

Dare

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 1

TENNESSEE'S GAY AND LESBIAN NEWSWEEKLY

JANUARY 6-12, 1989

ANALYSIS: What will 1989 bring?

By **JEFF ELLIS**
Managing Editor

Only one week into the New Year, the news year is beginning to take shape.

Following the almost monumental strides made by the mid-south's lesbian and gay community in 1988, many people are likely to suspect 1989 will be anti-climactic. Any year in which there is more activism proves a tough act to follow, but in this case Act One may lead to an Act Two that's even more notable for its activism.

Entering the new year, the event that's shaping up to be the first "big" story is the \$500,000 lawsuit filed in late December against Nashville's Baptist Memorial Hospital and orthopedic surgeon Dr. John Lamb. The suit, filed by attorney Abby Rubinfeld for her client known only as "John Doe," charges the hospital and Dr. Lamb with performing an HIV-test on a patient without his knowledge and consent.

If indeed Baptist changed its policies regarding HIV-testing as a result of the incident, the suit may have been, for all intents and purposes, already decided. Most likely, the suit will never be heard in a courtroom, but instead will be settled out-of-court by the parties involved.

And John Doe — and every other potential Baptist Hospital patient — will be the victors.

One of last year's more intriguing stories was the somewhat strained relationship existing between the Nashville Mayor Bill Boner's office and lesbian and gay leaders and the cat-and-mouse games played by both sides in order to gain the upper hand.

The strain developed after Boner's reluctance to issue a proclamation for last year's Pride Week celebration became known. Boner claimed ignorance of the matter and staffers took the fall, including former press secretary Bill Fletcher. Fletcher has since changed jobs within the administration and is now lobbying for Metro on Capitol Hill.

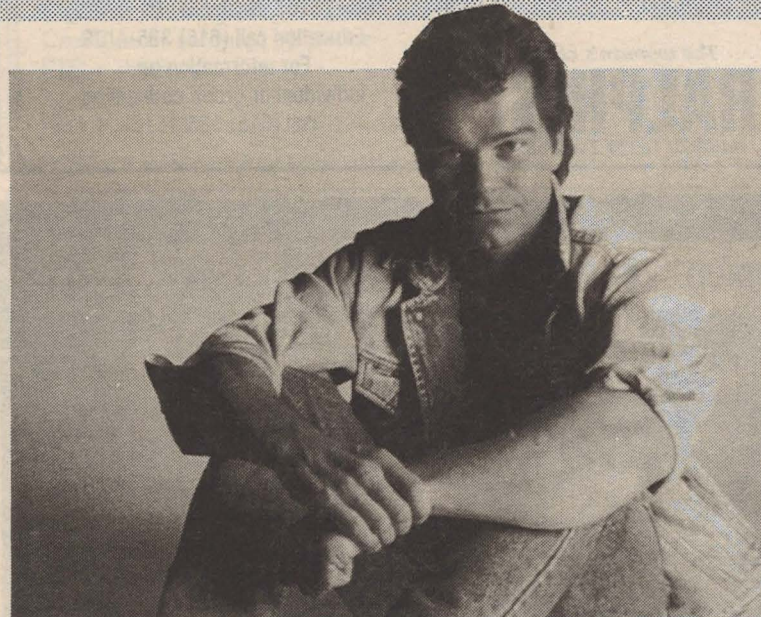
Fletcher's replacement, former WTVF reporter Tom Lee, has shown a willingness in the past to work with the lesbian and gay community and can be expected to be more open in his dealings than was Fletcher.

Boner did, however, make some concessions of his own following the Pride Week problem, agreeing to meet with lesbian and gay leaders. During that September meeting, he promised quarterly confabs with staff liaison Mike McDonald. The first such meeting with McDonald is scheduled for January 10. Only time will tell if the Mayor's office is acting in good faith.

Metro Police appear to be working hard to find the murderer of Vernon Lester Larkin, who was found in his blood-spattered Hickory Valley-area apartment last September.

Unfortunately, because the prime suspect is a transient known to authorities only as Bubba, the trail virtually free of clues. Authorities did recover Larkin's stolen automobile in Atlanta, but those who know the streets well — and every indication is that "Bubba" does — could lose themselves among the city's homeless. But there are no indications the man is still in Atlanta.

One police source lamented the passage of
continued on page 3



Brian Starcher, who stars as Hank Elliott on CBS-TV's *As the World Turns*, is the first continuing gay male character on a network soap opera. The show airs daily at 1 p.m. on Memphis' WREG, Channel 3, and at 3 p.m. on Nashville's WTVF, Channel 5. —PHOTO CBS-TV

National lesbian conference sets southeast meeting

By **DEBORAH BURKS**
Staff Writer

Plans are under way for a national lesbian conference which will identify and promote the concerns of the lesbian community.

"The idea for this conference was really conceived by the women who worked together on the March on Washington and felt that the issues being addressed by the March were those that primarily concerned gay men," explained Libby Post, co-chair of the New York State Lesbian and Gay Lobby and an organizer of the lesbian conference. "There's

a need for lesbians to get our agenda out front but before we can do that we need to decide what that agenda is. That's what this conference is about."

Post noted that an ad-hoc group of about 40 women met in September in Washington, D.C., to begin discussing plans for the conference. This group made the following recommendations for the conference:

1. The conference should be by, for, and about lesbians.
2. The conference should be planned ac-
continued on page 3

Lawsuit seeks half-million

By **JEFF ELLIS**
Managing Editor

A lawsuit, seeking some half-million dollars in punitive damages, was filed recently in Davidson County Chancery Court by a man who claims officials at Nashville's Baptist Memorial Hospital tested him for HIV-infection without his knowledge or consent.

The man, referred to only as "John Doe" in the suit, claims that hospital officials had no right to test him. The test was performed on Dec. 27, 1987, when the man visited the hospital's emergency room for treatment of a broken leg sustained earlier that day.

According to the man, Dr. John Lamb, an orthopedic surgeon on staff at Baptist, ordered the HIV-test while setting the man's broken leg.

Lamb told reporters in January, 1988, that he ordered the test because the man appeared to

be "chronically ill."

John Doe, however, claims he "was and is healthy as a horse," and that Lamb ordered the tests, "because he thought I was gay."

"Dr. Lamb was very cold toward me, he wouldn't touch me. To say he was homophobic is an understatement," the man said.

The test for HIV-infection is usually ordered for those Baptist Hospital patients "known to be an increased risk for the human immunodeficiency virus, as well as those patients whose clinical illness suggests AIDS or other recognized HIV-related syndromes," according to hospital spokesperson Aileen Katcher.

Hospital policy, which reportedly was adopted two weeks after the incident involving John Doe, now calls for patients who test positive to be counseled.

John Doe, whose HIV test was positive, was
continued on page 3

INSIDE This Week's Dare



"I'm not a lesbian.
I just loved Thelma,"
page 4.



Someone you know
got shot this week: *Snap*,
page 8.

Take that, Harlequin:
a lesbian romance novel,
page 7.



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Mondays

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Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous)
Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, 8pm. Info 901 272-9459.

Tuesdays

Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous)
Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, 5:30 and 8pm. Info 901 272-9459.

Wednesdays

Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous)
Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, 8pm. Info 901 272-9459.

Thursdays

P-FLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
Support group, St. John's Episcopal Church, 322 S Greer. 1st Thursday only.
Info 901 761-1444.
Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous)
Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, 5:30pm. Info 901 272-9459.
Into the Light (Women's Alcoholics Anonymous)
Meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, 8pm. Info 901 276-7379.

Fridays

Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous)
Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, 5:30 and 10pm. Info 901 272-9459.

Saturdays

Twisted Sisters (ACOA)
Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, Noon. Info 901 276-7379.
Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous)
Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, 8pm. Info 901 272-9459.

Sundays

Agape New Life Church
Sunday School, 9:30am. Worship service, 11am. Info 901 276-1872.
Into the Light (Women's Alcoholics Anonymous)
Meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, Noon. Info 901 276-7379.
Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous)
Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center, 8pm. Info 901 272-9459.

Nashville

Mondays

Nashville CARES
AIDS/ARC Support Group, 6:30pm. HIV Education Support Group, 6pm. Family Support Group, 6:30pm. Info 615 385-1510.
Lambda Group
Closed Alcoholics Anonymous meeting for gay men and lesbians, Unitarian Church, 8pm.
MAGNET (Married and Gay Network)
Support group for married gay men. 1st & 3rd Mondays only. MCC, 8pm. Info 615 320-0288.

Tuesdays

Vanderbilt Lambda Association
Meeting for gay and lesbian Vanderbilt students, faculty, staff and alumni. Vanderbilt Divinity School, Room G 23. 5:30pm. Info 615 385-4283.
Al-Anon
Open meeting, MCC, 6:30pm.
Nashville CARES
HIV Education Support Groups, 7pm. Info 615 385-1510.
Sober Sisters (Lesbian Alcoholics Anonymous)
Closed meeting, MCC, 8pm.

Wednesdays

Sex Addicts Anonymous
Closed meeting for gay men and lesbians. MCC, 5:30pm.
Nashville CARES
AIDS/ARC Couples Support Group, 5:30pm. AIDS/ARC Support Group, 6:30pm. HIV Support Group, 7pm. Info 615 385-1510.
MTSU Lambda Association
Meeting for lesbian and gay Middle Tennessee State University students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Murfreesboro, 7pm. Info 615 890-3787.

Thursdays

Nashville CARES
HIV Support Group, 6:30pm. Visualization group, 6:30pm. Info 615 385-1510.
Alternatives (Alcoholics Anonymous)
Closed meeting for lesbians and gay men, MCC, 8pm.
Lesbian Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA)
Meeting, 8pm. Info 615 385-4776 or 615 352-5823.

Fridays

Sexaholics Anonymous
Closed meeting, MCC, 5pm.
Gay Parents Support Group
Meeting, MCC, 1st Friday only, 7pm. Info 615 292-0817 or 615 320-0288.
Alcoholics Anonymous Program Study Group
Meeting, Belmont United Methodist, 7:30 pm.

Saturdays

Nashville CARES
AIDS/ARC Support Group, 4pm. Info 615 385-1510.
Metropolitan Community Church
Mortgage Meal, all you can eat, 7:30pm. \$5.
Gay Cable Network
Cablecast, Nashville Viacom Channel 35 (Community Access Television), 8pm.

Sundays

Metropolitan Community Church
Worship services, 11am and 7pm. Info 615 320-0288.

Special Events

Sunday, January 8

Meeting Pride Week '89 Committee, Nashville. 1pm. Info 615 297-4297.

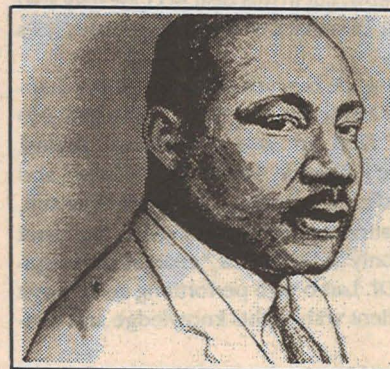
Thursday, January 12

Brown-Bag Lunch *That Strange Girl: The Alice Mitchell Murder Case (Memphis, 1896)*, Sherre Dryden, Vanderbilt University librarian. Lesbian and Gay Studies Lecture Series, Vanderbilt Lambda Association, Sarratt 118, Vanderbilt, Nashville. 12:10-1pm. Free.

Potluck For those interested in attending the Lesbian Agenda Conference Southeastern Regional Planning Meeting in Atlanta January 28-29. 6:30pm. Free. Info 615 385-4283.

Saturday, January 14

Potluck and Discussion *Martin Luther King Remembered, Black and White Men Together*, Memphis. 7:30pm. Info 901 327-3753.



Martin Luther King, Jr.

Monday, January 16

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY

GayRap *What Does the Bible Really Say About Homosexuality?*, led by Bill Tracer, assistant pastor, Agape New Life Church. Sponsored by Memphis Gay Coalition. Meeting Room B, Memphis Public Library, corner of Peabody and McLean. 7:30pm. Free. Info 901 324-GAYS.

Saturday, January 21

Party *Recoup from the Holidays*, movie and popcorn, Gay Women's Social Group, Memphis. 7:30pm. \$2 donation. Info 901 324-6949.

Saturday, January 28

Spaghetti Dinner and Fish Fry Black and White Men Together, Memphis. 7-10pm. Info 901 452-5894.

Friday, February 3

Mardi Gras Ball Party and dance, Towne House Tea Room, 167-1/2 8th Av North, Nashville. Food, drinks, and costume contest. Sponsored by Metropolitan Community Church. 8pm-1am. \$5 donation. Info 615 228-8571 or 615 320-0288.

Your nonprofit event can be listed free in *Dates*. Write to *Dare*, Box 40422, Nashville, TN 37204-0422, or phone 615 292-9623 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. Deadline noon Tuesday for publication next Friday.

'89 predictions

continued from page 1

time as the real culprit in finding Larkin's killer, saying that any witness' memory will become more and more clouded.

"People may forget, but we won't," the police source said. "We never forget when someone's been murdered."

As the Tennessee legislature reconvenes for its 1989 session, among the issues being considered will be the proposed changes in the state criminal code. The legislature charged the Tennessee Sentencing Commission in 1986 with the task of eliminating from the code any antiquated or archaic language.

So the Commission decided to eliminate heterosexual "crimes against nature" and place a specific ban on same-sex sexual acts, apparently dismissing claims that such changes would reinforce such archaic notions.

Although some Commission members have indicated privately a desire to eliminate any references to sexual acts, strong lobbying efforts led to the proposals the legislature will consider in 1989.

Will the legislature adopt the changes? It's still too early to tell, but the legislature's conservative tone is fact, as is its rural complexion.

To counter the conservative elements, a strong lobbying effort will be needed to combat the changes. Already under way is a move by Advance, the political action committee of the Tennessee Gay and Lesbian Alliance (T-GALA), to make its views on the subject known on the Hill.

Since initial media coverage heralding the creation of the Nashville Coalition Against Pornography (NCAP), not much has been heard from the group which has vowed to rid the city of "illegal pornographic materials."

Perhaps NCAP is trying to lull the city into a false sense of security by their inaction. But they have already promised to make their presence felt this spring.

...lesbian agenda conference

continued from page 1

cording to feminist principles.

3. The planning and conference should represent our diversity and welcome all lesbians.

"Out of this conference we'll hopefully see a cohesive lesbian community develop and some of our issues getting attention," said Post.

Suggested topics for the conference include day care, visibility, legal rights, youth, racism, money, and establishing a national lesbian organization.

To ensure diverse national input for the conference, Post said the lesbians attending the September meeting suggested dividing the country into six regions, each holding a regional meeting in late January. Each region will discuss issues and then send their "voices" to a national planning meeting March 4-5 in Durham, N.C.

The organizers hope the national conference will take place in the fall of 1989 or the

spring of 1990. Sites under consideration include Dallas, St. Louis, New Orleans, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta.

The Southeastern regional planning meeting is scheduled for January 28 and 29 at Emory University in Atlanta, according to Ginny Real, the region's contact.

"We are really excited about this meeting," said Real. "The Midwest regional meeting was very positive and we expect the same here. When women hear about the conference they get very enthusiastic and tell others so I have no idea how many lesbians will attend our Southern meeting."

Community housing and child care are available with advance notice is given. For more information or make reservations, phone (919) 788-6522.

Tennessee organizers will hold a potluck supper meeting in Nashville this Thursday, January 12, at 6:30 p.m. For information about the supper, phone (615) 385-4283.

Rubenfeld, former legal director of the New York-based Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, was the author of the nation's first AIDS law manual. She recently returned to her Nashville practice with the firm of Cheatham and Palermo after a five-year stint with Lambda.

On a much more positive note, however, 1989 will probably bring about a stronger sense of community, both in Memphis and Nashville.

Recently announced plans for a gay community center in Memphis would be the culmination of years of dreaming and planning. Such a center would enable the Bluff City's lesbian and gay community to play an even more viable role.

Of course, the selection of a location for the gay community center could engender some controversy. Memphis is, after all, home both to powerful conservative Republican mayor Dick Hackett and to the state's largest Southern Baptist congregation, Bellevue Baptist Church, and its pastor, Adrian Rogers, a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Neither Hackett nor Rogers is known for his liberal views toward lesbians and gay men.

The lesbian and gay community in Memphis, however, has a rich history of working together for its goals and will probably prove to be worthy adversaries if any such controversy arises.

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...\$500,000 suit against doctor

continued from page 1

never counseled while he was a patient at Baptist.

The suit, which seeks \$500,000 in punitive damages and an unspecified amount in compensatory damages, was filed in Davidson Chancery Court by attorney Abby Rubenfeld.

Rubenfeld, former legal director of the New York-based Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, was the author of the nation's first AIDS law manual. She recently returned to her Nashville practice with the firm of Cheatham and Palermo after a five-year stint with Lambda.



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D J U N A



By **SHERRE DRYDEN**
Book Editor

"They walked down 1922 and the boulevard du Montparnasse with their legs coming forward in perfect coordination as though they were one. They were dressed in black and they did not stop until 1931," Andrew Field writes of author Djuna Barnes and her lover, artist Thelma Woods, in *Djuna: The Formidable Miss Barnes*.

The two women lived tempestuously together for nearly a decade, first in a flat on the boulevard St.-Germain and later in a house Djuna bought on rue St.-Romain. Thelma called Djuna "Irene." In 1928 Djuna dedicated her novel *Ryder* to Thelma, whom she called "Simon." *New Yorker* columnist Janet Flanner called Thelma "the bitch of all time."

Around 1910 Djuna Barnes had gone to New York City, immediately becoming one of Greenwich Village's decadent, bohemian "crowd." In 1911 her first poems were published in *Harper's* magazine. She also had a career as a journalist that included writing features and essays for a variety of newspapers and magazines - *Charm*, *Vanity Fair*, the *New Yorker*, the *New York Press* and the *Telegraph*.

Although Djuna did not take this part of her career seriously - journalism was a way of supporting herself in order to write poetry and plays - she was doing a kind of "participatory" journalism rare among men and unheard of for women. She often sought out subjects requiring courage on her part. One of her most celebrated articles was written after being force-fed. She wanted to be able to comment first-hand on the use of such coercive measures against suffragists who refused to eat when imprisoned for marching for women's rights.

Djuna sailed to Paris in late 1919 or 1920. She lived at the Hotel d'Angleterre, wrote in bed each morning and spent most afternoons in the cafés, a "ocean of red hair," dressed in her signature long black cape. Robert McAlmon described her as "haughty" and Ezra Pound, his attempt at seduction turned down, said she "weren't [sic] too cuddly."

The women Djuna knew in Paris had a

different view, however:

Sylvia Beach said Djuna was "so charming, so Irish and so gifted...certainly she was one of the most talented and fascinating literary figures in the Paris of the Twenties." Janet Flanner called her "the most important woman writer we had."

Further evidence of Djuna's secure position in the Paris women's community was the publication in 1928 of *Ladies Almanack*. *Ladies Almanack* was privately printed and distributed by hand on the streets of Paris. It is an affectionate satire of Paris lesbian society, particularly the circle of women who surrounded Natalie Barney.

Dame Evangeline Musset, Natalie herself, is "the first woman born with a Difference" - the return of her sexual self. Committed to rescuing women from the perils of heterosexuality, Dame Evangeline creates a community where women are not divided from their sexuality. They have value because they *are* women.

The other characters also are based on Djuna's real-life friends and acquaintances: Romaine Brooks (Cynic Sal), Lady Una Trowbridge and Radclyffe Hall (Lady Buck-and-Balk and Lady Tilly-Tweed-in-Blood), Dorothy Wilde (Doll Furious). All delight in the pleasures of new-found freedom.

In *Ladies Almanack* Djuna rewrites scripture, documents ritual, considers woman's condition and tells the heroic story of Dame Evangeline, woman's patron saint. She creates a calendar that celebrates woman's accomplishments, provides goddesses, a zodiac and a lullaby. She explains the workings of a



LE
PAR

ESBIAH
ARIS

BARNES



woman's body and the direction of her sexuality.

Natalie Barney said of *Ladies Almanack*, "All ladies fit to figure in such an almanac should of course be eager to have a copy, and all gentlemen disapproving of them."

The gentlemen *were* disapproving, because the ladies of *Ladies Almanack* were busy overturning patriarchal mythologies and creating their own counterculture. It was a counterculture where men might come (although critic Shari Benstock suggests that while glorifying love between women Djuna "made man...the avowed enemy"), but they certainly would not understand.

Ladies Almanack has often been considered a satire at the expense of lesbians, a barb at Natalie Barney and her circle. Instead of deploring that society, however, it is clear that what Djuna deplores is the treatment of women generally (and lesbians particularly) in the heterosexual world.

She continues Natalie's and Renée Vivien's attempts to recover women's history and create a woman-centered new community.

Woman's body—which has been taken over by man to satisfy his lust—is returned to woman's control. The ladies of the *Almanack* celebrate women's sexuality and find a language in which to express woman's desire for herself.

Ladies Almanack demonstrates that the knowledge of one another's "otherness" provided considerable support for the women who went to Paris.

Unfortunately, Djuna's own relationship with Thelma was not a happy one. She

spent much of her time trying to get Thelma to stop drinking; both women had serious problems with alcohol. As difficulties between them intensified, so did their drinking. Thelma would threaten to leave Djuna every night. Djuna would go out after her, both of them drinking their way from bar to bar. Finally, in 1931, Thelma really did leave.

Soon afterward, Djuna began on her most remembered work, *Nightwood*, which was published in 1936. *Nightwood* became a cult guide to the homosexual nightworld of Paris that Djuna had shared with Thelma.

"I'm not a lesbian. I just loved Thelma," Djuna would tell a friend years later.

Yet *The Book of Repulsive Women*, published a full decade before Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, years before Djuna met Thelma, includes the lines

"We'll know you for the woman

That you are,

See you sagging down with bulging

Hair to sip,

The dappled damp from some vague

Under lip."

SHE WROTE A FRIEND about a brief affair with Jane Heap before leaving New York. During her first summer in Paris she had an affair with Natalie Barney.

In his memoirs *Shadow and Light*, artist Maurice Sterne recalled, "Djuna's most intimate friend was the loveliest young woman in the Village, a Titian-haired beauty who was fatally ill. When Mary Pyne died I found Djuna sobbing painfully, her head buried in her arms, saying over and over that she would never get over the loss."

In her poems *Six Songs of Khalidine*, written shortly after Mary Pyne's death and dedicated to her memory, the poet keeps a night-long vigil over her dying friend. The two women kiss desperately, terrified of their inevitable separation.

But by the time Djuna declared "I am not a lesbian," she was an old woman. Most of the women who went to Paris were dead, and Djuna lived alone, secluded in Greenwich Village. •

The write stuff.

Jeff Ellis
Managing Editor

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January 6-12, 1989
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such person or members of such organization.
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VIEWS

Secret HIV Testing Is Wrong

A NASHVILLE MAN has sued Baptist Hospital and physician John Lamb for illicitly testing Doe's blood for the presence of antibodies to the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), thought to cause AIDS.

Lamb has said that he ordered the surreptitious test of "John Doe" because he thought Doe "looked gay." The suit filed by crack human-rights attorney Abby Rubinfeld for Doe charges that Lamb also failed to counsel Doe about the results of the test, about what those results might mean, or about ways Doe could protect his health and the health

of others.

Any physician who surreptitiously tests, or who does not fully disclose what she or he is doing to a patient's body, is guilty of malpractice.

What Lamb did was wrong: it was a violation of Doe's privacy and of his rights as a human being and as a patient.

Doctors are supposed to be healers, not self-appointed "morality" detectives. •

SOAPBOX

Drag 'Em Out of the Closet?

by Carole Cunningham
Staff Writer

WHILE GEORGE C. SCOTT in the movie *Patton* may be considered a somewhat unsavory role model for the budding gay or lesbian activist, the movie does contain one notable scene worth remembering. General Patton, near the end of World War II and experiencing a considerable decline in his popularity with the Allies, strolls through the ruins of walls built by the Romans, explaining to one of his aids an ancient custom of the Roman warrior: when the centurian, victorious, rode through the streets to be recognized and celebrated by the populace, he had on his litter his wife, his children, and the spoils of battle. But, Patton explains, nearest the centurian and at his side in all moments of victory was the slave who, while the crowds roared, would whisper in the centurian's ear that "all glory is fleeting."

In November of 1987, gay and lesbian activists from around the country met in Washington D.C. at a summit called "The War Conference." The purpose of the conference was to draw the battle lines in the fight for lesbian and gay rights, to assess the impact of recent victories and defeats, to implement effective strategies in our civil rights battles, and to set a national agenda of issues groups around the country would address in the upcoming year. The War Conference organizers came under significant fire for way the conference was organized, for the disproportionate number of white males in attendance, its seemingly "country club" atmosphere of exclusivity.

However, the issue that seemed to receive the most press but was met nationally with the least controversy was a strategy for exposing as gay those gay public officials who worked directly against the interests of the lesbian and gay community.

Activists have always, like the slave whispering to the centurian, whispered in the ears of closeted public leaders reminders of their "roots" when those leaders began to work against the interests of the gay community—either out of their own ignorance or their fear of being exposed. But the participants at the War Conference decided the whisper in the ear needed to become a shout from the street, and armed with the blessing of the country's lesbian and gay rights "leaders," the troops began to implement their own brand of *perestroika* or "openness." Come willingly or not, politicians would come out.

The aggravation precipitating this new strategy is felt by nearly anyone who steps into the frustrating fray we call the gay rights movement. The participants at the War Conference

realized rightly that the battle we fight is as much at home in the "free" territories as it is abroad in the straight world. We have seen the enemy and they are us. But are "we" the only enemy? And will fighting the battle at home win the war or obliterate our chances of winning abroad?

Activists in Illinois, outraged that Governor James Thompson signed a bill allowing doctors to give patients HIV antibody tests without the patient's knowledge, decided to take Governor Thompson to the carpet for betraying the community they allege he is a part of. When running for office in 1975, Thompson's personal life was the subject of speculation by his opponent and by the press. Still unmarried at age 39, speculation about his private life included the suggestion that Thompson was gay.

A few months later, Thompson married and quieted for years those who thought they would discredit him by making the gay label stick. That is, until gay activists themselves, protesting the governor's stand on HIV testing, shouted outside the governor's mansion "Big Jim, come out of the closet!" Thompson publicists have repeatedly and vehemently denied the governor is gay in response to the activists' charges, but gay papers across the country continue reports about the "closeted" Illinois governor's controversial decisions. The mainstream press has virtually ignored the issue.

Arguing from a "moral" standpoint, a standpoint lesbian and gay activists have hardly shirked from, a person's sexual orientation is a private matter that should neither hamper nor aid a person in their public lives. The closets public officials and other "high profile" personalities often inhabit are the products of fear—fear of personal and professional violence. Those in the closet now have another enemy to fear—the lesbian or gay activist who, fed up with the obstacles to progress and change so many closeted gays create, insist that the masks be stripped away, the closet doors unbolted. Did those who set the new "national agenda" for lesbian and gay activists also set a code of conduct that would improve the struggle for civil rights, or would the klieg light thrown on the private lives of public leaders drive them even deeper into the dark recesses of the closet?

In Illinois, the results have been less than promising: the claims of activists have not enjoyed a broad audience, the governor has not changed his position on testing, and publicists for Thompson have denied he is gay as

often as activists claim he is gay. War Conference participants seemed not to have outlined exactly how this forced coming-out would progress. How would allegations be supported? Would activists march a trail of former lovers in front of reporters from the *New York Times*? What would the activists hope to accomplish?

Frankly, if the results seemed positive I might support the effort to drag gays and lesbians out of the closet who had been actively working against the cause of gay rights. But abridging someone's right to privacy, whether supportive of my opinions or not, seems to be taking a terrible risk: a risk that you violate rights and gain nothing more than a headline in a paper only gays read; a risk that you drive those who might actually help you even deeper into the closet, making enemies out of those who under kinder circumstances might be willing to take a small risk in your favor; but most of all you risk abandoning your own principles in the interests of the elusive goal you hope to achieve.

And to an "outsider" (and outsiders are the ones who will ultimately decide the fate of many of our causes) a gay man or lesbian fighting another gay man or lesbian with the weapons of the enemy begins to look more like the enemy than the enemy. What a subtle victory for the "real" enemy that would be.

One Barney Frank standing up to say he is gay of his own volition will do more to advance our cause than one hundred politicians denying they are gay because of activists' accusations. Our cause is too precious, our gains too few to risk alienating the very community we hope to liberate. Let us hope we have the wisdom to avoid vanquishing ourselves.

The gay and lesbian rights movement has gained a promising momentum in the last few years even in the face of Reagan, the New Right, and the Religious Right. On October 11, 1987, 750,000 lesbians and gay men marched through the streets of Washington D.C. and the marching of those feet has been heard ever since.

Like the centurian glorying in his victories, we too must be reminded of the ineluctable defeats we will suffer no matter how sweet our success. Remembering like the slave that "all glory is fleeting," we must remember too that we have some choice about who our enemy is, about who will take us prisoner if we fall. The answer has usually been clear: "the enemy." In Illinois and elsewhere the answer tomorrow may be "us." •

PAGES

A Mistress Moderately Fair*A Mistress Moderately Fair.* By Katherine Sturtevant. Boston: Alyson. 249 pages. \$8.95, paper.by **Robyn Kevlin**
Special to Dare

A WOMAN'S LIFE in London in the 1670s fell into one of two categories. If she were high-born, she could look forward to having her husband chosen for her, and her hours spent raising his children and minding his household. No thought was given to her needs or desires; instead, she existed solely for his pleasure and expediency.

If she were born into the lower classes, she would live her short life as servant to her more fortunate sisters, or as whore to their husbands, or both. Women's roles were pre-or-

dained, and their lives were often dismal.

But somehow, amidst all this despair, Katherine Sturtevant has created a passionate novel of two women who choose to live their lives beyond the pale of London's dichotomy. We are engrossed by the courage and talent of Margaret Featherstone, a rare female playwright, and Amy Dudley, the brilliant actress who brings Margaret's plays to life. Margaret and Amy discover the best of themselves in each other, and therein lies the tale. •

by **Sherre Dryden**
Book Editor

MARGARET FEATHERSTONE is a moderately successful playwright in Restoration London. Amy Dudley is an actress recently arrived in the city. From Amy's diary we learn that she has a mysterious, undoubtedly tragic, past.

Margaret, whose motives are mostly noble, takes Amy under her wing. She hopes to save Amy from having to bargain for parts with her body. Only to end up taking Amy into her own bed. Soon, though, Margaret and Amy's idyllic time together is disrupted when Amy's past catches up with her.

Katherine Sturtevant writes easily and well. The passages from Amy's diary and Margaret's poetry are not painfully silly, as insertions of that type often are. The characters and subplots are interesting, as well, and Sturtevant handles the historical setting nicely.

Events are, of course, entirely predictable. Modern romance novels have recently received attention from feminist critics who offer several explanations for their large audience and continued popularity. These explanations often conflict, but most suggest that absolute predictability of characters and plot is essential.

A lesbian audience requires some changes in the formula. The primary characters should be more than just the male and female hero and heroine turned into two women. But similarities with romances aimed at heterosexual women outweigh differences and place lesbian romances like *A Mistress Moderately Fair* firmly in the genre.

Sturtevant makes it clear that neither Margaret nor Amy behaves, nor wishes to behave, like the traditional romance heroine. Neither is subservient; each becomes angry when the other attempts to intervene, unasked, on her behalf. Each insists that she is competent to solve her own problems.

Female competence is taken a step farther, as well, into female superiority. Amy asserts

that friendship between women is "of a higher order than that between a man and a woman." It is "the nature of women," she continues, "that we are not so filled with ourselves that we think only of snatching our pleasure from another, however the other may feel."

Women who turn to men fare badly. Elizabeth Hill, another actress, is spurned for superficial reasons by the man she loves. She is forced to sell herself to a man she despises in exchange for future financial security.

Homosexual men fare just as badly. "What Mr. Cary and Lord Valentine do together is ill-called love, or so I guess," Margaret comments.

Richard Cary is director of King's Company, the theatrical company that produces Margaret's plays and with which Amy performs. He is by no means a villain; in fact, he is the most positively portrayed male character. By the end of the novel it is clear that Cary (Sturtevant refers to all of the women by their first names, the men by their last) loves and is loved by Valentine. Yet the two men, merely because they are men, are denied the happy ending the romance formula would have us expect.

UNFORTUNATELY, Sturtevant undermines her position by reinforcing stereotypes of lesbians as "masculine," or at least not properly "feminine." Margaret "might have been taken for a gentleman." Amy blithely gives up her son to win Margaret's freedom.

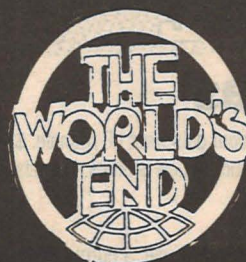
Additionally, Margaret and Amy declare their independence from traditional female roles by emphasizing the traditional maleness of the role they desire. The conclusion finds them committing to life together:

"Are you content, then, to be my mistress?" Amy asked. "Aye, Amy. If you are content to be mine."

In the end Margaret and Amy do not triumph because of their essential womanly superiority; they triumph because they become "masculine." •

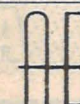


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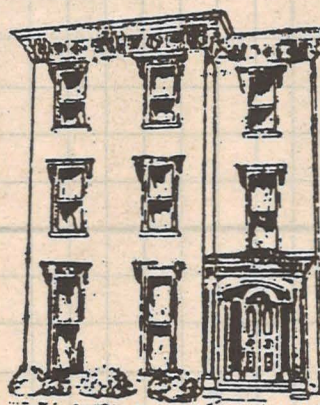
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• The Lesbian Agenda Conference will hold Southeastern Regional Planning Meeting in Atlanta Jan 28-29. Interested? Potluck meeting Jan. 12, 6:30pm. Info 615 385-4283.

• Watch GCN/Nashville Tuesdays at 9pm, Saturdays at 8pm. Or both! Exclusively on Nashville's Cable 35.

• Help stop the proposed homophobic changes in Tennessee's crimes against nature law. Send your contribution to Advance, the political action committee of the Tennessee Gay & Lesbian Alliance. Freedom - the best Christmas gift of all. Advance, Box 24181, Nashville, TN 37202. Not tax-deductible. Info 615 385-4283

• **LONG HOURS. HARD WORK. NO PAY.** Dare is accepting applications from writers. Learn community-oriented journalism, and be one of the best. Dare, Box 40422, Nashville, 37204 or phone 615-292-9623.

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SNAPS

What was your worst Christmas gift?



David Carr - "Everything I got in a box was great. But a friend of mine who was 18 died of AIDS."



Grace Perry - "I don't think I had a worst one. Got an Amos 'n' Andy tape that was pretty wonderful. It was a dandy Christmas."



Becky Pancel (left) - "Nothing." **Donna Williams** - "This bandanna thing with wood beads on it. It was pretty tacky. Gee, I hope my step sister doesn't read this - she gave it to me."



"Colonel Jed" - "That's a pretty tough question for a guy who only got one present."

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