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April 25, 2009

magazine

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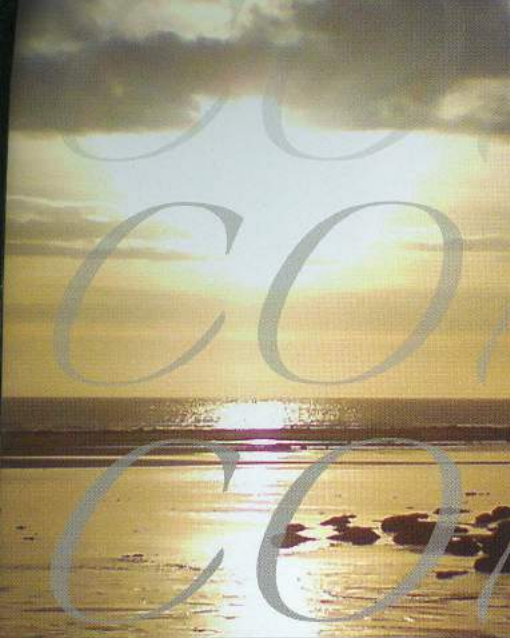
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April | 2009
volume 1 issue 11

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HIM / HER

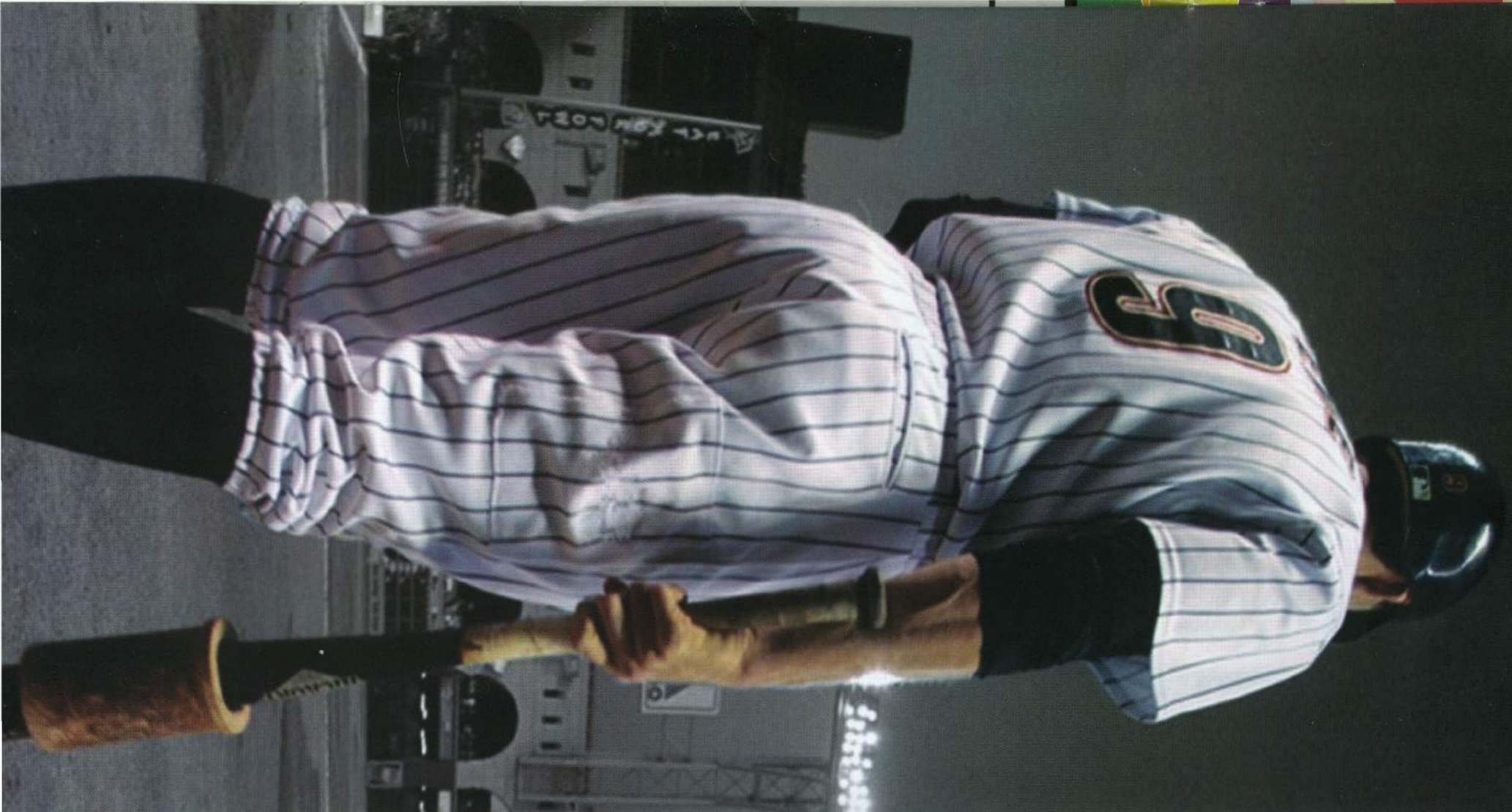
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EAST BEACH
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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Dear abOUT Readers,

As we went to print on this issue, a story came across my desk about a teenage boy from Katy that lost his life because of an on-line date gone horribly wrong. Watching this story unfold within the community and on local and national news, made me want to cover it, and get involved and see if I could bring more information to the community, by telling more about these young men. Please make sure to read the story in the abOUT Him/Her section of this issue.

On to more uplifting news, WET Galveston! Y'all get ready for the weekend of fun, as Galveston officially welcomes the community back on to East Beach for the 2nd Annual WET event. This issue of abOUT is the guide to all the fun and exciting events planned in Galveston this weekend. Please make sure to come down, enjoy the sun, and help support the rebuilding of Galveston Island.

YAY! Lady Gaga! Yes it's true, abOUT Magazine sat down with the pop diva and we are so excited to share this exclusive interview with our readers in our May 8th issue.

PS: I would like to say thank you to KPFT's "After Hours" for inviting abOUT Magazine onto their show, and allowing me to share my feelings and support for several community organizations. AFTER HOURS is on KPFT 90.1 FM, airs every Saturday night starting at 1AM. THANK YOU!

As always, thank you for your support of abOUT Magazine and our advertisers.

Cade Michals

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FRIDAY

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Tony's Cornor Pocket- Great Drink Specials-Great Dancers

SATURDAY

Richs Houston is Freak Show Saturdays. Guests should expect a New York / Miami / International club experience.

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SUNDAY

Third Coast Bar in Galveston is "Sunday is Funday" on the seawall. Great place for a beachside mimosas **5PM**

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MONDAY

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TUESDAY

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WEDNESDAY

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THURSDAY

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7 Months after Hurricane Ike: Galveston still remembers that day!

abOUT Magazine follows the stories of several different survivors of Hurricane Ike: the storm and the aftermath of recovery

By Cade Michale

We all remember that Friday night, like it was just yesterday. The gas stations with lines down the street. The freeways jammed with people leaving town. Then Houston lost power. We all woke up to what Ike had left for us...

abOUT Magazine is proud to be the official Media Sponsor for WET Galveston 2009. AN EVENT AIMED TO HELP RE-BUILD GALVESTON, BRING THE GAY DOLLAR TO THE ISLAND'S STRUGGLING ECONOMY, AND BRING BACK WHAT WE ALL KNOW AND LOVE ABOUT THE SMALL RESORT ISLAND.

"The most powerful tool in re-building Galveston right now is the Gay Dollar", Angela Snell of GayIslander.com recently said in an interview about WET' 2009. "We want to give back to this community in a way that is so powerful". Snell and longtime partner Laura Villagran are WET 09 event promoters. Villagran owns the successful Gay & Lesbian Yellow Pages, and currently resides on Galveston Island with her partner.

abOUT Staff set out to relive the storm with the survivors, what we found is heart breaking in the least. What we found made us fill with anger. What we found made us desperate to be a part of the re-building process. Hearing these personal stories, we hope you feel the same way!

Gail and Reba

Gail Ettenger made her last phone call at 10:10 p.m. She was trapped in her Bolivar Peninsula bungalow with her Great Dane, Reba. A drowning cat cried outside. Her Jeep bobbed in the seawater surging around her home. Ettenger, 58, told her friend she was reading old love letters by flashlight. "I think I really screwed up this time," she said, according to Monroe Burks, Ettenger's neighbor who had evacuated to Houston. That was Friday, Sept. 12. On Wednesday — 12 days later — her nearly nude body was found face down by a huge debris pile in a remote mosquito-ridden marsh in Chambers County, about 10 miles inland from where her gray beach house once stood. Ettenger, a contract chemist who worked for ExxonMobil in Beaumont, loved living at the beach. She rose before dawn each day to walk with Reba, an aging black and white spotted Great Dane who looked like a Holstein calf. Outside, Ettenger grew towering birds of paradise. Inside, she filled her bungalow with mementos: a wolfskin from New Mexico, a collection of nautical antiques and endless snapshots of Reba and beach sunsets.....all is lost now. Even Reba!

His Mother

Raul "Roy" Arrambide last heard from his mother, sister and nephew as the three prepared to evacuate by car from Port Bolivar. Just after 6 a.m. Sept. 12, his sister, Magdalena Strickland, 51, called from the house to say they were leaving. The family's 2000 white Ford Taurus and 1993 maroon Ford pickup were loaded and idling in the driveway. It was a quick call, since Strickland was eager to go. His mother, Marion Violet Arrambide, 79, along with Strickland and Arrambide's nephew, Shane Williams, 33, had planned to evacuate to Arrambide's house near Dallas. They had two vehicles but no cell phone. They never arrived. Roy Arrambide fears they were washed off the road. After the storm, he hired an airboat to visit the area, where he saw dozens of submerged cars in the floodwaters and marshes along the peninsula's lone low-lying highway. But neither he nor anyone else has found his relatives or their vehicles. The house they left behind was damaged but intact.

Too Late to Rescue

16-year-old Jerrith Baird told abOUT that Jennifer Mclemore, 58, refused to abandon her beach house in the village of Gilchrist, despite his pleas that she retreat to High Island, where he lives. Mclemore believed her home, battered and rebuilt after Hurricane Rita, could survive a Category 2 storm. When the first waves of seawater started to flood Gilchrist early on Sept. 12, Baird called the Coast Guard, begging for her rescue. "They said they were doing the best they could," he said. "But by the time they got around to it, the wind was too high. They couldn't fly." Flights were suspended after about 100 people were rescued from the peninsula, leaving at least 150 still stranded, according to a Sept. 13 Coast Guard press release. Mclemore holed up at home with her pit bull Hoodoo. At 8 p.m., her cell phone went dead, her worried grandson on the other end. The next morning, Baird set out to find her the only way he could: he kayaked with a friend about eight miles through the marshes and debris along the ravaged coastline. "There's really nothing left of Gilchrist. We were kayaking over our friends' cars that were out there that got washed away. It wasn't fun. I was just in total shock," he said. Hours later, Baird reached the spot where his grandmother's house had stood. Nothing remained except a few snapped pilings, he said. The search for survivors was an arduous one, stymied by the size and scope of the storm, which propelled wrecked boats as far south as Padre Island.

Recovery

The haunting task of re-building a life financially and emotionally, the re-building hasn't stopped. The storm rages on.....

You can see the house from Rollover Pass Bridge, a silhouette on stilts, dark against the sky. Seven months after Hurricane Ike annihilated every other structure along the coast for 11 miles — neighbors' homes, the church next door, the fire station — Pam and Warren Adams' yellow house on the beach in Gilchrist has become an informal pilgrimage site, complete with a 10-foot cross planted in the sand. People come every day. Pam Adams counted nearly 50 vehicles last weekend. "Some people get out with tears in their eyes and hug my neck and thank God that it's still there and how inspirational it is," she said. "I don't know if it's hope for everyone, just to look up and see the house and know that you can build on the beach, that you can withstand hurricane winds and floods." But the house that defied Ike's fury Sept. 13 remains in disrepair, a victim of post-storm insurance troubles that threaten efforts to rebuild this close-knit community on Bolivar Peninsula. If the passage of half a year has proved anything to the Adamses and others struggling to recover along the Gulf Coast, it's that the nightmare doesn't end when the winds die down and the waters recede. For some, surviving the storm was the easy part. The Adamses' house sunk 4½ inches from washout, but a flood insurance adjuster refused to authorize payment for repairs, saying the damage predated the storm. They hired an adjuster and attorney to appeal. The Adamses now rent an apartment in Baytown, but Warren Adams, a 64-year-old retired electrical designer, spends most of his time camping at the house in Gilchrist with the couple's two dogs. His wife, who works for a construction company in Houston, joins him on weekends. Pam Adams, 54, said she'll fight tooth and nail to put her house back exactly the way it was before Ike. "People say, 'Why don't you just walk away?' I just feel like there's a reason our home is still sitting there," she said. "How do you walk away from something that didn't float away from you?"

(story continued on page 17)

Worried About Neighbors

When Ike's rising floodwaters trapped Margaret Winters in her first-floor apartment on 61st Street in Galveston, the 79-year-old retired teacher curled up on her bed with her cat, Sherpa, and said a little prayer: "Lord, if it's time for me to go, that's fine. I've had a good run. But if it's not, please send somebody to come get me out of here." Minutes later, the wind stopped howling and Winters heard someone knocking on her door. Her neighbors had waded through the storm surge during the eye of the hurricane to rescue her. Winters normally uses a motorized scooter to get around, but with her neighbors' help, she found the strength to cross the courtyard in a walker and climb upstairs to safety. "I don't know what I would've done without them," she said. "I would've just floated, I guess." Two days later, Winters was evacuated in an ambulance. Paramedics thought she might be having a heart attack, and they wouldn't let her take Sherpa. "I lost him," she said. "The last thing I saw was my cat looking out the window, watching me leaving." Over the next five months, Winters bounced between three hospitals, two nursing homes and a friend's trailer. She had salvaged nothing except the clothes on her back and the contents of her purse. Warding off hopelessness felt like a tougher feat than climbing those stairs in the storm. "All those months of not knowing where I was going to go, not knowing where I was going to live, I was just emotionally exhausted," she said. "I was desperate to get back on the island." Winters returned to Galveston in January, to an apartment a few blocks from her old one. She wonders what became of her neighbors. The complex where they lived has been gutted for renovation. "I have thought about them every day and wondered where they went and how they are," she said. "They were such dear people."

Washed Away

Mike Anderson wouldn't mind if he never set foot on a beach again. "I won't even get close to the water, no way," he said. Ike swept the 50-year-old air-conditioning technician from Crystal Beach into the East Bay. He clung to floating wreckage and washed up in Chambers County along with furniture, refrigerators and other debris. He spent 36 hours in the water. Doctors had to remove chunks from both feet and one calf that had been infected by flesh-eating bacteria. After he got out of the hospital, Anderson moved to an apartment in Winnie with his wife and two children, who had evacuated. Anderson said he has trouble sleeping more than a few hours at a time. He's stressed about the family's financial situation. His business and three vehicles were lost in the storm, credit cards have been maxed out, insurance won't pay in full, and now the mortgage company has threatened to foreclose on the family's storm-wrecked house in Crystal Beach. "It's kind of like having Ike around your throat, and you're trying desperately to move on," said his wife, Dawn. Anderson still isn't well enough to work, and he's going stir-crazy. He reinjured his leg last weekend, trying to get in shape so he could apply for a job. "The thing about it is, I'm glad I'm alive, but if I would've died, my mortgage would've been paid off," he said. Anderson fights despair with the same images that kept him afloat in the bay six months ago: the faces of his 7-year-old son

and baby daughter. For their sakes, he'll never underestimate another storm. "Us Texans, we all think we're 10 feet tall and bulletproof," he said. "And me, I ain't scared of no man, I ain't scared of nothing, but I'm scared of hurricanes now." Hurricane Ike was the most damaging hurricane to hit the Texas coast in 25 years. Jeff Masters, director of Weatherunderground, a private commercial forecasting service said the cost of Ike's rampage could reach \$ twenty-two billion, which would make it the third costliest hurricane on record behind Katrina in 2005 and Andrew in 1992. The search for survivors was an arduous one, stymied by the size and scope of the storm, which propelled wrecked boats as far south as Padre Island.



community news

HOUSTON PRIDE IDOL RETURNS BIGGER, BOLDER & MORE FABULOUS THAN EVER!

PRIDE Houston announces the start of the third season of searching for Houston's most talented singer, with the return of Houston PRIDE Idol. Open auditions will be held May 3rd, 2009, from Noon-5 p.m., at Warehouse Live (813 St. Emanuel St., Houston, TX).

Houston's most popular annual singing competition, part of the 31st PRIDE Houston festivities, kicks into gear with its biggest audition process to date.

The trio of judges will select a handful of singers to move on to the semifinals. Back again for their third year are: Emmy nominated Ernie Manouse, a popular PBS anchor/producer who has emceed the Pride Parade for the last 10 years and Joey Guerra, music critic and American Idol blogger for the Houston Chronicle. Joining the group this year to share her opinions, is renowned fashion designer, Vanessa Riley (Bravo's Project Runway).

PRIDE Idol semifinals will be held every Thursday night starting May 21st, continuing until our new Idol is crowned on June 25th, at Guava Lamp (570 Waugh Dr., Houston, TX). Contestants will be eliminated each week – a la American Idol – via a mixture of judges' scores and text votes from the live audience. Emceeding the event is Toddicus, Houston's wittier, more fashionable version of Ryan Seacrest.

Expect surprises and special guests throughout the competition, including American Idol 7 semifinalist Kady Malloy, who will perform and guest judge during the semifinals. Malloy was dubbed one of "the best" by Simon Cowell at her first audition.

The contest is open to the entire gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community – as well as their open-minded (and talented) straight friends.

OPEN AUDITIONS*

Noon-5 p.m. May 3 at Warehouse Live, 813 St. Emanuel St., Houston, TX
(Interview, Photo and video opportunities available that day – contact to schedule)

PRIDE IDOL SEMIFINALS

Guava Lamp, 570 Waugh Dr., Houston, TX

~All shows begin at 10 p.m.~

May 21

May 28

June 4

June 11

June 18

June 25 - FINALE

For more on Houston PRIDE Idol, visit www.houstonprideidol.com

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Please send all submissions to:
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by: *bill elevenger*

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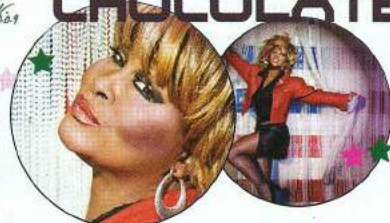
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Saturday: The Black Party April 25th

Marsha Mellow & Guest DJ Special K from KRBE



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Tuesday: TnT Karaoke

Wednesday: Disco 70's & 80's with DJ: XXI

Thursday: TnT Karaoke

Friday: Anita Bump with DJ: Worm

Saturday: Groovetts in the Lounge with DJ: Worm

Sunday: Drag Bartenders, ☐The show is behind the bar☐

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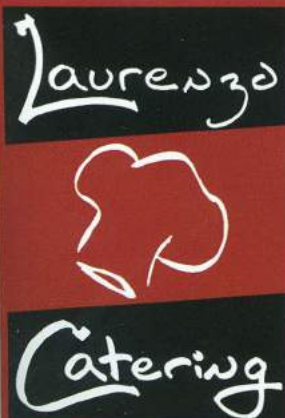
Galveston Open for Business

Here's a snapshot taken on a recent weekday morning in Galveston, Texas. Tanned surfers ride breaking waves. Souvenir hunters stroll past roadside shops. Sightseers pedal rented bicycles on the shoulder of Seawall Boulevard while hungry vacationers munch on blackened catfish and fried shrimp at beachfront eateries. But the picture is marred by the seven-story Flagship Hotel, perched on the Galveston Island pier. The ornate, beige-and-red hotel stands as a reminder of the damage. A gaping hole on one side of the hotel exposes rooms to the sun, and the concrete car ramp tilts precariously, as if it's ready to fall into the sea. A few hundred yards away, several splintered pillars are all that remain of the Balinese Room, a legendary oceanfront nightclub that, in its heyday, featured Frank Sinatra, and Bob Hope. Despite these and a handful of other shuttered buildings, Galveston has reopened for business just in time for the summer tourism season. The Flagship is one of only four of the island's 40 hotels that remain closed since the Category 2 storm tore through town, local business leaders say.

Across town, the island's most popular theme park, Moody Gardens, reopened its storm-damaged rain forest and aquarium exhibits in March. Also last month,

crews at the nearby Schlitterbahn Galveston Island Waterpark reopened its 70,000-square-foot indoor recreation area after a six-month cleanup. Among the features added during the overhaul were free wireless Internet, a large palapa structure and a wireless wristband debit system that allows visitors to buy food without carrying cash or a credit card. A week after the reopening, park spokesman Jeffrey Siebert said attendance has kept pace with previous years. "We've been pleasantly surprised by the number of people returning," he said. Crews are now working to dump about half a million cubic yards of sand along the island's Gulf Coast shore to restore beaches that were washed away during the storm. With 32 miles of sandy shore, Galveston has long been a top weekend destination. Before the storm, Galveston's tourism industry attracted up to 5 million visitors a year and generated nearly \$800 million in revenue for local businesses. Although the visitor numbers are still down, Galveston business and tourism leaders are optimistic about a strong recovery as the peak tourism season begins. To promote the community, the island's tourism bureau has recruited former President George H.W. Bush to appear in commercials that urge tourists to "come home to Galveston." The GLBT business is

Galveston is returning. Galveston's 3rd Coast Beach Bar and the Pink Dolphin has experienced a surge recently in business. They are the official HOST bars for Wet 09. Lisa Velasquez, a secretary at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, regularly walks her dog around the island she has called home for 10 years and is glad to see a flurry of reconstruction projects. Although many residents are still struggling to rebuild homes and wrestling with insurance claims and contractors, Velasquez said tourists who wander near the beach will find Galveston as warm and inviting as ever. "There are no problems finding stores and restaurants, and the beaches are fabulous," she said.



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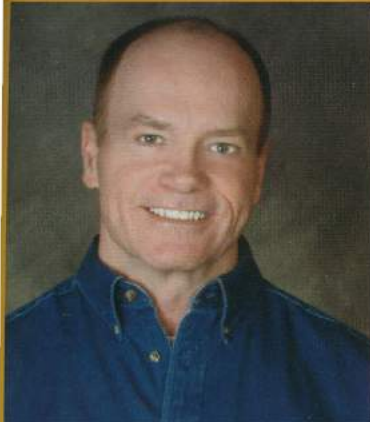
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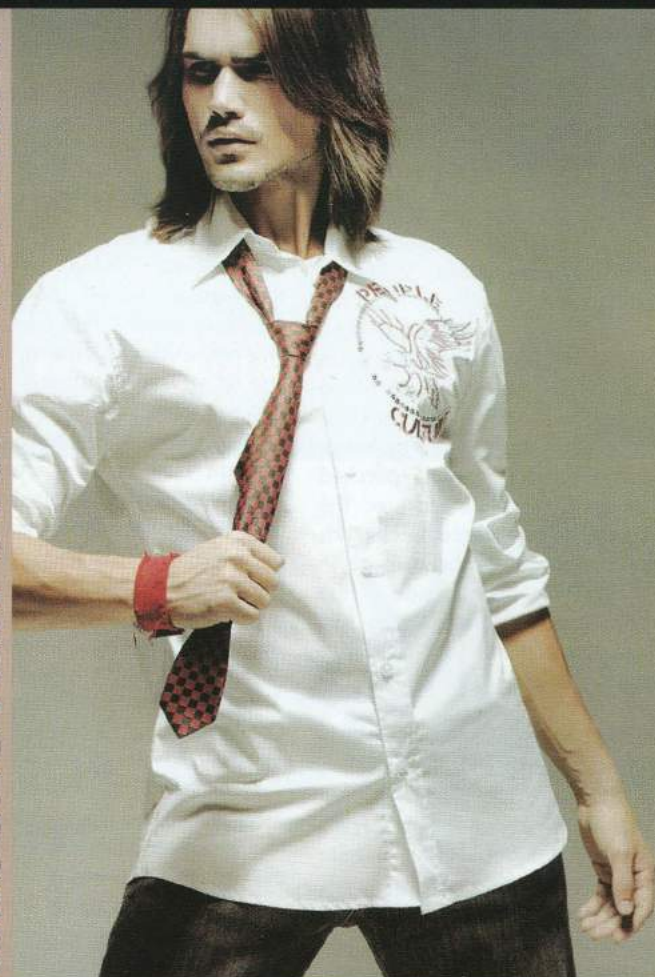


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Tragic Death of Gay Katy Teen ruled Homicide: Case gets National Media Exposure

A sad day has come as a gay student attending Cinco Ranch High School in Katy was found dead last week; his alleged killer is another gay teen. The two had met on the internet.

Sources close to the case say the victim; 19 year old Spencer Vogt was shot to death, with two gunshot wounds to the head. His body was found wrapped in a tarp, his head in two plastic bags that had been dumped in a field on Houston's south side near Cullen and Fuqua. The Harris County Medical Examiner's Office ruled Spencers death a homicide, a spokeswoman said. The primary cause of death was two gunshot wounds to the head.

Lee Carl Banks III, 19, has confessed to the murder, police say. Banks was stopped by police near Cairo, Georgia driving Spencer's Mitsubishi Eclipse early Monday. He was in possession of the .38-caliber pistol police believe was used to shoot Spencer. Police are awaiting ballistics test results to see if it was used in the killing. Banks confessed to killing Spencer and told investigators where he had dumped the body. Authorities are currently working on returning Banks to Houston to face a capital murder charge.

Investigators, who believe the killing took place at Banks' home, which he shared with his mother, in the 3300 block of Yellowstone, searched the south Houston residence Thursday of last week. Investigators found what appeared to be blood on the back patio of the apartment.

The two men allegedly met on the Internet at a gay hook-up site. The two 19-year-old men likely never would have met except for the fact that both were drawn to a gay chat room, police said. When their paths crossed online it led to tragic results. Spencer dead and Banks jailed on a capital murder charge, possibly facing the death penalty. Police say they may never know exactly why the pair's second face-to-face meeting on March 27 turned violent. abOUT Magazine obtained Interviews and public records suggesting that Banks, a former Yates High School drum major and one-time aspiring journalist, had problems controlling his temper. One Yates High School instructor said she was so badly frightened when Banks lunged at her in 2007 that she considered quitting her job. Banks later sent an e-mail to fellow students threatening the teacher's life.

Court records also show Banks was arrested last year on allegations of assaulting a former boyfriend and damaging his apartment and pushing his ex-boyfriend into a window. Banks was on bond pending a probation revocation hearing when Spencer was killed, he never showed to court. By this time he had fled Texas for Georgia. Spencer was last seen March 27 at his home in Katy. His mother reported him missing the next day. Spencer had just been accepted to college.

TIMES are changing for GAY Houston

Back in 1985 the Houston business establishment and several leading politicians led a successful campaign to overturn a city ordinance that would have protected gay city employees from job discrimination. Times are now changing.

It's been twenty-four years, and according to the latest Houston Area Survey, fewer than half of Harris County residents believe homosexuality is morally wrong, 61 percent believe it's an innate characteristic rather than a lifestyle choice, and 43 percent believe gay marriages should have the same legal status as heterosexual ones — up from 32 percent just two years ago. Every measure of support for gay rights has increased significantly in recent years, said Stephen Klineberg, the Rice University sociology professor who has directed the annual survey since 1982. He attributed the change partly to changing individual attitudes, but mostly to the emergence of a new generation that grew up amid positive images of gay men and lesbians who no longer felt the need to conceal their sexual orientation.

Younger residents involved in the survey, Klineberg said, were more likely to believe gay marriages should have the same legal status as heterosexual unions, to support allowing gays and lesbians to be school teachers, and to say they had a close personal friend who was gay or lesbian. Anglo voters over 60 were most likely to oppose increased rights for gays, Klineberg said.

Ray Hill, a Houston gay activist, said he vividly remembers the disappointment felt in his community on the night of Jan. 19, 1985, when Houston voters overturned the anti-discrimination ordinance by a margin of greater than 4-1. Hill said gays and lesbians drove the change in attitudes by coming out of hiding, allowing heterosexuals to see how they could contribute to families and communities. "It's not about what they think about us, it's about what we think about us," Hill said. "There is almost no reason in the world for anyone to be closeted anymore."

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