

# Amarillo Lesbian Gay Alliance

# Update

**SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE**

Volume 3, Number 4

ALGA Information Line: 373-5725

September 1996

## Events Calendar

2nd Annual

*Costumed Gay-la*  
to benefit the  
Lesbian Gay Rights Lobby  
of Texas

Saturday, Oct. 26

8:00 pm

4409 Baltus Place

\$25.00 at the door

Queer Dinner Club

Thursday, November 21

Italian Delights

10th at Georgia

7:30 p.m.

Everyone Invited

Melissa Etheridge

Amarillo Civic Center

November 25

P.A.S.O Benefit

at Independence Hall

Friday, November 15

Queer Dinner Club

Thursday, December 19

Italian Delights

7:30 p.m.

Everyone Invited

## Lesbian Mother Loses Custody

(by Kay C. Peck)

Expert witnesses confirmed that 9-year-old Riley Curtis should get exactly what he wanted. He wanted to live with his mother, Diane Curtis, and her partner, Bekki McQuay, with occasional visitations with his father, Dr. Don Curtis. A conservative Amarillo jury bypassed the boy's wishes and ignored the recommendations of all three psychological experts in the case in granting sole custody to the father in a hearing held July 22-29 in Potter County.

"We got screwed," McQuay said in her summation of the court's ruling. Both McQuay and Diane Curtis feel strongly that the jury based its decision entirely on their fear of a homosexual lifestyle and its possible influence on children.

Visiting judge Don Lane of Abilene added to the defeat when he enhanced a co-habitation clause in the Curtis divorce decree. When Riley visits his mother, McQuay must leave the home she shares with Diane Curtis by 7 p.m. and not return until 7 a.m. Since Curtis and McQuay cannot legally marry, this provision, without court intervention, will remain in place until Riley reaches an age where parental custody is no longer an issue.

Lane presided over the case after Judge Richard Dambold declined to hear the custody hearing assigned to his court.

"The position it's put me in is always having a hole in my life. I can't have both the love and support of my partner and my child at the same time," Diane Curtis said. "At any time, one of them has to be excluded from my life."

Although both Curtis and McQuay wish to appeal the court's decision, it is not known if they can raise sufficient funds to do so. In less than a year, the family moved twice because of the custody case. Legal expenses forced Curtis to sell her original home, and the couple closed Washington Square, a cafe operated by McQuay, and refurbished the building into a residence. When Dr. Curtis questioned the issue of a non-traditional home, they moved again to a smaller house. Between legal expenses, financial losses in case related moves, and short-term loss of income when the cafe closed and before McQuay found long-term employment, Curtis and McQuay's financial reserves are gone.

"We need funds to have supper," McQuay responded when asked about financing of the appeal.

In the end, both women acknowledge that their primary concern is Riley's

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well-being. Although Dr. Curtis was assigned sole custody, a 50/50 visitation schedule was ordered by the court so that the boy in reality spends only a fraction less time from the former situation in which Diane Curtis retained primary custody and Dr. Curtis received visitation rights for 40 percent of his son's time.

"He's doing pretty well, but we never told him Don won," Curtis said. "We just told him the judge split the visitation time."

McQuay and Riley have grown close since McQuay and his mother entered into a committed relationship. Frequently, McQuay assists with many parental tasks, such as taking Riley to Karate lessons and ball games.

"He's sad (when Bekki has to leave)," Curtis said. "He doesn't think it's right, but as long as he still has his mother, he's basically okay. His father told him Bekki has to leave to reduce the homosexuality in his environment."

## Gramm Runs Anti-Gay Ads

(from BruceSJ on the Internet)

Senator Phil Gramm has started running a campaign ad against his challenger, Victor Morales, claiming that Morales is for (heaven forbid!) openly gay people serving in the military.

Gramm won his first senatorial election after trailing in the polls by charging his opponent, Lloyd Doggett, as being friendly to gays and having received financial contributions from us.

Gramm has no qualms about playing the homophobia card, just as southern politicians never hesitated to play the racist card a generation ago.

## RECORD NUMBER OF GAY DELEGATES TO DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION

by Rex Wockner

CHICAGO -- The Democratic National Convention got underway here Monday, Aug. 26, with a record 102 openly gay or lesbian delegates along with 25 openly

# News Briefs

gay alternates and 19 gay standing-committee members. The total delegate count was 4,329.

By contrast, July's Republican convention in San Diego had only three openly gay delegates.

"The Clinton/Gore Re-elect Committee worked very hard to open doors and ensure inclusion in the delegate-selection process," said Brian Bond, Democratic National Committee director of lesbian and gay outreach. "This is an example of real fundamental empowerment within the political process of the Democratic party."

The previous convention, in 1992, had 81 gay delegates, 10 alternates and 13 standing-committee members.

California topped the list of gay participants this year with 34 delegates and 8 alternates. Texas was next with 15 delegates/alternates followed by New York with 14 and Florida with 7.

Another key difference between the Republican and Democratic conventions is their platforms. While the Republicans denounced gay marriage, gay-rights laws and gays in the military, the Democrats proclaimed: "We continue to lead the fight to end discrimination on the basis of ... sexual orientation. ... We support continued efforts, like the [federal] Employment Non-Discrimination Act, to end discrimination against gay men and lesbians and further their full inclusion in the life of the nation."

Not quite, though, of course. Bill Clinton opposes legalization of gay marriage -- thus severely limiting gays' full participation in the mainstream of American life. And his "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy requires gays and lesbians in the military to lie and hide or else have no personal life whatsoever.

Even so, there was not much friction over these issues among the gays and lesbians who came to Chicago as del-

egates.

"There's no split," said delegate Sky Johnson, public policy director at Los Angeles' gay community center. "Even the folks who were the most disappointed, those [from that group] who are here obviously came to some resolution about those concerns and -- at least for the sake of the campaign -- are determined to work for the president's re-election."

Delegate Carole Migden, an openly lesbian member of California's legislature, agreed with Johnson but said the anger some gays and lesbians have toward Clinton is certainly legitimate.

"I don't want to dampen or diminish their anger which is righteous and appropriate," Migden said. "There is no question that we have been marginalized and stripped of our humanity. I am not one that will in any way try and soften the dissent or cloud over our deep disappointment. But as a California State Assemblywoman, who's been in hand-to-hand combat with Republicans about key lesbian and gay issues, the Democratic Party is the party of hope for us. So whereas it is not our finest hour, it is nevertheless important to support the Clinton-Gore ticket for a myriad of other things we believe in -- and help bring them along and educate them hopefully to bring us to more enlightened times."

At press time Tuesday, none of the major gay-related events had taken place with the exception of a big Aug. 25 reception for gay delegates at the popular gay bar Sidetrack, co-owned by Chicago gay leader Art Johnston and his lover Pepe Pe~na.

About 550 people attended the event -- including Clinton senior advisor George Stephanopoulos. When Stephanopoulos jumped up on the bar to address the crowd, someone yelled, "Take it off!"

"I about fainted," said Sidetrack's Pepe~na.

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The crowd repeatedly cheered Stephanopoulos as he touted the gay ground Clinton has broken. "Bill Clinton is the first president to meet with openly gay and lesbian Americans in the Oval Office," he exclaimed, going on to list the President's many other gay firsts -- such as a record number of gay appointments and support for a federal bill to ban workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Clinton's gay liaison, Richard Socarides, was also on-hand along with the highest-ranking open gay in the Clinton administration, Bruce Lehman.

Tuesday night, past ALGA Update's deadline, the Lesbian Avengers were to stage a mock wedding of Clinton to Dole (they both oppose gay marriage) in one of the two designated-free-speech sites. Half an hour later, an AIDS march was to step off from the United Center convention site heading for Grant Park downtown, site of some of the 1968 Democratic Convention police riots.

On Wednesday, a long list of national, regional and local gay groups were to stage a gala reception for gay/lesbian delegates at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Also, gay veterans had secured a protest slot Wednesday night at one of the free-speech sites, and the Human Rights Campaign and IMPACT -- Illinois' gay political-action committee -- were hosting another del-

egates' reception featuring U.S. Sen. Ted Kennedy, San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown and Candace Gingrich, Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich's lesbian sister.

Brown was slated to address the convention Wednesday night. The previous Sunday, he had quipped to reporters that he likely would perform some gay domestic-partnership ceremonies Wednesday afternoon to get in the mood for his speech, which he planned to ad lib. The San Francisco city government offers such ceremonies.

Cornered on the convention floor

Monday night, Brown told ALCA Update: "I absolutely disagree with the president on gay marriage but that quote was clearly a typical-San-Francisco-Willie-Brown funny. I'm not licensed to perform domestic-partners unions here," he said, laughing.

Also on Wednesday evening, an openly gay candidate for Congress was scheduled to address the convention. He is Rick Zbur of Long Beach, Calif., the first openly gay non-incumbent to win a contested primary for the U.S. House of Representatives.

"Rick Zbur's appearance at the DNC is political dynamite," said Kathleen DeBold, spokeswoman for the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, a national group that funds the races of gay candidates for public office.

"Nothing explodes antigay stereotypes like the power of positive visibility," she said.

The largest of the national gay groups, the Human Rights Campaign, ran a hospitality suite all week at the Hyatt hotel that quickly became the convention's gay action center.

Among the large number of folks HRC brought to the convention was Barbara Roberts, Oregon's governor

until 1995. In a lengthy interview, Roberts called the gay cause "the civil-rights issue of this decade -- without any question."

"I am absolutely committed to this cause," Roberts said. "I believe strongly that straight people must take a stand on this issue. It's a civil-rights issue, it's a human-rights issue, and if people who are not personally impacted by it stand silent, then maybe they're going to be in the group that gets chosen to be battered next -- and I'm just not willing to do that."

At press time, the convention -- and the gay politicking inside and protests

outside -- were continuing.

## LARGE GAY PRESENCE AT GOP CONVENTION

*Liberal Gays Protest, Republican Gays Endorse Dole*

*by Rex Wockner*

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SAN DIEGO -- Gays and lesbians endeavored on numerous levels to make their voices heard before and during the Republican National Convention here Aug. 12-15. If they did not at all times succeed, it was not for lack of trying.

The gay Log Cabin Republicans, a national organization with 10,000 members, got the ball rolling with their national convention held in San Diego's University Heights neighborhood Aug. 9-11.

In an unexpected move, LCR's 200 conventioners voted Aug. 11 to delay a decision on whether to endorse Bob Dole's candidacy. At a minimum, spokesmen told reporters, LCR wanted Dole to ask for the endorsement. The group did not endorse George Bush in 1992.

"Bob Dole as a presidential candidate has repeatedly compromised, retreated or reversed himself under pressure from the extreme right," LCR Executive Director Rich Tafel said Aug. 11. "Despite our best efforts, Bob Dole has passed up a critical opportunity to demonstrate that he truly wants to lead a party which welcomes the participation of gays and lesbians. [For him to request our endorsement] would be somewhat historic, and we're very aware of that."

Four hours later, the Dole campaign responded.

"The Dole campaign would welcome the endorsement of Log Cabin Republicans as a sign that they too share the same beliefs, as Bob Dole has always held the belief that the GOP is an inclusive party," said spokeswoman Christian Martin.

By Aug. 15, Tafel was singing a very different tune.

"Bob Dole has a long and honorable record when it comes to civil rights for all Americans," he said in announcing that

### Important Phone Numbers

**Senator Phil Gramm (R)**

202-224-2934

(FAX) 202-228-2856

**Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R)**

202-224-5922

(FAX) 202-224-0776

**Rep. Mac Thornberry (R-13th)**

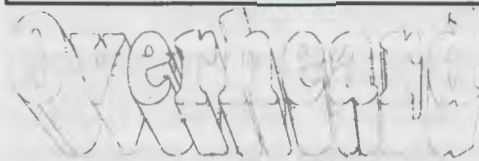
202-225-3706

(FAX) 202-225-3486

**Rep. Larry Combest (R-19th)**

202-225-4005

(FAX) 202-225-9615



by Rex Wockner

"They think we want special rights. We deserve special rights. Let's start with parking. They can put pink triangles next to all the handicapped parking signs and we can have special parking."

--Harvey Fierstein at the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses convention in Tampa as quoted in the Florida gay publication Gazette.

"One unforgettable scene in [gay 'Friend of Bill' David Mixner's new] book involves the second gay relationship in Mixner's life (his first lover was killed in an accident), when he fell in love with a man he calls 'Frank.' One day federal agents showed him pictures of himself and Frank in bed and told him they would show the pictures to his parents and the media if he didn't stop his anti-war activities. Fearful that Frank would be blackmailed too, Mixner ran to Frank's apartment to warn him, only to find the place empty, and Frank gone. It turned out that Frank had been a government agent, too, and the entire affair a setup to bring Mixner down."

--The San Francisco Chronicle, July 31.

"People always say to us, 'Your politics are so different, how do you get along?' And the answer is: We don't talk about politics when we're at home."

--Rob Morris, lover of openly gay U.S. Rep. Steve Gunderson, R-Wis. Morris is a Democrat.

"At Macy's stores on the West Coast, the words 'bride' and 'groom' soon will be purged from the computerized gift registry system, replaced by the word 'partner.' ... 'Some gay couples are very affluent and have a lot of disposable income,' said Kimberly Miller, a promotion director for Macy's West Coast division. 'If retailers in certain markets are resistant to servicing them in any way, they're turning away a lot of business.'"

--Reuter news service.

An Editorial:

## Dangers in the Closet (by Bekki McQuay)

People have to know that gays and lesbians are a part of their everyday functioning world. We know we're out there, but the heterosexual world has no way of knowing unless we tell them.

Yes it is insane to have to tell others we're gay. It shouldn't matter, but it does.

Oursexuality is totally irrelevant to our day at work or play or socializing, but people will always retain their fear of us if we don't show them that we do, in fact, do more with our lives than have sex. That's the only difference between them and us, but until they can know our similarities, they will never know us as human beings.

Society segregated black people because society closed the door on their humanness. They remained a misunderstood race until they were willing to go into the white world and show people they had all the same "normal" human traits and emotions as whites. Somebody had to push their own comfort zones to go out in the world and just be human and black at the same time. Now, we don't have the fear of black people that existed 50, 25, ten or even five years ago. By sharing daily existence with them at work and at play, we realize they are not to be feared.

All we as gay people ask or fight for today is tolerance. The acceptance part I believe will come as heterosexuals knowingly interact with homosexuals one on one. I encourage everyone to push the comfort zones, both your own and those of the people with whom you come in contact. There are lots of people out there who cannot hurt you — the grocery store clerk, a car salesperson, a Realtor, a hotel clerk, an insurance contact when you call your company asking about coverage for unmarried spouses. Call your local video store regularly to request the latest gay movie, or the book store to request a gay book. These things don't even put you at risk, but it lets people know we're here. When they look us in the eye, they

can see that we're not the three-headed monsters they've been told.

In July, my lover lost custody of her child. It happened because people were afraid of us. The only thing they knew about us was that we prefer to have sex with a member of our own gender. That seems simple enough, and it is our only real difference from the rest of society. They need to start seeing our similarities, the things we have in common that can start the process of creating peace. We know we're here. They need to know it, too.

Please, before something happens to your or to someone you love, play your part in pushing the comfort zones of our society. They need to see our faces as we spend money and not just read of us as a statistic printed by some activist group. I know the risk is too great for some of us in some places, but danger is not everywhere. If you get frustrated that society only sexualizes our relationships, then go out there and let yourself be seen so you can be known as a human being.

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for the lesbian, gay and  
feminist communities.



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**Student Organizations****Lambdas of West Texas A&M***(inactive)*

Box WT 335, Canyon, TX 79016

**Pink Triangles Student Group***(inactive)*

Amarillo College

Contact Rob Mills, 371-5300

**Religious Organizations****Metropolitan Community Church**

2123 S Polk,

Office hours M-F 9 AM 1 PM 372-4557

Sunday Services 10:30 AM &amp; 6 PM

Children's Sunday school during service

Monday 12 Noon, Brown Bag Prayer

Wednesday 7 PM, Discussion Group

**St Andrews Episcopal Church**

1601 S. Georgia, Father Bill Nix

376-6316

**Unitarian Universalist Fellowship**

4901 Cornell

Sundays, 11 am (Summers, 10 am)

355-9351

**Services****Family Support Services**

Domestic violence, rape crisis, counseling services. Fees charged on a sliding scale.

900 S. Lincoln

372-3202

1-800-749-9026 hotline/helpline

**National Gay & Lesbian Task Force**

1734 14th St. NW

Washington, D.C., 20009

(202) 332-6483

**National Gay & Lesbian Teen Hotline**

Open 6 PM to 11 PM Central Time

**Northwest Texas Public Services**

D.J. Wyatt Community Health Ctr.

351-7220

**Panhandle AIDS Support Organization (PASO)**

604 W. 8th, 372-1050

1-800-388-4879 Hotline/Crisis number

**Parents & Friends of Lesbians/Gays***(P-FLAG), Amarillo Chapter*

Parents and friends, you have a support group, too!

**The Pavilion****Northwest Texas Healthcare System**

Intensive Outpatient Program/Addictive

Disorders

354-1835

**Shepherd House (call PASO)**

MWF 11:30 - 1:30

Home cooked meal services for

HIV/AIDS individuals

**Sisters (Women's Discussion Group)**

MCC 2123 S Polk

Every Sunday 7 PM

**Speak Out! Human Rights**

Campaign Fund Information

1-800-777-HRCF

**Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas**

P.O. Box 2579

Austin, TX 78768

(512) 474-LGRL

**People For The American Way**

2000 M Street, NW, Suite 400

Washington, D.C. 20036

**Parents, Family & Friends of Lesbians & Gays (P-FLAG)**

Travis McBride 358-4810

**Texas Human Rights Foundation***(Gay/lesbian legal issues)*

1-800-828-6417

**Bars****Club 10**

1219 W 10th Ave

373-1250

**The Ritz**

322 W 10th Ave

372-9382

**Sassy's**

309 W 6th Ave

374-3029

**The Classifieds**

519 E. 10th St.

374-2435

**Gay Friendly****Businesses/Organizations****Amarillo Bowl**

4100 Wolflin

352-5681

**B & E Coffeehouse**

coffee, espresso, latte, beer, wine, sandwiches

3806 W. 6th

351-0084

**Hastings Books, Music and Video**

2001 S Georgia - Gay/Lesbian book section &amp; magazines

4301 W 45th - Lambda book section

**Italian Delights, Inc.**

2710 W 10th Ave

**Queer Dinner Club (QDC) meets 7:30**

PM on the third Thursday of the month.

Everyone is welcome!

**Valley Lodge Family Motel &**

The Hole Thing Donut Shop

PO Box 304 - Main Street

Red River NM 87558

Reservations: 1-800-951-2262

Information: (505) 754 2218

**Gay Owned Businesses****French & Co. Realtors**

Paul D. French, Owner

4200 Ridgecrest, Suite A-5

356-9086

This listing is a service of the Amarillo Lesbian/Gay Alliance. Please send corrections/additions to ALGA Update, P.O. Box 9361, Amarillo, TX 79105-9361.

LCR's endorsements committee was recommending that local chapters endorse Dole. The chapters will now vote by mail.

"Last February, Log Cabin Republicans stated that our top concern was to avoid another [highly anti-gay] convention like in Houston in 1992." Tafel continued, noting that this year's convention featured an "inclusive, welcoming tone from the podium" and a speech by a person with AIDS.

"The gay and lesbian demonstrators, many of whom are working closely with the Democratic National Committee to support President Clinton this fall, have not told the full story of Bob Dole's record," Tafel charged, citing Dole's votes for AIDS funding and a ban on discrimination against HIV-positives, along with the policy in his Senate office that prohibited job discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Several national gay leaders who

strators nonetheless quickly denounced LCR's pre-endorsement, citing other Dole votes and Republican policies. But LCR was not dissuaded. The group's mission is clear, its leaders said: To work with the GOP from within.

"We are like Dorothy in Oz," said Brian Perry of Log Cabin California. "In our journey, we're going to run into a few scarecrows, some people who just don't have a brain, and our role is to help them understand and educate them. There are the tin woodsmen who don't have a heart, and we have to present ourselves as real people and make them understand that it's about caring -- and concerning our lives about each other that is so important. And there's the toughest ones of all, the cowardly lions, who just need that courage. We talk to them privately and they do the right thing most of the time but when push comes to shove, when it's really on the line, they need that extra courage."

Log Cabin Texas President Dale Carpenter suggested, however, that Bob Dole may not fall into any of these categories.

"Dole is so beholden to the far right of our party that it's unrealistic to think when he's president he'll change his colors," Carpenter said.

**Openly Gay Delegates**

There were three openly gay delegates to the GOP convention, all Log Cabin members.

"I was elected an openly gay delegate," said Abner Mason of Boston, LCR's national board vice-chair. "I had to get to my congressional-district caucus enough people to elect me. I got enough people to Belmont High School on a Saturday in April to get elected."

Mason said he was pleased with Dole's selection of Jack Kemp as his running mate. "Jack Kemp is Mr. Big Tent; he defines inclusion," Mason said.

ALGA seeks to provide an organization that will encourage healthy acceptance of our lifestyle both within our community and the population at large. Our annual budget is funded solely by your membership fees. Membership guarantees reduced rates for future ALGA-sponsored events. Those same fees pay for printing and mailing of this newsletter, sponsors the annual ALGA Gay Pride Picnic, camping trips, future workshops and our information line costs. All mailings are discreet.

We are happy to provide the **ALGA UPDATE** to people who cannot afford to purchase a subscription; however, we ask that anyone who can afford to subscribe, do so to keep the exchange of information flowing, our community informed, and allow for more activities in the future.

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\$25 Individual annual membership (with 12 issues)

\$10 Student/PWA/Low Income membership (with 12 issues)

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Rumors flew all week about alleged homosexuality in Kemp's past but nothing was proven. But in an indication of just how run-of-the-mill the once-controversial tactic of outing has become, even the Associated Press reported matter-of-factly on the rumors, which revolve around a cabin Kemp apparently co-owned with some homosexuals in 1967 near Lake Tahoe. Numerous gays posting in cyberspace claimed to have second-hand information on Kemp's alleged gay sexual escapades.

### **The Platform**

Gays and lesbians were disappointed with, but not surprised by, the final GOP platform document. It stated:

\* "The sole source of equal opportunity for all is equality before the law. Therefore, we oppose discrimination based on sex, race, age, creed or national origin and will vigorously enforce anti-discrimination statutes. We reject the distortion of those laws to cover sexual preference and endorse the Defense of Marriage Act to prevent states from being forced to recognize same-sex unions. Because we believe rights inhere in individuals, not in groups, we will attain our nation's goal of equal rights without quotas or other forms of preferential treatment."

\* "We oppose Bill Clinton's assault on the culture and traditions of the Armed Forces, especially his attempt to lift the ban on homosexuals in the military. We affirm that homosexuality is incompatible with military service. ... We reaffirm our support for the exemption of women from ground combat units."

\* "We remain committed to, and place a high priority on, finding a cure for HIV disease. We support increased funding for research targeted at conditions that touch the families of most Americans, like Alzheimer's, breast cancer, prostate cancer and diabetes. We call for an increased emphasis on prevention of diseases that threaten the lives of women. This requires dramatic expansion of outreach and education to expand public awareness."

The platform also calls for constitutional amendments to ban abortion, balance the budget, prohibit burning of the U.S. flag, and end the guarantee of citi-

zenship to any child born on U.S. soil.

### **VOICES '96**

The main gay presence at the convention site was VOICES '96 -- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Voters Organized In Coalition for the Elections '96 -- a coalition of the large national gay organizations and local San Diego activists.

They set up a Media Center in an abandoned restaurant a stone's throw from the Convention Center front door and staged a series of demonstrations, rallies and press events.

Sunday night, Aug. 11, about 250 VOICES folks carpoled 30 miles north to Escondido, Calif., to picket "The Man and the Movement: A Tribute to Pat Buchanan."

When they arrived, they found the California Center for the Arts complex sealed off by temporary fences. So they chanted across the fence, in the general direction of the auditorium: "Racist, sexist, anti-gay, Pat Buchanan go away," "Equal marriage rights for all" and, in Spanish, "Here we are and we are not leaving."

While Lt. Col. Ollie North, Phyllis Schlafly and Buchanan spoke inside, the gays waved signs reading: "Stop the Scapegoating -- Justice for All: Immigrants, Poor People, People of Color, Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgenders," "Jesus, save us from your followers" and "We're here, we're queer and we're your kids."

VOICES Co-chair Tony Valenzuela told ralliers: "Crossing back and forth, because my parents live in Tijuana, I've seen that border turned into a prison. I've seen how the right-wing has given license to allowing to humiliate us."

Buchanan's speech inside -- the speech he had hoped to give at the GOP convention -- did not mention homosexuals. Oliver North, however, made a passing reference to President Clinton's "social experimentation" within the military.

### **2,000 March Through Downtown**

The evening of the convention's opening day, VOICES '96 staged its major gay-specific event, a march from a

downtown park to the convention's so-called free-speech site. The site was directly across the street from the Convention Center -- the result of a lawsuit filed by VOICES, the ACLU and others. Before the lawsuit, GOP organizers had succeeded in pushing the protest site several blocks away from the convention.

The noisy, colorful march -- 1,000 people strong -- was led by national gay-movement leaders, including Urvashi Vaid, Elizabeth Birch, Candace Gingrich, Robin Tyler, Eric Rofes, Tom Ammiano, Melinda Paras, Donna Red Wing, Lorri Jean, Robert Bray and Joe Zuniga.

By the time marchers reached the fenced-in free-speech site, police estimated the turnout at 2,000 people. That number then dwindled as speakers carried on for a full two hours.

What is accomplished by staging large gay protests outside the convention? Here's how five gay leaders responded to a reporter's inquiry:

\* Human Rights Campaign Executive Director Elizabeth Birch: "It sends a message that there are really hundreds of thousands of Americans that are tired of seeing the Republican Party cede their party to the political-religious extremists. There have been deals cut at this convention that have locked the Christian Coalition in for the year 2000."

\* Gay author and academic Eric Rofes: "We can provide an alternative to the hate-mongering that is going on inside the convention and a sense of who we are as gay citizens, including gay Republicans who are here and marching as well."

\* San Francisco Supervisor Tom Ammiano: "There are thousands and thousands of queer people, particularly youth, who feel isolated and alone. When they see this on TV ... I still believe that they take some modicum of support and legitimization from this. Also, it shows people we know how to have a good time, that we are not going to go away, and we really understand what the issues are and how they are connected to other groups with the same kind of civil-rights struggle. And it's a pretty good fashion statement considering what I've seen on the delegates."

\* Tracy Conaty, spokeswoman for

the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force: "More people get ... active in our community. As importantly, we're educating the larger American public. We're educating Republicans of conscience ... about the extremism within the Republican party. When we have turnouts like this, we not only bring our message within our community but we expand it, and we expose and oppose the Right."

\* Candace Gingrich, sister of U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich: "We need to be here to remind people ... that the things coming out of there don't accurately reflect the rest of the country -- that, basically, they have been hijacked by a very, very narrow group of religious-political extremists. Their views ... are not indicative of how most Americans feel. ... In actuality, even members of the party itself are a little frightened by the people who have taken control."

### AIDS

On Tuesday, Aug. 13, gays and lesbians mounted a march and rally focusing on AIDS issues. When the rally ended, 400 protesters led by ACT UP/Los Angeles broke free of the designated-free-speech site and marched an additional block to the Convention Center main entrance.

They halted behind several strands of yellow "Police Line Do Not Cross" tape, just a few feet from the convention's metal detectors, and began shouting at the thousands of Republicans who were leaving the convention hall following the close of the evening's events.

They chanted, "Racist, sexist, anti-gay -- born-again bigots go away." Many Republican delegates chanted, "Dole, Kemp" in return. Others smiled, ignored the protest or shouted insults back at the gays.

Police eventually formed a line between the two groups and, after about 40 minutes, the gays started drifting away. About 60 protesters headed for the Planet Hollywood restaurant in the downtown Horton Plaza mall where Republican VIPs were partying with actor Charlton Heston. Police quickly intervened in that protest action and it ended after half an hour.

"The purpose [of our protests] is to

increase visibility around HIV and AIDS to the Republican delegates," said NGLTF's Robert Bray. "The platform for the 1996 Republican National Convention has one sentence on AIDS -- and, actually, it's not bad; it talks about their support for a cure for HIV. Unfortunately, it doesn't talk about ... how to fund that cure, how to keep people alive through life-prolonging drug therapy, and how to fund effective preventative education."

"Their silence on AIDS is unacceptable," said VOICES' Keith Anastasi. "Their two sentences in their AIDS platform are an absolute atrocity. We demand that they ... tell us what they intend to do in order to deal with this national health crisis."

Jon Arterton, a member of the Flirtations gay singing group, was more philosophical about his participation in the protests.

"I think we can actually be here not just to be visible people -- to show the Republicans that we do in fact exist and that we do in fact breathe the same air and walk the same earth that they do -- but I think it's also important for those people who are here just for themselves to reassert to their spirits that what they do is important and that in fact they do have a voice and some say in the governing body of this country," Arterton said.

"AIDS is far from over in our lives and in the lives of millions of people in this country and in the world," said former NGLTF head Urvashi Vaid. "It's really important to remind the country and the media that AIDS is ... just as desperate of an emergency in our lives [as ever]."

### An Attempted Outing

There was one unexpected moment in Tuesday's protests. During the rally at the free-speech site, actor William Baldwin showed up and briefly addressed the crowd. As soon as he took the stage, former CBS News producer and ACT UP co-founder Ann Northrop of New York City began chanting, "Come out, come out."

Baldwin replied, "You've heard, huh?" But after he left the stage, he walked over and confronted Northrop.

"They always say that about my

brother too," Baldwin told Northrop. "And they say that about Sean Penn. Why would you stand here and yell that out unless you knew, unless I told you that I was gay? ... If I were, I would tell you. I just don't understand."

Northrop said she was sorry if she was wrong about his being gay and Baldwin replied, "I accept your apology."

### Fisher Addresses Delegates

HIV-positive Republican Mary Fisher addressed the convention itself again, as she did in 1992.

"I mean to live and die as a Republican," Fisher said. "But I also will live and will die in the AIDS community, a community hungry for the evidence of leadership."

Elsewhere inside the convention hall, *Out* magazine columnist Michelangelo Signorile was busy chasing Phyllis Schlafly, newly out Arizona Congressman Jim Kolbe, allegedly closeted Florida Congressman Mark Foley and assorted anti-gay GOP shakers-and-movers. Signorile said Schlafly grew positively exasperated with his daily inquiries about how she reconciles her brand of conservatism with the fact that her son is openly gay -- and she finally told him, "My son John is right over there; go talk to him yourself." As for Foley, who was recently outed on the radio program "Out In New England," Signorile said the congressman very clearly cruised him for several minutes on the convention floor Thursday night -- at a time when Signorile was blocked by the crush of the convention crowd from moving a few feet closer to Foley and introducing himself. The remainder of Signorile's adventures will be recounted in an upcoming issue of *Out*.

Back in the streets, the gay protesters took a day off on Wednesday, Aug. 14. Local activists staged a \$50-a-head "Honoring Our Voices Reception" in the gay Hillcrest neighborhood, presenting awards to national gay leaders Urvashi Vaid, Elizabeth Birch, Joe Zuniga, Robert Bray, Donna Red Wing, Candace Gingrich, Frank Buttino, Jack Campbell, Melinda Paras, Ann Northrop and others. The event was hosted by Christine Kehoe, an openly lesbian member of the San Diego City Council. Later in the evening,

gay groups converged on the hip gay nightclub Rich's for the VOICES '96 "Politics of Dancing Party."

## Gays and Delegates Clash

Thursday, Aug. 15, protesters organized by VOICES '96 staged a large "progressive coalition" rally and march. As Bob Dole finished his acceptance speech and delegates began filing out of the Convention Center, about 2,000 supporters of gay equality, abortion rights, immigrant rights and other issues marched from the free-speech site to the convention-hall exit.

For more than an hour they and passing Republican delegates shouted insults at each other across double lines of hundreds of police officers. The police kept re-routing the delegates down different streets only to have the protesters quickly re-group at a new location and continue haranguing the Republicans.

Eventually, the protesters wandered back to the fenced-in free-speech site -- "They walked back into their cage," commented one activist -- and called it a night.

"[The week of protests] was a tremendous success," according to VOICES '96 Co-chair Brenda Schumacher. "Inside the Convention Center it was like one big soft-drink commercial, highly choreographed. ... Outside, the delegates were able to see and hear dissenting voices. Particularly on the closing night of the convention, the delegates were very angry at having to walk out into 1,500 people who were protesting not fitting under their Big Tent."

There is no question that the 1996 Republican National Convention was kinder and gentler than the party's 1992 affair in Houston. And some observers -- the gay Log Cabin Republicans among them -- believe it was not just a facade. They say the GOP learned the hard way over the past four years that it cannot let fundamentalist Christians dominate the party's discourse or policy-making on social issues.

Many other gay analysts, though, were having none of it. The GOP has not changed, they said, and one need only read the party's 1996 platform -- which Bob Dole says he hasn't -- for confirma-

tion.

"The Republican Party proved something when the television lights went on in San Diego," said syndicated lesbian columnist Deb Price. "It's learned to smile without showing its fangs. The political animal that frightened fair-minded voters four years ago is more clever now. It knows it must disguise itself to be appealing. And that makes it all the more dangerous."

Even Reuters was of a similar mind. In an analysis piece, the news wire service said: "Is this the real Republican party? Or did it go into hiding during a four-day convention of touchy-feely videos, speeches dripping with concern and scarcely a controversial remark? ... The Republicans seemed to be playing a game of 'Where's Waldo?' only it was 'Where's Newt Gingrich? Where's the Christian Coalition? Where's Pat Buchanan? Where's the 'Contract with America?'"

## DOMA Passes, ENDA Fails

The Senate passed the anti-gay Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA passed 85-14) and failed the pro-gay Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA failed 50 to 49) on Tuesday, September 10.

DOMA, which has passed the House and is expected to be signed by the President, specifies marriage as a union between one man and one woman and allows states to deny same-sex marriages performed in other states. Currently, no states allow same-sex marriage, but it is possible that the courts in Hawaii could allow same sex marriage in the future.

Gay activists and supporters were angered but not surprised by the DOMA vote. Matt Coles, Director of the 4 Lesbian & Gay Rights Project at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) said: "This vote [on DOMA] is a deplorable act of hostility. It is one of the worst things any Congress has done to gay Americans. This vote will go down in history as a low point in our nation's struggle against bigotry. This bill does nothing to 'defend' marriage. Its only purpose and effect is to bash lesbian and gay Americans, and to pick up a couple of votes along the way."

Although many activists had hoped that

ENDA would pass the Senate, a 50-49 vote was still considered a victory. This was the first time that ENDA had ever reached the floor of the House or the Senate for a vote. Sen. Edward Kennedy led the movement to force a vote on the bill. One Senator from Arkansas who had planned to vote for the bill was absent. If he had been present, the bill would have passed the Senate with a vote from Vice President Al Gore, who was available in the event of a tie.

Melinda Para, Executive Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, remained upbeat, despite the votes: "Despite the outcome of these bills, the debates on them have already made history. We have broken the legislative logjam that has blocked Congress from seriously discussing our civil rights. What was inconceivable only a few years ago is happening today. Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender equal rights have taken center stage in American government, and we can never go back to the days of silence."

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"He went [to the Republican convention] as a Dole delegate and I went to see some of the tackiest women I'd ever seen, bejeweled in red-white-and-blue glitter, with high hair and elephant ear-bobs the size of tennis balls."

--Rob Morris, speaking of his lover, U.S. Rep. Steve Gunderson, R-Wis.

"The American press is no longer creating 'beards' nor assuring silences for would-be closet cases in order to deflect attention away from gay issues and gay lives as though gayness were just too embarrassing to mention. To its credit, the press is gradually abandoning both its past policy of 'don't ask, don't tell' when it comes to gayness and its phoney belief that to discuss someone's sexual orientation unasked is to violate that person's privacy. It is time that gays carry over these trends into their daily lives as well. We need to let the gayness of an individual come up where it is relevant, rather than playing along with the shaming social convention of the closet, the demand that every gay person is bound to keep every other gay person's secret secret."

--Syndicated gay-press columnist an University of Illinois philosophy professor  
Richard Mohr.