deeds or lease, magazine subscriptions, banking accounts, car title, stocks and securities, utilities and the list goes on.

Congrats to Terry and Robyn Kevlin on your celebration of life together by bonding yourself with a mutual last name!

The Southern Women's Music Festival drew scores of Nashville women to north Georgia for a week of music, crafts, workshops and friendship. Among those making the journey down Interstate 24 were: Penny Campbell and Devie Levin, the Kevlins, Diane Easter, Deborah Burks and Barbara Coe and Diane Neel.

Sherre Dryden spent her Memorial Day weekend in the sun and surf of Pensacola, aided and abetted by Joe Marohl, who claim they "sighted some incognito Vandy students at the gay beach!" Do I smell a scandal in the offing?

Kicking up some "White Mischief" of his own while interning with the Kenya Supreme Court is Gregg Orifici, who will return in August for his third year at Vanderbilt Law School.

Dearhearts, that's all for this week's Sociables. See you next time!

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## Sandee Potter's Pilgrimage to Atlanta

By **JEFF ELLIS**  
News Editor

Viewing the NAMES Project quilt during its recent exhibition in Atlanta proved to be an emotionally draining experience for those who viewed the memorial to our nation's AIDS dead.

Among the scores of Nashvillians who made the pilgrimage southward was Dr. Sandee Potter, executive director for Nashville CARES, an AIDS services organization.

"I needed to go to Atlanta," Potter said. "The quilt holds the names of so many people with whom I share a history. So many people who have died of AIDS were in the same age group as I.

"I'm glad I went."

The quilt, Potter said, should serve as an inspiration to us all: "If anything would make you want to find a vaccine, or work towards finding a cure for AIDS, viewing those 3,500 panels would do that."

And although experts predict that finding a cure may take as long as forty to sixty years-generations, in fact-Potter suggests that this prediction be viewed as a challenge.

"I like a challenge," she said.

Potter further suggested that her "need" to view the NAMES Project quilt resulted in mixed emotions for her: "I had no idea what my reaction would be."

That reaction? "I cried. I'm not ashamed to say that I shed a lot of tears."

Tears from a seasoned professional, inured to suffering and loss? "Whenever I reach the point that I am no longer able to cry, I'll quit. I won't be able to do the job that we need to have done to fight this epidemic," Potter said.

"People have no idea how much potential we've lost to this epidemic, and the loss of just not having these wonderful lives around us."

But Potter said she was not certain if she would be able to view the quilt in Washington next October. By then, according to organizers, the quilt will likely contain some 10,000 panels.

Potter encourages the gay and lesbian community to make the pilgrimage to Washington to see the quilt.

"It gives you a very real sense of pride to be associated with these people who are included in the NAMES Project."



The 3500 panels of the NAMES Project National AIDS Quilt on display at the World Congress Center.

By **HARRISON HICKS**  
Staff Writer

As children, most of us are taught the story of the elephant and the three blind men. In the fable, three blind men assign themselves the task of describing the essence of the elephant, each attempting to do so by examining a different portion of the elephant.

Of course, the accounts vary wildly with the man in back portraying an animal that is long and rope-like. The man in the middle talks of a beast that is large with huge, fleshy folds, while the man examining the front claims the existence of a creature made of large flaps.

Even as children we realize that the men are describing the tail, body, and ears of the elephant. Only later do we realize the moral of the tale, that we each bring our own perceptions and prejudices to all that we learn in life, and that if we aren't careful, we can miss discerning the larger picture that exists, much as the three blind men did by not taking into account other perceptions of the elephant.

Much the same can be said of hazarding a description of an event as emotionally charged and subject to as many levels of meaning as the showing of the Names Project quilt in Atlanta over Memorial Day weekend.

One can try to examine the event from an objective point of view, as most of the general press attempts to do; one can quote facts about the exhibit such as weight, number of panels and how large a hall is required to display the quilt. But, in so doing, by undertaking such an "objective" examination, one misses the point of the memorial, which was designed to honor the memory of the thousands in this country who have died from AIDS.

In its quest to become a memorial, the Names Project quilt has become something more. Yes, it honors our friends and comrades who have been felled by this dread disease, but it has also become a touchstone for our lives, for all who live with AIDS and its effects, whether it be someone who suffers the symptoms of AIDS, someone who has tested HIV-positive, or someone who knows another with the AIDS virus. And, as such, one cannot look upon this project without bringing one's humanity along for the ride, hard as we may try to examine the quilt "objectively."

For myself, that fact became clear even before entering the quilt's exhibit hall. For months I had been preparing myself for the visit to Atlanta to see the quilt on its national tour, all the while hearing of people's reactions to the quilt, to being "changed" by the experience. I was somewhat skeptical, I must admit, that a piece of cloth could change or alter my views on anything, but always, at the back of my mind, I never doubted the sincerity of those who spoke of their reactions to the quilt, which made me somewhat apprehensive.

Entering the World Congress Center, the site of the Names Project Quilt exhibit for that weekend, did nothing to ease those apprehensions.

The center, an example of modern architecture with a steel and glass facade to present itself to the outside world, consists of three main levels, including the exhibit halls. Thus, when my companion and I walked in we had to descend from the first level to the second, on which were placed various displays detailing the origins of the quilt, its history and miscellaneous

# The Quilt: A Fable For Our Times



# Cleve Jones: Father of the Quilt

By JEFF ELLIS  
News Editor

Cleve Jones' eyes sparkle mischievously as he recalls making out with Marvin Feldman in the back room of a San Francisco gay bar some 15 years ago.

"I was in love, I thought. But then Marvin called me and said he thought we should just be girlfriends," Jones remembers. "And so we were."

Several years later Feldman called from his parents' home in Rhode Island and told Jones he had been diagnosed as having AIDS.

"You've got to come see me," Feldman pleaded.

And so Jones traveled to Providence to see his friend.

"I was so moved by the love in that household and when I left I thought what can I do for Marvin?" Jones said.

With that, the NAMES Project was born and the quilt which is now being exhibited throughout the country came to be. Jones told his story of friendship and honor to gay and lesbian journalists gathered in Chicago over Memorial Day weekend for the international convention of the Gay and Lesbian Press Association.

Jones, charming and articulate, waxed eloquently about his relationship with Marvin Feldman and the idea to honor him by creative means. He never expected the outpouring of emotions that has hailed the quilt's exhibition around the country.

"It started slowly. Every few days we would receive a couple of panels, nothing very exciting," Jones recalls. "Then one day I went to the post office. The first woman said, 'Here comes Mr. Jones.' The second said, 'I guess he wants his mail.' The third said, 'Well, I hope Mr. Jones brought his truck with him.' It was amazing."

Since then, the panels for the quilt have continued to come into the San Francisco post office. During the quilt's recent Atlanta exhibit, some 3,500 panels were displayed.

Jones predicts that by October, when the quilt is displayed in Washington to commemorate its first exhibit during the historic March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, more than 10,000 panels will honor those dead from the AIDS epidemic.

"We expect it to stretch the entire length of the mall, from the Capitol to the Washington monument," Jones said.



Center in Atlanta.

"objective" facts about the quilt such as materials involved in the quilt's construction, etc. In a sense, these displays and exhibits reminded me of a briefing of sorts, a preparation before going into battle.

From there, it was another set of escalators down to the exhibit hall in which the quilt was displayed. Entering the doors, I was first struck by the expanse of fabric ahead filling the hall; the next thing I noticed was that despite the hundreds of people walking through the exhibit that the hall was quiet enough to make your voice heard on the other side of the hall rather easily as desired.

As we approached the quilt, the next thing that leapt to my attention was the riot of colors that is the quilt itself. As I heard others remark, instead of the somber colors and dark tones they were expecting, they were greeted by panels full of vivid colors and hues.

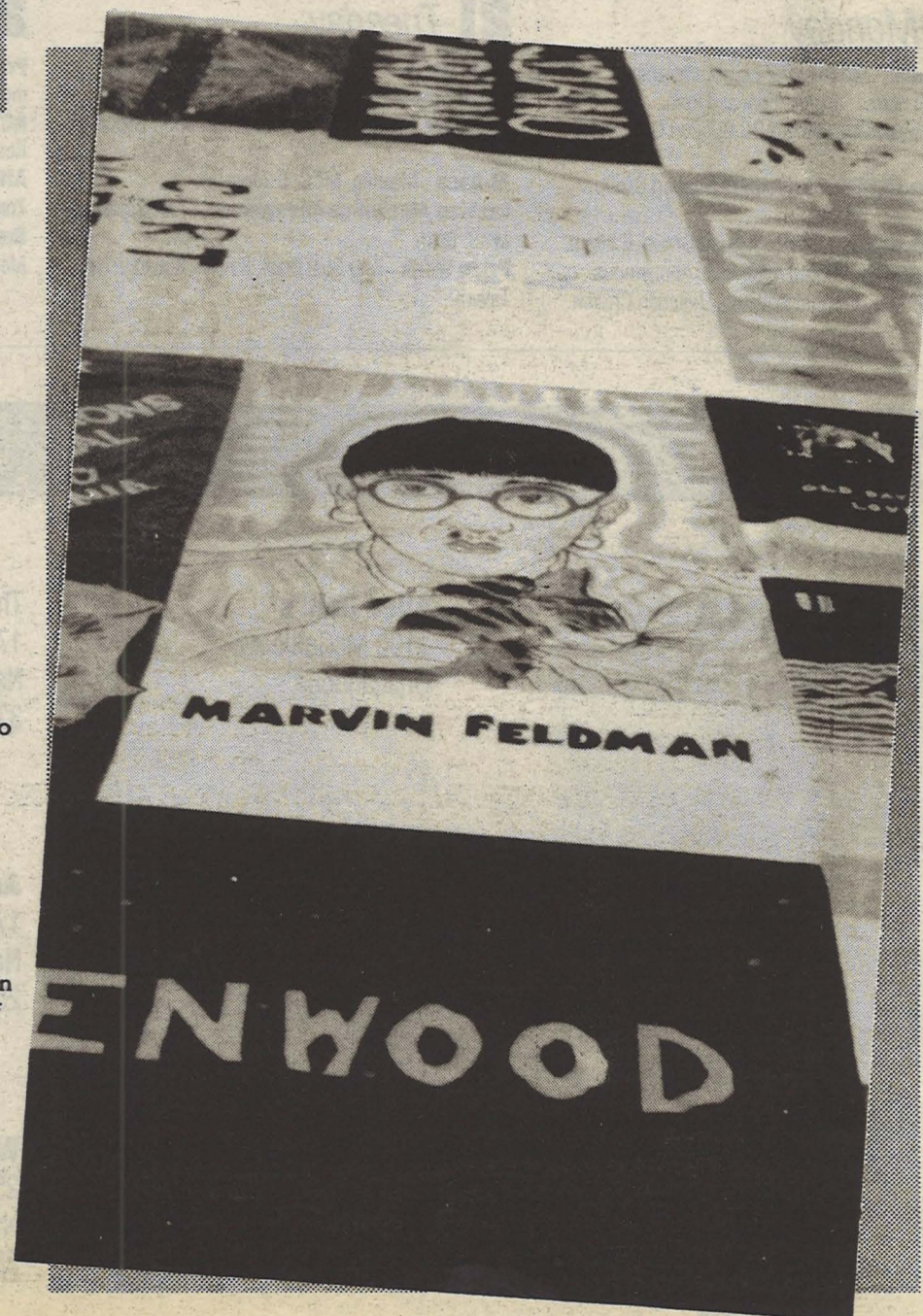
Starting to make the rounds of the panels, one of the first reactions I felt was a need to distance myself to insulate my emotions from the procession of names unfolding before me. For a time, the camera served that purpose; it's quite remarkable how in the process of framing life in order to capture it on film one detaches oneself from the subject being observed.

But, after an hour or two of watching other people in the hall and their struggles to retain their composure that detachment begins to crumble. Even though the names before you may be unfamiliar, the makers of the panels unknown, the sections of the quilt before you begin to tell their stories to draw you into their worlds, if only for a moment. Adding those moments together is what gives the quilt its power, the ability to communicate the human dimensions of the struggle with AIDS, to make that struggle your own.

One of the panels, in particular, brought one of those moments bursting forth into life for me. Titled "My Buddy" the piece was one of the simpler panels in the display consisting of a black piece of fabric with white paint. Though the panel may not have been as artistic as some of the others, the message was clear. The writer remembered the good times they had together and the suddenness of his friend's diagnosis with AIDS and subsequent death. The anger expressed in the message is alarming. More than anything else, in the way it was written with white paint on a black background, it reminded me of a chalkboard with the memory of that person the only thing remaining from a slate wiped clean by AIDS.

In the center of the exhibit was a large blank panel on which people could write down the names of others not yet memorialized. As dozens did so, scenes of other cities on the tour doing the same played in my mind, adding to a memorial that is still in the making.

For, unlike the Viet Nam Veterans Memorial in Washington, which is perhaps the only similar event of our generation, the Names Project quilt is still evolving. While the Viet Nam Memorial attempts to reconcile its visitors with memories of the past, the Names Project quilt must do more; it must reconcile us with our future. Staring at the panels one is reminded of the fact that the battle with AIDS is not over, indeed has only begun, and that before the struggle with AIDS ends, many names will be added, many of them friends, lovers, family members and in some cases, ourselves.



Cleve Jones' panel in memory of Marvin Feldman started it all.



# Dates

# June

Your event or organization can be listed at no charge in *Dates* or *Listings*. Just drop a postcard or letter to *Dave*, Box 40422, Nashville, TN 37204-0422, or phone 292-9623 and leave a message. Please include information about time, location, cost, sponsor, and a contact person's name with address and/or phone number for verification.

## 8 Wednesday

**ACT UP Nashville** Meeting, Towne House Tea Room. 7pm.

## 9 Thursday

**Nashville CARES** AIDS/ARC Support Group. 5pm.  
**Women's Book Discussion Group** Organizational meeting, Green Hills Public Library. 6:30 pm. Free.  
**Alcoholics Anonymous** Closed meeting for lesbians and gay men, MCC. 8pm.  
**Lesbian Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA)** Info phone 385-4776 or 352-5822. 8pm.

## 13 Monday

**Nashville CARES** AIDS/ARC Support Group. 5:30pm.  
**Nashville CARES** Gay Couples Support Group. 6pm.  
**Nashville CARES** Family Support Group. 6:30pm.  
**Lambda Group** Closed Alcoholics Anonymous meeting for gay men and lesbians, Unitarian Church. 8pm.

## 14 Tuesday

**Vanderbilt Lambda Association** Meeting. 6pm.  
**Nashville CARES** HIV Education Support Groups. 7pm.  
**Al-Anon** Meeting, MCC. 6:30pm.  
**Lesbian Alcoholics Anonymous** Closed meeting, MCC. 8pm.

## 15 Wednesday

**ACT UP Nashville** Meeting, Towne House Tea Room. 7pm.  
**Gay and Lesbian Parents' Support Group** Organizational meeting, 164 8th Av North, Suite 201. Info phone 646-7225.  
**Support Group for Lesbians and Gay Men** Meeting. 8pm. Info phone 833-4598.

## 16 Thursday

**Nashville CARES** AIDS/ARC Support Group. 5pm.  
**Alcoholics Anonymous** Closed meeting for lesbians and gay men, MCC. 8pm.  
**Lesbian Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA)** Info phone 385-4776 or 352-5822. 8pm.

## 20 Monday

**Pride Week** *My Beautiful Laundrette*, movie. Vanderbilt Sarratt Cinema. 5pm and 8pm.  
**Nashville CARES** AIDS/ARC Support Group. 5:30pm.  
**Nashville CARES** Gay Couples Support Group. 6pm.  
**Nashville CARES** Family Support Group. 6:30pm.  
**Lambda Group** Closed Alcoholics Anonymous meeting for gay men and lesbians, Unitarian Church. 8pm.

## 21 Tuesday

**Pride Week** *Parting Glances*, movie. Vanderbilt Sarratt Cinema. 5pm and 8pm.  
**Nashville CARES** HIV Education Support Groups. 7pm.  
**Al-Anon** Meeting, MCC. 6:30pm.  
**Lesbian Alcoholics Anonymous** Closed meeting, MCC. 8pm.  
**Pride Week** Beer Bust Blast. Ralph's Rutledge Hill Tavern.

## 22 Wednesday

**Pride Week** *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*, movie. Vanderbilt Sarratt Cinema. 8pm.  
**ACT UP Nashville** Meeting, Towne House Tea Room. 7pm.  
**Affirmation** (United Methodist) Monthly potluck. 7pm. Info phone 366-6448.  
**Support Group for Lesbians and Gay Men** Meeting. 8pm. Info phone 833-4598.

## 23 Thursday

**Nashville CARES** AIDS/ARC Support Group. 5pm.  
**Alcoholics Anonymous** Closed meeting for lesbians and gay men, MCC. 8pm.  
**Lesbian Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA)** Info phone 385-4776 or 352-5822. 8pm.

# Listings

## Restaurants & Clubs

**Allen Gold's**  
 1100 McCallie Av  
 Chattanooga

**The Cabaret**  
 1711 Hayes St  
 Nashville  
 320-7082

**The Chute**  
 2535 Franklin Rd  
 Nashville  
 297-4571

**Chez Collette**  
 407 1st Av South  
 Nashville  
 256-9134

**Crazy Cowboy II**  
 2311 Franklin Rd  
 Nashville  
 269-5318

**The Gas Lite**  
 167 1/2 8th Av North  
 Nashville  
 254-1278

**Juanita's**  
 1700 4th Av South  
 Nashville  
 256-9681

**The Jungle**  
 306 4th Av South  
 Nashville  
 256-9411

**The Office**  
 130 Franklin St  
 Clarksville  
 645-1157

**Ralph's Rutledge Hill Tavern**  
 515 2nd Av South  
 Nashville  
 256-9682

**Victor/Victoria's**  
 111 8th Av North  
 Nashville  
 244-7256

**Warehouse 28**  
 2529 Franklin Rd  
 Nashville  
 385-9689

**World's End**  
 1713 Church St  
 Nashville  
 329-3480



# Dates

## 10 Friday

**Alcoholics Anonymous Program Study Group**  
Meeting, Belmont United Methodist. 7:30pm.

## 11 Saturday

**Nashville Voters' Coalition** Voter Registration, Farmers' Market (8th Av North and Jefferson), Eddie's Market (on Lafayette). 10am-2pm.  
**Nashville CARES** AIDS/ARC Support Group. 4pm.  
**Metropolitan Community Church** Mortgage Meal, all you can eat. 7:30pm. \$5.

## 12 Sunday

**Metropolitan Community Church** Worship services, 11am and 7pm.  
**The Office** Co-ed softball, Mericourt Park, Clarksville. 1pm.  
**Tennessee Association of the Deaf** Women's softball practice, Calvert Field. 1-3pm.  
**Pride Week** Organizational meeting, Towne House Tea Room. 4pm.  
**New Attitude** *Mommie Dearest*, movie. 8pm.

## 17 Friday

**Sexaholics Anonymous** Closed meeting, MCC. 5pm.  
**Alcoholics Anonymous Program Study Group**  
Meeting, Belmont United Methodist. 7:30pm.

## 18 Saturday

**Nashville CARES** AIDS/ARC Support Group. 4pm.  
**Metropolitan Community Church** Mortgage Meal, all you can eat. 7:30pm. \$5.

## 19 Sunday

**Metropolitan Community Church** Worship services, 11am and 7pm.  
**The Office** Co-ed softball, Mericourt Park, Clarksville. 1pm.  
**Tennessee Association of the Deaf** Women's softball practice, Calvert Field. 1-3pm.  
**Pride Week** Organizational meeting, Towne House Tea Room. 4pm.  
**New Attitude** movie. 8pm.

## 24 Friday

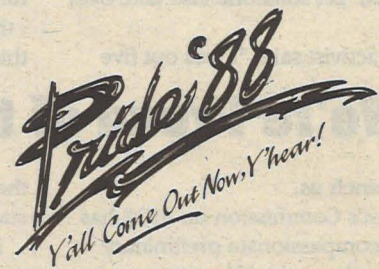
**Sexaholics Anonymous** Closed meeting, MCC. 5pm.  
**Nashville Womens' Alliance** Jamie Anderson and Martie van der Voort, coffeehouse. Unitarian Universalist Church. Info phone 883-4833. \$4.  
**Alcoholics Anonymous Program Study Group**  
Meeting, Belmont United Methodist. 7:30pm.

## 25 Saturday

**Pride Week** Parade, leaves Fannie Mae Dees Park at 12:30pm.  
**Pride Week** Festival, Centennial Park. Music, food and crafts. 1pm. Free.  
**Nashville CARES** AIDS/ARC Support Group. 4pm.  
**Metropolitan Community Church** Mortgage Meal, all you can eat. 7:30pm. \$5.  
**Pride Week** *Homosexuality and the Bible*, Church and Community Forum, Metropolitan Community Church. 8:30pm. Free.

## 26 Sunday

**Metropolitan Community Church** Worship services, 11am and 7pm.  
**Pride Week** Pride Picnic, Edwin Warner Park, Hwy 100, Site #9. Noon.  
**The Office** Co-ed softball, Mericourt Park, Clarksville. 1pm.  
**Tennessee Association of the Deaf** Women's softball practice, Calvert Field. 1-3pm.  
**New Attitude** *Boys in the Band*, movie. 8pm.



# Listings

## Organizations

**American Civil Liberties Union**  
Hedy Weinberg, *Director*  
Box 120160, Nashville 37212  
256-7028  
Lesbian & Gay Anti-Violence  
Hotline 256-7028

**Conductors**  
Box 40261, Nashville 37204

**Nashville CARES** Sandee Potter,  
*Director*  
Box 25107, Nashville 37202  
385-1510  
**AIDS Crisis Line**  
385-AIDS

**Nashville Women's Alliance**  
Box 120834, Nashville 37212  
366-0555

**National Organization for Women**  
(Tennessee) Elizabeth Jamison,  
*President*  
Box 120523, Nashville 37212

**Tennessee Gay and Lesbian Alliance**  
(T-GALA)  
Box 24181, Nashville 37212

**Tennessee Gay and Lesbian Task Force**  
(TGLTF) Carole Cunningham,  
*President*  
Box 24181, Nashville 37212

**Tennesseans Keeping Abortion Legal and Safe (TKALS)**  
Box 120871, Nashville 37212  
297-8540

**Vanderbilt AIDS Project**  
**Hotline**  
322-AIDS

**Vanderbilt Lambda Association**  
Box 121743, Nashville 37212

**Women's Resource Center (YWCA)**  
1608 Woodmont Blvd  
385-3952



## Views

# Show Your Pride, Nashville

Last year after the historic March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, Nashvillians returned home excited, enervated and eager to work toward bringing about social change here in Tennessee.

The first meeting of the then-Tennessee Gay and Lesbian Coalition held after the return from Washington was awe-inspiring - the meeting room was filled to capacity with people yearning to make a difference in their hometown. The outer room was fairly abuzz with activity.

People volunteered to call their legislators urging gay and lesbian civil rights reforms; they volunteered to patrol the airwaves to guard against homophobic language on popular radio shows and in local newspapers and magazines; they volunteered to help recruit others to the gay and lesbian civil rights cause.

We are going to make a different. Goodbye complacency and apathy! Hello activism and social change!

But on our way to Utopia, apparently many of us met one stumbling block too many. Gradually, the fervor gave way once again to complacency. Our activism was put aside in order to let someone else do the work.

We were tired. Let someone else take over for a while.

One former activist said, "I was out five

years ago! Where were you?"

For many of us, we probably weren't in Nashville. And for still more, we probably were still mired deep in some closet.

Still and all, it all sounds like a lot of excuses. The words may be given a pretty ring to them, but it still amounts to so much bullshit.

At that TGLC meeting last October, more than 90 people crowded into an over-heated room to hear some heated words about effecting social change in Nashville. We left feeling gratified by the courage and conviction of our comrades.

At May's T-GALA meeting, only 15 people showed up. And ACT-UP, which began with such a feverish pitch its efforts to bring about change, seems to have decided to act down. At their last meeting, only one person showed up.

A number of people who volunteered to help coordinate Pride Week '88 efforts all but vanished into thin air, the remaining stalwarts report. Thus, a handful of people are diligently working to make the celebration a success.

All this and we're getting ready to celebrate Pride Week '88?

It is time, Nashville, to regain the momentum. We have much to be proud of this year - there is now a real sense of community in this town, we have made some changes by

making our presence known, political leaders recognize us for the viable group of voters that we are.

But the time is now, Nashville, to get off our butts and work our hearts out. We must somehow harness the energy and forward motion that's floating around out there unused. We had it in October and we desperately need it in June, July, August, September and all the months to come in all the years to come.

If we remain silent, then our fate is sealed. In the mid-1930s, millions remained silent and scores of gay and lesbian Europeans were systematically murdered by henchman Hitler. Perhaps, you say, that analogy is a little strong? There are those out there who would like nothing better than to herd us all off into concentration camps. It is not inconceivable given the tenor of our times.

But we can make a difference. People can be educated. They know us, in many cases they like us; they may even respect us. But first we must respect ourselves.

It is imperative we make our voices heard and our presence known. Pride Week '88 offers an ideal opportunity for us to bring the spirit of last October back to Music City.

Our tasks are just beginning. We're up to the challenge. Let's show our pride.

## We're Proud of the President's AIDS Commission

Somebody pinch us.

The President's Commission on AIDS has issued a sane, compassionate preliminary report. After nearly a year of hearings and wrangling which saw the resignation of the Commission's first chair, a year in which AIDS and lesbian and gay rights activists worked with public health experts and the grassroots AIDS movement to counter homophobia and bigotry, Commission chair Admiral James Watkins reported that the group would recommend to President Reagan a plan to attack the disease instead of its sufferers.

This is a major achievement, both in the struggle for lesbian and gay civil rights and in

the drive to both find a cure for AIDS and succor those who suffer from it.

It was a hard-fought battle - a battle against the use of AIDS as an excuse to further the political agenda of the radical right against homosexual people, a battle against time running out for those who have contracted the disease, a battle against ignorance and apathy among those in government and politics who would rather let innocent people die than talk honestly and directly about AIDS, the way the disease spreads and the way its spread can be slowed, if not halted.

The Commission as a whole has done a good job under Admiral Watkins' leadership.

It has listened to those who have worked tirelessly against the disease from the outset, those who have the experience in the trenches, and has separated medical and scientific fact from self-serving political rhetoric.

Now, it's up to the Reagan administration to implement the Commission's recommendations, and not a moment too soon. It's time to put aside the "moral" outpouring and the finger-pointing, and to get down to the work of saving lives and comforting the suffering.

The Commission has set a shining example for the nation and the world.

We hope President Reagan can follow that example.

# Dare

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From the Heart of the American South

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GAY AND LESBIAN  
PRESS ASSOCIATION

## Dykes to Watch Out For™





# Pride Week '88

## Monday, June 20

- *My Beautiful Laundrette*, movie, at Vanderbilt Sarratt Cinema, Showtimes 5 pm and 8 pm.

## Tuesday, June 21

- *Parting Glances*, movie, at Vanderbilt Sarratt Cinema. Showtimes 5pm and 8pm.
- Beer Bust Blast, Ralph's Rutledge Hill Tavern.

## Wednesday, June 22

- *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*, movie, Vanderbilt Sarratt Cinema Showtime 8pm only.

## Friday, June 24

- Women's Alliance Coffeehouse, Unitarian Universalist Church, 1808 Woodmont Blvd.
- Music, wine, beer, nonalcoholic beverages, and fun!

## Saturday, June 25

- Pride Parade and Festival  
Parade leaves Fannie Mae Dees Park at 12:30pm and heads to Centennial Park for an afternoon of food, music and crafts!
- *Homosexuality and the Bible*, Church and Community Forum, Metropolitan Community Church, 131 15th Avenue North, 8pm.

## Sunday, June 26

- Pride Picnic  
Come to Edwin Warner Park on Hwy 100, Site #9, for a "family" potluck picnic. Noon.

*Pride '88*  
*Y'all Come Out Now, Y'hear!*

Pride Week '88 is proudly sponsored by:  
The Cabaret\*, The Gas Lite\*, NOW, Ralph's\*, T-GALA, Warehouse 28\*, and World's End

\*Pride Week '88 Souvenir merchandise available Friday and Saturday night. Buttons \$1 Mugs \$2 T-shirts \$10

Y'all come out now, y'hear?

## Pages

### Adams Takes Chances in New Novel

*Second Chances*. Alice Adams. [New York: Knopf, 1988]

By JOE MAROHL  
Staff Writer

I have an amused interest in books about gay men written by women, often by women who are straight.

One of the best is *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* by Iris Murdoch, a writer of consistently wise and tasteful novels. A thing I've noticed is, more than gay men writing about gay men, they (women writing about gay men) make their characters three-dimensional subjects. The gay characters are preeminently human, their homosexuality is a secondary feature, whereas gay writers are interested, unsurprisingly, in depicting the characters' gay lifestyle and/or sexuality as apart from and more important than "normal" existence.

Women writers place their gay characters in the context of the straight, usually female world, not among other gays. For good or bad, the gay man usually appears simply as another kind of woman. The men are frequently middle-aged or older, devoted to a single partner or celibate, a reliable soul-mate for the novelist's female protagonist. Not so in the typical gay writer's novel, where the protagonist is young (usually a glamorized semi-autobiographical comer-of-age), and happily though guiltily promiscuous; and the women characters are comic monsters, forever wrong-headedly trying to get into our hero's fashionable briefs.

Of the two, I think I prefer the women's version, as a rule (only "as a rule"). My only complaint is that they like to portray the gay man as too serenely human and hardly a sexual animal at all. In fact, a good many good novels make all their human characters, gay and nongay, too human, more "human" than people ever really are. I like that in a book, I really do, but I never quite believe in it. Humanity is largely the invention of novelists, I think. Furthermore, in the mythography of the typical woman novelist, the gay man is the icon for the human being qua being human.

Of the five main characters in Alice Adams' new book, *Second Chances*, one is a gay man, Edward, a failed poet in his late sixties. The other four are women, ages ranging from nearly 40 to twice that. Edward is the best friend to the two younger, Polly and Sara. Typically, Edward is more womanly, really more human, than nearly all the other male characters, who are usually represented, interestingly, as mere physical types. He also contributes to the book's local color: the story is mainly set in a small California community (San Sebastian) near San Francisco.

Adams has a knack for titling her stories simply and appropriately. *Second Chances* centers on five friends in middle age or senior who are, in one way or another, regaining that which they assumed they had irrevocably lost. The eldest and most glamorous, Celeste, has recently lost a husband and is willing herself "back to being a young mother" by having her goddaughter (Sara) move in with her and pursuing a



platonic romance with a man thirty years younger.

Dudley, a successful writer, is surviving addiction to alcohol and to her husband and beginning to discover herself as a whole and independent woman. Polly, the eccentric of the lot, gains a second chance to win at love, having lost (to Celeste) 40 years before. And Sara, the 1960s radical, renews a relationship she gave up 20 years ago because of differences of principle in politics. Only Edward, chastely comfortable with Freddy, his companion for 30 years and nouveau gay activist, lives a steady and undisturbed life - but, as the novel reveals, his elegant stability is still only a cover for loneliness and worry.

The book is very topical. Contemporary issues abound in nearly every chapter. Among the aspects of living in the late 1980s which actively influence the storyline are the Iran-Contra affair, AIDS and President Reagan's polyps and politics. These things, I reiterate, are not merely historical allusions; they are shaping events in the novel's plot. Adams' book, moreover, is contentiously political, arguing in favor of the radical left and severely criticizing the present Administration at every opportunity.

Like the first story I ever read by Adams, "The Gift of Grass," *Second Chances* is mainly about conversation. The way people communicate and fail to communicate. Continually, Adams pointedly informs us of not only what is said, but also what each character neglects to say. When characters do reveal themselves genuinely to one another, the revelation is small and indirect, wrapped up like a present or gift, an analogy Adams herself makes several times. She makes us observe how chatter is often a substitute for real conversation, and how incredibly similar friendship and a love affair are.

The novel's theme is based on an assumption voiced by one character midway through the book: "How lonely and isolated all people are, though, basically" (101). Every person has a secret; everyone is a mystery to somebody. However, the beauty of the world is, the novel suggests, that people do sometimes connect, do sometimes find the word or gesture that enables them to share something that is truly a part of themselves, though such moments happen in ways we do not plan or anticipate, or perhaps even notice, our vision being blurred through cynicism or sentimentality.

The theme of the book seems to be simply this: There are always second chances for all of us, but they are never what we expect them to be.



