

FROM THE HEART OF THE AMERICAN SOUTH

Dare

FREE

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 20

THE GAY AND LESBIAN NEWSPAPER

AUGUST 5-11, 1988

Gay Man Regains Visitation Rights

By **STUART BIVIN**
Editor

National Gay Rights Advocates (NGRA), a California-based public interest law firm, has announced that a Chicago man who had been denied all visitation with his four children because of his ex-wife's fear of AIDS has had his visitation rights restored.

An Illinois judge had ruled in April that the man, known in court as Leslie Roe, could not visit with his children because of his "failure to take an AIDS test [*sic*], Leslie being an admitted homosexual."

Roe had not taken an HIV antibody test. Hee showed no signs of AIDS or AIDS-related complex (ARC).

The children's mother withdrew her demand that Roe be denied visitation after

NGRA conducted negotiations on Roe's behalf.

Ben Schatz, Director of NGRA's AIDS Civil Rights Project, said that, although he was pleased with the outcome of the case, he was "outraged that the courts granted legal legitimacy to AIDS hysteria in the first place. To separate gay fathers from their children because of stereotypes and medical misinformation hurts father and children alike, while helping no one."

NGRA Executive Director Jean O'Leary added her determination to fighting AIDS-related discrimination, saying, "The courts must never become a place in which hysteria and prejudice are able to dictate the law and sweep aside fundamental rights."

Metro Parks Director Talks About Park Sex Arrests

By **HARRISON HICKS**
Staff Writer

Despite the controversy surrounding undercover operations which in the past year have resulted in the arrests of more than 300 people for soliciting for sex or performing illicit sex acts in Nashville parks, Metro Parks Director James Fyke refused last week to rule out the possibility of future sex stings taking place.

Fyke, speaking Saturday about public park policies at the latest Metropolitan Community Church-Nashville forum, said it was his hope that the possible threat of future sex stings would deter people from using the parks as places to engage in sex or solicitation for sex.

"That's something we're not going to condone," Fyke said, referring to sexual acts in the parks.

Stating that he was not at the meeting to be judgmental toward the lesbian and gay

community, Fyke asked for suggestions on ways to deal with the problem.

"The first step is communication, rather than combat," Fyke said.

Several people questioned Fyke on the ethics of the recent undercover operations, raising the issue of entrapment.

Fyke said he had no knowledge of entrapment in any of the operations. He stated that all officers involved in the stings were given guidelines concerning evidence and told not to deal with cases where the evidence against someone might be shaky.

"All of these cases have been or will be or should be heard in court," Fyke said. "Anyone who feels as if they were entrapped has the rights within the court procedure to offer that in their evidence. Our evidence obviously would speak for itself. The court would have to decide (whether there was entrapment.)"

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Lesbian/Gay "Freedom Ride" Tours South

New York Group Skips Nashville and Knoxville

By **JEFF ELLIS**
Managing Editor

The scheduled Nashville visit by a group of six New Yorkers, billing themselves as the Lesbian and Gay Freedom Ride, failed to take place because, according to group spokesperson Heidi Dorow, "I didn't follow through."

Originally hailed as a visibility and civil rights event, the Freedom Ride decided to bypass Tennessee due to a lack of planning, Dorow said. Stops in both Nashville

and Knoxville had been on the group's itinerary. As early as April, Dare reported that the freedom riders would visit Music City.

Michael Petrelis, a PWA activist and founding member of ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), spearheaded the idea following the reaction of Southern activists at the War Conference, a gathering of lesbian and gay leaders, held near Washington, D.C., in February.

In March, the Freedom Ride got under

Senate Hopeful: "Close Gay Orgy Parlors"

Republican Alice Algood Blasts Gay "Typhoid Mary"

By **JEFF ELLIS**
Managing Editor

In an apparent last-ditch effort to consolidate the state's conservative voters, Republican Senatorial candidate Alice Algood Tuesday called for the closing of "all homosexual bath houses, orgy parlors and so-called gay bars" to halt transmission of the AIDS virus.

Algood, a longtime GOP stalwart and fund-raiser from Columbia, released a six-point program on AIDS in her effort to rally the state's conservative voters to her camp in yesterday's Republican primary. Polls showed Algood trailing her opponent, Bill Andersen, a Kingsport attorney. Results of yesterday's balloting were not available at press time.

"AIDS is a public health issue. It is not a civil rights issue," Algood's position paper stated. "There is no civil right to act like Typhoid Mary and go around contrtaminating innocent people. Cowardice by most of our public health establishment has caused them to give in to the outrageous demands of the homosexual lobby."

Algood credits "the radical and politically powerful homosexual lobby" with unduly influencing current public health policy, blaming doctors for "whitewashing" the facts about the deadly disease.

Tuesday's statements from Algood reiterate her earlier stands on AIDS and lesbian and gay issues. She has long called for the quarantine of persons who might transmit the virus.

The statement, released by Algood's adviser John Davies of Chattanooga, was met with obvious disfavor by local lesbian and gay leaders.

Carole Cunningham, president of the statewide Tennessee Gay and Lesbian Task Force, called Algood's statement, "a way to get her name in the paper."

"It think it's extremely unfortunate that simply by running for office she is given a forum to express the profound ignorance of her ideas," Cunningham said. "I'm sure there are others throughout the state with the same opinion, but because this woman is running for the U.S. Senate, her views are made public by the media."

Cunningham charged that media coverage give the candidate's statements "a air of legitimacy."

"Their (the media's) coverage lends credibility to pure rubbish," Cunningham charged.

However, Cunningham expressed pleasure at the response of Algood's opponent, Andersen, who was campaigning in East Tennessee on Tuesday. Andersen said that he agrees with "President Reagan and Surgeon General C. Everett Koop that additional education is needed in the home, school and church and additional funding is needed to find a cure or a vaccine for this disease."

"I'm happy that Andersen didn't feel compelled to take sides with Algood or to outdo her with reactionary statements," Cunningham said.

Algood's proposed six-point program calls for:

- Closing "all homosexual bath houses, orgy parlors and so-called gay bars."
- Enforcing anti-sodomy laws

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Who? Did what? Where? Sociables, page 7.

way with rallies, press conferences and "kiss-ins" throughout the Carolinas. The Ride gained steam at last month's Democratic National Convention in Atlanta, Dorow said. The itinerary calls for stops in other Southern cities and at the Republican National Convention in New Orleans later this month. Prior to the scheduled Nashville stop, slated for July 26 and 27, the activists had spent the weekend in Alabama, visiting Montgomery and Birmingham, as well as

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Sociables

On the Road, On the March, and On the Prowl

By **JAAN STURGIS**
Staff Writer

Earlier this month while we were all frying in the summer heat, Billy Isaacs and Tim Roberts were vacationing in beautiful Maine. The resort town they stayed in - Ogunquit - was a joy and right on the ocean. Their gay guest house - Inn, Two Village Square - was a hoot and the scenery was mainly on the beach and blond. My!

Off and away to the Windy City and beyond were Gregory Tennison-Fisher and Trent Ates as they traveled to Madison, Wisconsin last weekend via Chicago. Why Madison? To participate in Evangelicals Concerned's annual conference for lesbians and gay men. Gregory sang and they all were BAD BOYS when Trent, Gregory, and six others escaped to the New Bar, Madison's dance club. Did they have fun? Ask any boy from Madison!

Did you attend the coffeehouse at the Unitarian Church a couple of weeks ago? Then you surely saw some of Nashville's finest musical talent - Trent Ates, Linda Johnson, Margie Plant, Cathy Stamps, Greg Tennison-Fisher, and Gerrit Wilson. You can see the three boys - billed as Triple Play - on August 20th at the Towne House Tea Room for a mere three bucks. In addition to three solo sets, they'll be doing some duets and trios. Something you shouldn't miss!

This Sunday will mark the big birthday celebration for Sharon Kowalski. Festivities start with a barbeque at 1401 Cedar from 6:00 to 8:00 pm followed by a motorcade to Legislative Plaza where Marianne Osiel, Kat Graham, and Lisa Roberson, among others, will perform.

All this is followed by a candlelight march illuminating the hope that the lesbian and gay community holds forth that Sharon Kowalski will be reunited with her lover, Karen Thompson.

The celebration promises to be both fun and moving. Be there!

And a cheery farewell (I was going to say "farewella," I really was, but somebody's already used that one) to Carmella Marcella Garcia, who's trotting off to conquer new hearts. Good luck, dearheart.

There's a new face out there. Deborah Kowalski has just opened her new chiropractic clinic in Belle Meade.

Rumor has it that Jamie McMahan, our intrepid managing editor's lovely nephew, is here for a few days. Welcome to Nashville, Jamie. Don't miss the Elvis museum.

Now, here's something different. Really different. I got a lovely party invitation from Bob Simrell at the Crazy Cowboy II. Seems

that he and his ex are celebrating the fifth anniversary of their divorce. The invitation says to be there, and bring an ex.

Great.

Now I'll have to decide *which* ex. Guess I'll just give the old Rolod-ex a couple of spins. And you wondered why they call it the Crazy Cowboy.

Should be really ex-citing.

Last Saturday at MCC-Nashville, Jim Fyke, Director of Metro parks, spoke at the Church and Community Forum. The topic was sex-related arrests in the parks.

Alan Coates felt that Fyke came unprepared. There were volumes of information he didn't know. Alan said that Fyke was "unprepared and not fully aware of what his topic was going to be," even though Fyke had over a month's notice of this speaking engagement.

Jimmy Capps felt that Fyke made a good attempt at answering questions.

However, Jimmy did say that Fyke didn't know what the police were doing. Feeling that the evening was informative, Jimmy said that if a person asks another person to go home with her or him that a felony has been committed. Apparently, this comment caused quite a flutter among the observers at MCC-N and a question was raised whether, if a man asked a woman to go home with him, would that be a felonious act? Fyke said it would. Too, Jimmy discovered that even the slightest suggestion of a sexual act was enough for someone to be arrested. Certainly we should all heed this warning.

Diane Easter, on the other hand, felt that Fyke was to be admired because of his courage to come to MCC-N to face a number of us homosexuals. She stated it was literally "us against him."

Feeling that Fyke answered questions forthrightly, she, too, felt that he was not prepared on some of the more technical matters which were brought up.

On a lighter note, who's off to New Orleans next weekend? Looks like Deborah Burks, Penny Campbell, and Diane Easter.

They had such a good time at the Demo convention in Atlanta last month that Diane says she wants to do more "outreach work" for the Tennessee Gay and Lesbian Alliance (T-GALA). (Why is it that I have no idea what she means?!)

What's up in your life? Gone on any weekend trips? Been to an exciting party? Planning a noteworthy event? Why not ring me up and tell me about it - 226-4034 (evenings).

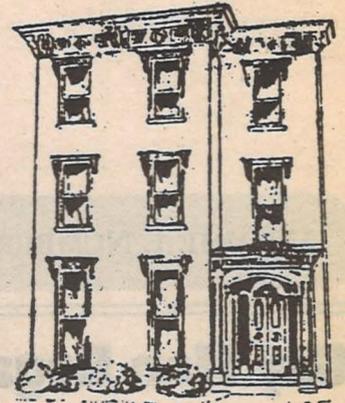
And for this week, dearhearts, that's *Sociables*. See you next time.

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Cry out for joy! Cry out for justice!

For more information about the party, the rally, or about ways to help in the Kowalski case, please call 297-4293. Sponsored by the Nashville Kowalski Committee, T-GALA and the Pride Week Committee.

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Pages

"At Risk": Taking No Chances

By **FRANKLIN BROOKS**

Special to Dare

At Risk. Alice Hoffman. G.P. Putnam. \$17.95.

Publishing's pet PWA this season will be little Amanda Farrell, an eleven-year-old top gymnast in her school in the WASPish Cape Anne village of Morrow, Massachusetts, where she lives with her parents, Polly and Ivan, and a pest of a brother Charlie. A blood transfusion five years previously infected her with AIDS.

The fictitious family's struggle with her illness is the subject of Alice Hoffman's novel, *At Risk*. Its release this month is surely the AIDS fiction event of the year. G.P. Putnam has produced what the *New York Times* calls a "huge" first printing of 100,000 copies and is spending \$100,000 to promote it; it is a Book of the Month Club main selection; *Redbook* published a condensation and 20th-Century Fox has commissioned a screenplay.

Novels that deal with AIDS began appearing in 1983, only two years after the public health crisis was recognized. Since then, at least two dozen have appeared.

They include every sort of fiction, published by major houses or alternative, gay presses: detective stories, science fiction, horror tales in modern hospitals and research labs, Harlequin Romances. Some are good, lots bad. Given that choice, we may wonder whether to spend \$17.95 on this particular one. Before rushing to the bookstore, consider the sacrifices that have been made to get this story about AIDS onto the best-seller list.

Hoffman apparently decided that to create her story - and to sell it - she had to protect it from all objectionable filth, all destructive material, as securely as isolation procedures surround AIDS patients in the hospital. This book could use a condom for a jacket. No one's sympathy for Amanda will be troubled by questions of AIDS and sex, gay or straight, or the risks adults run of infecting each other and their unborn children. No "guilty" behavior, only ignorance, opened the door to AIDS here. This would be to Hoffman's credit if only she were challenging our prejudices about who gets AIDS and how and why.

As it is, she is simply avoiding problems. And how easy that is once she has set her story in the make-believe town of Morrow. No IV drug users, no blacks or Hispanics live here. No fears of child abuse or lesbian love cloud Amanda's friendship with Laurel, the modern sort of a good witch, a thirty-year old divorced woman, or their sleep-over time together.

To meet a gay male with AIDS Ivan has to drive into Boston. There are no churches here either, surprisingly; at least no clergy comes calling to condemn or console or to affirm a religious belief in the face of grief. No one from the bank or insurance company asks awkward questions about paying Amanda's bills. As for national controversy about government funding, public health policy and medical research, it cannot gain access here. The Farrells must be the only family in the United States, even in a novel, not watching TV.

To be sure, this would not be a story about AIDS if it were not about social ostracism, prejudice and ignorance. Hoffman is her strongest as she describes the boycott of Amanda's school, her classmates' fears about toilet seats and the Halloween when no one comes to her house to trick-or-treat. At those moments Morrow seems no better today that it was when witches were being drowned in New England, Hoffman concedes.

What is left is to read about by the time Hoffman has adjusted her focus so narrowly is a sure-fire winner: the death of an innocent child.

There seems something peculiarly American in the choice of a child athlete, with her admirable dedication to discipline, dreams of being the best and an uncanny blend of guts and grace. Amanda's declining stamina and loss of weight can be followed clearly in one sports event after another, her awareness of her condition, in her shrinking ambitions. Sports follow us in literature's rituals of dying: the sick-bed request ("Amanda wanted to know what the score was last night," Charlie says. "Tell her we won," the coach replies) and the writing of a will (Charlie gets her gym bag). I challenge the toughest ABC Sports fan to read those pages without crying.

Winning and losing are the way Americans understand most things perhaps, especially politics and health care. Hoffman is good at bringing us face to face with losing and failure. Jack Eagan, the gymnastics teacher, was not good enough for the Olympics. Ivan works in a second-rate astronomy lab. Ed, the family doctor, blames himself for Amanda's infection. In Charlie's nightmares he's a dinosaur, abandoned in an Ice Age world. For want of fortitude Polly must share the mothering of Amanda with Laurel.

And so it goes. Amanda grows thinner and more delicate, sick once and then again with pneumocystis carinii pneumonia, rather like the tubercular heroines of 19th-century fiction. In such circumstances AIDS, I'm afraid, becomes almost glamorous, a trivial metaphor for the decline of America in these last days of our century.

But what about that gay man in Boston? His name is Brian, a former rock star and chain-smoker, who raps with Ivan on an AIDS hot line. This is our decade's AIDS boogey man, in other words: antisocial, self-destructive and bisexual besides. The wonder is that he's in the novel at all.

In a *New York Times* interview Hoffman claimed that "he's real important to me." Yet she had taken him out of the book at an early stage and omitted him in the *Redbook* version. A friend with AIDS convinced her that even a "domestic story" like this could not be "completely divorced from social reality." So she put Brian back in.

Unfortunately the presence of this negative stereotype only underscores the novel's basic flight from reality. People concerned enough about AIDS to buy a book this August deserve more for their money than this: the publishing world's equivalent of safest sex.

4 Parks Director Talks About Sex Arrests

Dare

August 5-11, 1988

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Pressed further on the issue, Fyke urged people to not let themselves participate in a situation where they could be construed as soliciting sex.

"People allowed themselves to get in situations allowing themselves to be susceptible to suggestion or entrapment," Fyke said, adding that from the evidence he had seen, including videotapes, most of those arrested had been the instigators and had not been victims of entrapment.

One local gay activist disagreed with Fyke, stating that on many occasions he had been winked at by Metro Parks Ranger Jeff DeBusk, who was involved in some 200 of the arrests.

Further, he contended that DeBusk had attempted to make conversation with him

but because the man recognized DeBusk as a ranger, he refrained from interacting with him.

The results of a survey conducted among those arrested in the sting were cited by the activist.

"A great percentage, more than half of those men, are married, with families and in the closet," he said, asserting that the gay community was bearing the brunt of negative publicity for people who were leading "double lives" and who are not part of "the gay community."

Fyke agreed that the gay community had gotten what he called a "bad rap" in the papers, noting that people engaging in heterosexual sex and solicitation had been arrested as well.

Concerning the issue of publicity, Fyke

reiterated his position that his office had nothing to do with the publication of names of those arrested in the local newspapers. He said that the names were part of public arrest records which are available to the media.

"Obviously, the newspaper thinks it's more discouraging to put their name and employment and address and age and everything in the world," Fyke said.

He assured his audience that he would address their concerns and would listen to any suggestions on solving the problems.

"All I'm asking is let's get together to try to clean up or correct or stop whatever activities are going on so we don't embarrass people," Fyke said.

"I will make sure that whatever sex is involved, (they) will be treated as whatever the letter of the law is."

Algood Wants to Close "Gay Bars, Orgy Parlors"

Continued from page 1.

- Making the wilful transmission of the AIDS virus a crime the same as manslaughter.

- Requiring the reporting and tracing of all AIDS cases by state public health officials.

- Prohibiting lesbians and gay men from donating blood.

- Ending the use of tax funds to support "pro-homosexual" education and research

programs.

Cunningham called the six-point plan "an insane measure" which indicates a need for action by lesbian and gay activists.

"It tells us, as we have always known, that there is more education needed and that we have much more work to be done," Cunningham said.

News of Algood's call to close gay bars and quarantine homosexuals engendered a

grassroots response among Nashville lesbian and gay leaders, with many saying they would vote in yesterday's Republican primary to ensure that Algood did not become the GOP's standard bearer in this fall's general election.

Incumbent Democratic Senator Jim Sasser will meet the Republican nominee in November's general election.

Dates

Mondays

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.

Tuesdays

Nashville CARES HIV Education Support Groups. 7pm.

AI-Anon Meeting, MCC. 6:30pm.

Lesbian Alcoholics Anonymous Closed meeting, MCC. 8pm.

Tuesday, August 9

Vanderbilt Lambda Film and meeting. For lesbian and gay Vanderbilt students, faculty, staff and alumni. Vanderbilt University Central Library Classroom, 6th floor. 6pm. Free.

Wednesdays

Nashville CARES AIDS/ARC Support Group. 6:30pm.

Nashville CARES HIV/Chemical Dependency Support Group. 7pm. Info phone 385-1510.

Support Group for Lesbians and Gay Men Meeting. 8pm. Info phone 833-4598.

Thursdays

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 352-5823. 8pm.

Fridays

Sexaholics Anonymous Closed meeting, MCC-Nashville. 5pm.

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

Saturdays

Nashville CARES AIDS/ARC Support Group. 4pm.

Metropolitan Community Church-Nashville

Mortgage Meal, all you can eat. 7:30pm. \$5.

Saturday, August 6

AIDS Fundraiser *Les Girls*, female impersonation show, to benefit Nashville CARES and AIDS Response Knoxville. Timberfell Lodge, Greeneville, TN. 9:30pm. BYOB. Tickets \$15 advance, \$20 at the gate. Info phone (615) 234-9272.

Saturday, August 13

Nashville Men Sing for Women's Choice Benefit concert for Tennesseans Keeping Abortion Legal and Safe (T-KALS), featuring Frank Sheen, Fred Koeller, Sweet Medicine, Bothy Bar Band, New Bond, Kenny Arnold and more. Vickie Carrico, emcee. 9pm. \$10. Advance tickets at Book Treasury, 2216 8th Ave South, or from TKALS members. Info phone 297-8540.

Sundays

Metropolitan Community Church-Antioch Worship service, 11am. Info phone 833-8581 or 834-4491.

Metropolitan Community Church-Nashville Worship services, 11am and 7pm.

The Office Co-ed softball, Mericourt Park, Clarksville. 1pm.

Sunday, August 7

Free Sharon Kowalski Day

Tennessee Gay and Lesbian Alliance (T-GALA) Birthday party and barbecue in honor of Sharon Kowalski's 32nd birthday. Hamburgers and soft drinks will be provided. Volleyball. 1401 Cedar Lane. 6-8pm. Free. Donation to Sharon Kowalski Legal Defense Fund requested.

Caravan to Legislative Plaza. 8pm.

Candlelight Vigil and Rally. Celebration of the lives of Sharon Kowalski and Karen Thompson, featuring speakers and music by Marianne Osiel, Lisa Roberson, and Kat Graham. 8:30pm. Free.

Sunday, August 14

Feminist Book Circle Discussion of Audre Lorde's *A Burst of Light*. Unitarian Universalist Church, 1808 Woodmont Blvd. 5-7pm. Free. Info phone 298-9931.

Your nonprofit event can be listed free in *Dates*. Just drop a postcard or letter to *Dare*, 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.



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"Freedom Ride" Tours South

Continued from page 1

both the men's and women's state prisons there.

The purpose of the Ride, Dorow said, "is to strengthen the networks of support between northern and southern lesbians and gays and to gain unity for all in our daily struggles for freedom and justice."

The group, based at Bailey House, an AIDS service center for homeless people with AIDS, displayed the Bailey House Quilt during their Alabama stops. The quilt is composed of panels commemorating the memories of Bailey House residents who have died from AIDS.

During the Birmingham stopover, the quilt's display and a "die-in" attracted the attention of most of that city's media, Dorow said in a telephone interview from Lexington, Ky., last week. Lexington was the next scheduled stop after the aborted Nashville visit.

"We didn't get many people at the quilt display," Dorow conceded. "But we were able to get the lesbian and gay community stirred up."

According to Dorow, lesbian and gay activists in Birmingham "are on the verge of acting but are unsure of what to do and where to take their action just yet."

In Montgomery, plans for an ACT UP chapter are in the works, due to "a lot of coalition building," Dorow said.

But when their journey took the New Yorkers to the Alabama Women's Prison in Tutwiler and Alabama Men's Prison in Limestone, the hopeful atmosphere was shaken by the grim realities of Alabama's quarantine of HIV-positive inmates. Testing for the human immunodeficiency virus is mandatory for inmates entering the Alabama prison system. Those who test positive are systematically quarantined, Dorow said.

"It was really grim. I had never been to a prison that large," Dorow said.

The quarantined inmates are told they

have tested HIV-positive, but are given no information. Currently, the Alabama inmates have taken the route of the courts, with the support of the American Civil Liberties Union, to end the quarantine.

Visiting the prisons to distribute information, the Freedom Riders found their tasks made more difficult by the inmates' lack of trust of outsiders.

"They've been given so much misinformation," Dorow said. "They are distrustful of any outsiders. We were a little worried, but they were willing and ready to talk to us."

"A lot of them know more about AIDS than the doctors who are treating them."

Currently 12 women are quarantined at the Tutwiler facility and some 118 men are segregated from the general inmate population at Limestone.

A visit to the head nurse at the Limestone facility left Dorow feeling "like an outside agitator." She maintained that the nurse assured the New Yorkers that the prisoners are masters of the con game and had conned the Freedom Riders into believing their story.

"It was very grim," Dorow reiterated.

While in Lexington, the Bailey House Quilt was to be displayed in a local park, despite some foot-dragging by city officials in giving the group a permit. In addition, information on AIDS and safe sex was distributed, along with condoms. A round-table discussion with Lexington lesbian and gay leaders was planned for later in the evening, Dorow said.

"If nothing else, we're getting a lot of media coverage," Dorow said.

Dorow lamented the lack of planning for the Tennessee visit. Although no formal program had been planned, the group had hoped to meet with leaders of the Tennessee Gay and Lesbian Alliance (T-GALA) during that group's regular steering committee meeting. However, the meeting was rescheduled.

Screens

A Dish of "A Fish Called Wanda"

By CAROLE CUNNINGHAM
Staff Writer

Few films of the 1980's can truly be called "farces." Farce, unlike comedy, does not require its audience to both laugh and think: just to laugh. Farce is thought to have its roots in interludes of sheer buffoonery during medieval religious plays - and rightly so: the medieval sensibility accepted and embraced contradiction. Humor during a religious play was not blasphemous, it was necessary. And if you didn't take your morality and enjoy it too, the joke was on you. Chaucer would feel an outsider in the 1980's as much for its moral sense as for its MTV.

Movie theatres, especially in summer, make their bread and butter from comedies.

But most American comedies, even those with the greatest aspirations toward the perverse and utterly foolish, can't seem to let us out of the theatre without some lame message about sexism, ageism, the evils of competition, the difficulties of parenting. Lame because having a "message" isn't what they really intend, but somehow what Americans require: both the comedy and the social commentary come half-baked.

In an era of Phyllis Schaffly, Tipper Gores and media writers and reporters acting as moral arbiters of public opinion and taste, pleasure for the sake of pleasure, laughter for the sake of laughter - the kind Chaucer jammed between every "moral" tale in the *Canterbury Tales* - seems not only impossible, but downright heretical. Which is why John Cleese's brilliant script for *A Fish Called Wanda* is a cause for celebration.

A Fish Called Wanda contains all the twists, turns and tantalizing pleasures of classic farce: unrepentant thieves, bungling assassins, trickery, sexual infidelity, outlandish stupidity, moral libertinism. John Cleese, who co-wrote *Wanda* with director Charles Crichton (*The Lavender Hill Mob*), has blended the manic and the bizarre to create one of the funniest farces of the '80's.

The improbable plot revolves around a motley ensemble of London thieves whose American co-conspirators Jamie Lee Curtis and Kevin Kline pretend to be brother and sister while actually trying to hoodwink the hoods out of \$20 million in jewels. While George (Tom Georgeson), the wily would-be lover of Jamie Lee Curtis' Wanda, rots in prison awaiting his trial, Wanda and her thick-headed partner and lover Otto (Kline) try to find the hidden jewels.

To find the loot, Wanda must seduce the tired and boorish barrister (Cleese) trying to get George out of prison. As Archie Leach,

John Cleese plays his "straightest" role to date with characteristic aplomb. He is the hen-pecked husband of a wife whose urban acerbity and frigidity are a chilling delight.

Absurdity runs in frantic circles in *Wanda* as the pathologically dumb but dangerous Otto jealously stalks Wanda's every move, making certain her seduction of Archie puts her in touch with the stolen jewels but not Archie's "family jewels." While Wanda and Otto get in and out of various sexual capers, Michael Palin (like Cleese, of *Monty Python* fame) Ken has been charged with killing the one eye-witness of the robbery, an 86-year old woman with a team of silky terriers who persistently put themselves between their mistress and Ken's increasingly imaginative ways of trying to kill her. Ken is a devout

animal lover and each time he mistakenly kills one of the pooches, writhes in agony over his error. To make things even worse and certainly more uncomfortable, Ken has a terrible stutter that is the key to many of the funniest gags in *Wanda*.

Anyone who has seen Palin or Cleese in *Monty Python* films knows what either can do with the slightest discomfort an audience may feel about a subject. It's hard to sit through a Python film without

occasionally feeling, "All right, they've gone more than far enough." And then they go even further

Wanda works so well because its actors and actresses, like the best *farceurs*, act with sincerity and seeming obliviousness to the outrageous circumstances they land in - which, according to a rather unfortunate speech Cleese makes, is the paradigmatic heart of English existence.

But nothing in *Wanda* would be so funny or so discomfiting were it not for the brilliant performance of Jamie Lee Curtis. Finally Curtis has been given a role that requires her to be as brainy as she is beautiful, as sly as she is sexy. Curtis' Wanda can seduce anything that walks - and you won't be left standing when she does.

Curtis is the perfect chameleon the role of Wanda requires: whether playing a brainy Midwestern law student or the calculating crook with a weakness for men who speak Italian, she shows a range of acting ability that equals the range of her amorous exploits. Next to Curtis, Kevin Kline's often overzealous performance as the dumb jock lacks the polish and timing of Curtis's considerable comic talents.

A Fish Called Wanda is zany, hip and hilarious. If you love Curtis or Cleese or comedy with no apologies made, *Wanda* is for you. If you take your tips from Tipper, you'd better see *Arthur II*.

Absurdity runs in frantic circles in *Wanda* as the pathologically dumb but dangerous Otto jealously stalks Wanda's every move, making certain her seduction of Archie puts her in touch with the stolen jewels but not Archie's "family jewels."

Briefs

Tennessee Dance Theatre Wins Award

From STAFF REPORTS

The Tennessee Dance Theatre (TDT) has been added to the touring roster of the Southern Arts Federation (SAF), making the local group the only modern dance company originating in the Southeast to be accepted this year.

"This is like getting a pat on the back from the national arts community for our company's artistic achievement," said Jane Hatley, executive director of the Tennessee Dance Theatre. "We are honored to be in the company of performers like Eddy Toussaint, Dan Wagoner, Lionel Hampton, Edward Villella and the Miami City Ballet and Taj Mahal."

SAF's touring program is that organization's means of promoting performances of artists in the Southeast. The SAF offers free support grants to presenters engaging any of the artists on its roster. The artists chosen for the touring program are selected through a competitive application procedure involving the Performing Arts Advisory Panel and approved by the Board of Directors of SAF and "represent the highest standard of artistic quality in the Southeast."

The performing artists selected to participate in the SAF Touring Program are featured in the Federation's annual Performing Arts Guide which is distributed to over 2000 organizations that host performances throughout the region.

Based in Atlanta, SAF is a non-profit corporation committed to fostering the growth of the arts in the South. It serves a nine state region which includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

In addition, TDT is now entering its fourth year as a featured company on the Tennessee Arts Commission's Touring Program.

One of the leading contemporary dance companies in the Southeast, TDT was established four years ago with Andrew Krichels and Donna Rizzo serving as co-artistic directors. The company's repertory consists of both distinctly "southern" pieces, based on the music, folklore and literature of the South.

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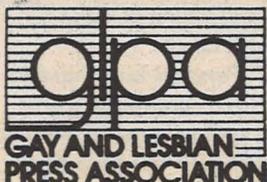
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Views

Aw, Shut Up

Those wacky Republicans. Now, they've discovered AIDS - five or six years after everyone else.

After all the tussling over the President's AIDS Commission, the lack of adequate lesbian or gay representation on the Commission, and the near-total absence of AIDS-service professionals, President Reagan has apparently decided to ignore the Commission's report, anyway.

The President's new ten-point proposal for dealing with the AIDS crisis completely skirts the two vital issues the Commission finally realized were important, and forces

It's Not the Heat. Is It?

The summer of 1988 is setting meteorological records here in Nashville and throughout the rest of the South.

We've been inundated with day after day of record-breaking heat and humidity coupled with dangerously low amounts of rainfall.

Farmers, upon whom much of the Tennessee economy is dependent, are perhaps hardest hit by the high temperatures and lack of rainfall. As they suffer so do the rest of us — ours is a region built upon the riches the land offers. When nature fails to shoulder its share of the burden, we find ourselves precariously on the edge.

A brief respite from the drought came last week when a much-needed two inches of rain fell on Nashville and the midstate. It will do a lot for the crops, the farmers say, but that's still probably not enough to save this year's harvests. That, of course, will mean higher prices at the grocery store.

But if the heat and the drought and the predicted high food prices aren't enough to

the country to wait at least another five months for a new President before there is any hope of real Federal leadership in fighting the epidemic.

The Commission reported very strongly in favor both of massive funding for AIDS research, education and services and of tough protection from AIDS or HIV discrimination. That's good - the Commission overcame its deficiencies and, when confronted with the sheer weight of the evidence, did the right thing. Sadly, the President has chosen to go down in history as the one whose inaction let the worst

make you want to slap your dawg and spit in the fire, we find ourselves faced with an enemy even more dreaded in the social circles of Music City.

The person who likes to talk about the weather.

You can find this person all over town. Sometimes she's a woman and sometimes he's a man and sometimes both. You can spot them a mile away.

"It's not the heat. It's the humidity," seems to be their battle cry.

When you reply to their rather obvious statement, they are likely to retort, "Hot enough for you?" or, if they want to appear hip, "It's this dam greenhouse effect!"

So let's set the record straight (so to speak): We live in the mid-South where, during the summer months, we are likely to experience higher temperatures - it has something to do with our being closer to the equator than folks up North.

It's also very humid here. Frankly, we're not sure why - that was probably discussed

health crisis in 400 years get out of hand.

As if that's not enough, the Republican party has given us the charming Alice Algood, who has declared that "gay orgy parlors" must be shut down in order to protect the "innocent" from "AIDS Typhoid Marys." At least Bill Andersen, Algood's opponent in the Republican primary, had the good sense and the moral conviction to say that he stood by the President's Commission's report on AIDS issues.

And that's more than the President would do.

in science class the day we tried out for drum major - but we've lived with humidity for a long time and don't really need to be reminded of that fact.

It's not that we're saying people shouldn't express themselves. On the contrary, we're all for original self-expression. Original is the key word here. Saying "It's not the heat. It's the humidity" is not original.

We're certain Davy Crockett said it to Polly just after he killed a b'ar.

Alice Mitchell may have lost her cool when Freda said it one time too many.

Loretta probably said it to Doolittle right after spreading up one of them boloney sammiches.

Lamar most likely said it to Honey after campaigning in McNairy County - where we really know what humidity is all about.

So we don't want to hear Nancy say it to Wendy of Steve say it to Phil. Okay?

Besides, it's not the humidity that's so bad.

It's the heat.

Between the Lines

Writing and Remembering

By JEFF ELLIS
Managing Editor

When I was five years old I realized I was different.

Every Sunday night as my family and I watched *Bonanza* I found myself mesmerized by the sight of Adam Cartwright bounding across the prairie on some magnificent steed. And when my mother was having difficulty persuading me to go to school on the first day, she lured me away from the safety of home by showing me my brand new *Bonanza* lunchbox with Adam on it.

I was in love. With a man. Instinctively I realized I shouldn't announce my ardor for Adam to all the other kids in my Cub Scout pack.

I assumed I was the only one of my sort on Earth. It wasn't until sixth grade I heard the class bully refer to me as a queer. I didn't know how he could label me as strange, so I asked a friend what Ricky Mott meant when he called me a queer.

"Not strange, Jeff. A homo," was my friend's reply. "I used to think you were until

I got to know you better."

I still didn't know what "homo" meant, but I did have a dictionary in my desk. Thanks to *Funk and Wagnalls*, I discovered what homosexual meant.

"So that's what I am," I thought. "Then there must be others out there, 'cause I know whoever wrote this dictionary has never heard of me."

So, at the age of 11 or so, I realized that "what I was" had a name. A few years later, in high school, I came out to several close friends — they took my declaration in stride and set about finding me a suitable match.

He obviously wasn't in McNairy County.

Although I was lucky enough to have several friends who were very supportive and affirming of me, I was also forced to endure the distress of being "different" at a time when most other kids my age were trying to fit into the mold society had prescribed for them.

It was not fun. I was called "faggot," "queer," "homo" and "sissy" more times than I can even begin to count. One of the more humiliating events of my life came when I

was giving a campaign speech in ninth grade and people shouted "queer" all through my two-minute address. Even at graduation they hurled the epithets at me when my name was called.

I remember well the difficulties of being a gay teenager. Both my nephews Jamie and Scott also came out while in high school and endured much of the same scorn and disapproval as I had some years earlier. I can still hear their voices as they recounted similar experiences via the telephone lines while I was in college.

Perhaps it was the memories of my own experiences that led me to pursue a story for *Dare* about gay youths. I was able to exorcise many of the ghosts that continued to haunt me some 13 years after high school.

Being a teenager is difficult enough, but being a gay or lesbian teenager is even more so. The young people I interviewed, in telling their stories and sharing their experiences, may be able to articulate their emotions better than I could have at their age, but they are the same now as they were 15 years ago.

Soapbox

Dante, Politics and Coming Out

By CAROLE CUNNINGHAM

*Ed elli a me: 'Questo misero modo
tengon l'anime triste di coloro
che visser senza infamia e senza lodo.
Mischiate sono a quel cattivo coro
delli angeli che non furon ribelli
ne fur fedeli a Dio...'*

*[And he said to me: 'This miserable state
is borne by the wretched souls of those who
lived without disgrace and without praise.*

*They are mixed with that caitiff choir of
the angels who were not rebels, nor faithful
to God...']*

•Dante, Canto III, *Inferno*

Everyone has a reason: parents who will find out; bosses who will find out; friends who will find out; business partners who will find out. Jobs will be lost, roommates lost, professionalism lost, ex-husbands will stop paying alimony. A local newspaper - a newspaper called "our paper" by those same people who see its integrity as their enemy - has to devote multiple issues to a dialogue about rights of privacy, freedom of the press, journalistic integrity. All because people who wanted to be at the center of lesbian/gay politics in Nashville, but to be there without names or faces, decided that their attendance at a benefit for someone who had experienced the violence of homophobia should not be for the public record.

Anyone who has worked in gay/lesbian political groups knows the kind of ignorance, misinformation, often hatred that exists out there. What we sometimes forget is that the same kind of fear, and potentially destructive hatred, may be sitting right next to us at the next T-GALA meeting.

I think most of us who have gone through the coming-out process recognize it as process, not event. We know that coming out and coming to terms with not only yourself, but friends, parents, co-workers, employers, etc., takes time - sometimes years

- and makes the National Coming Out Day this October as necessary as it is symbolic. All of us have a next step to take.

But taking that next step requires knowing where one stands - here and now. The problem - even with some of those who are most adamant about being "out" - is that many people won't look where they're standing, won't admit where they are in that process of coming out and where they are not.

Dante, in the second Canto of the *Inferno*, uncertain himself about where he stands, describes the doubt he feels when beginning his journey with Virgil:

*E qui e quei che disvuol cio che volle
eper novi pensier cangia proposta,
si che dal cominciar tutto si tolle,
tal mi fec io in quella oscura costa,
perche, pensando, consumia la 'mpresa,
che fu nel cominciar cotanto tosta.*

*[And as one who unwills what he willed
and with new thoughts changes his purpose
so that he quite withdraws from what he has
begun, such I became on that dark slope; for
by thinking of it I brought to naught the
enterprise that was so hastily begun.]*

Too often, in our community at least, enterprises, designs are hastily begun - begun with a commitment to their success, but not a commitment to what success will entail. Some people seem to get into gay/lesbian movements rather like they get into relationships: I'll be politically active *so long as* ____ (fill in the blank); I'll work on the parade, so long as no one says I'm working on it; I'll help write this letter, but my name can't be on it; I can't give my name when calling Senator X in support of our efforts; I'll love you so long as you do everything I want.

In the first circles of the *Inferno*, Dante describes the inveterate motions of the

uncommitted, the "neutrals," those whose actions deserved neither blame nor praise. They are, Dante says, like "eddies of sand in a whirlwind," like autumn leaves which whirl and never rest. The shades in this circle of hell fly beneath a banner that is ever changing, and ever meaningless. Dante even goes so far as to imply that their lot, of all those in hell, is the worst. Worst because they know that choice exists - that good as well as evil is theirs to make. Most damned, perhaps, because they were most redeemable.

...their lot, of
all those in hell,
is the worst.

Despite my feeling that anyone foolish enough to misrepresent their commitment, to fly under an everchanging banner, now for "the cause," now for themselves, or misrepresent how out they are/can be, should deal with their self-created hell themselves, repentance can be seductive. Even more so, mutual repentance: "None of us was really wrong. Or we both were wrong. Let's begin again."

Gay/lesbian political groups could probably raise as much money by installing a pay turnstile at their meeting place as by staging drag shows: the arrivals and departures, like the whirling autumn leaves, have their own kind of constancy and predictability. A risk-taker this week becomes tomorrow's closet case. Politics change with salaries, job titles, the next Ms. or Mr. Right. Instead of ascending the mountain, we stand staring at our feet.

Some may take exception to the metaphors here, particularly the invocation of a white male poet who supported the hierarchy of the papacy and an economy of

good and evil they may find repulsive. My only response is that Dante makes me think - about myself and about my world. So do Audre Lord, Adrienne Rich, Ernest Hemingway, James Baldwin. Because it's attached to a male doesn't necessarily mean it's a prick.

Dante the writer and the man knew how dangerous a risk any ascent is - he also knew, as Aristotle before him, that the way up is the way down. Introspection isn't a pastime, but a preliminary to any venture, any enterprise. If we fail to look where we are before we leap, we shouldn't blame those around us when we think we've taken a fall - especially when those around us are probably going to be the first ones lending a hand.

Rich and Lorde, Hemingway and Dante, I think would all agree that sacrificing identity for another person or another dollar is the most tragic form of self-slaughter. Gay men and lesbians risk the danger of committing a kind of suicide that destroys not only their own identities, but the identities of other gay men and lesbians: each gay man, each lesbian willing to erase who they are makes the struggle for other gay men and lesbians all the more difficult.

As Baldwin wrote, "It is dreadful to be so violently dispersed." Only when dispersion becomes cohesion, when we all, despite the odds, dare to hope for something better at the risk of something worse, will our journey *begin*. "To dare to hope for nothing, and yet dare to hope. To know that hoping and not hoping are both criminal endeavors, and yet, to play one's cards" (James Baldwin).

Let us play.

Carole Cunningham is an editor for a Nashville publishing house.

Dare invites your letters and opinions, and this space is intended to serve as an open forum for the free exchange of ideas. Soapbox submissions must be typed, double-spaced and over 300 words. All submissions must be signed and include the writer's address and phone number for verification. The writer's name may be withheld if requested.

Max and Mona

