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FDA-approved drug could clear body of coronavirus in 5 days
A study at New York’s Mount Sinai Medical Center and Hebrew University in Jerusalem have found that the FDA-approved drug Tricor could clear the lungs of the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 within five days, according to the Jerusalem Post. Tricor helps reduce cholesterol and triglycerides in the blood.

The researchers have found that novel coronavirus prevents the body from burning carbohydrates routinely. That results in fat accumulating in the lungs. The virus needs those fat cells to reproduce. Tricor caused the cells in the lungs to start burning fat and the virus stopped reproducing.

Tricor belongs to a class of drugs called fibrates that reduce fatty acid in the blood. People with liver disease or gall bladder disease are warned not to take the drug on a regular basis, but tests indicated the drug would be needed for less than a week to treat COVID-19.

The study is advancing to the next level of clinical trials, since the drug is already proven safe.

— David Taftet

TACA launches new initiative to pursue arts during the pandemic
If coronavirus hadn’t sidelined so much activity, right now I would be working on stories for Applause, our annual performing arts supplement published each August. (The supplement has been postponed for 2020.) Chief among those stories was to be a profile of Terry Loftis who, within the last year, was named head of TACA, a foundation that provides grants and arts funding across North Texas. We likely would have discussed the challenges and goals of running such an organization.

Now we all pretty much know what a hurdle serving the arts has become. And as of this week, TACA is doing its best to clear that hurdle. Loftis announced the TACA Resiliency Initiative, a new program to make TACA more helpful and easier to work with.

“In response to this pandemic and its severe impact on the Dallas community, we are reframing our support for Dallas arts organizations with this new initiative,” Loftis said. “We’ve conceived a multi-faceted funding system for the arts to make grants more frequent, [to] simplify the grant application process, ease the criteria for consideration of a grant and [to] remove grant use restrictions.

The three-pronged approach focuses on grantmaking (unrestricted grants designed to allow groups to fulfill their missions in the new world of remote and virtual enterprises); capacity building (built around workshops aimed at training arts professionals support and expertise in navigating work during the pandemic); and thought leadership (including those such as the study of the impact of COVID that I reported on last week). TACA’s annual Perforfund conference will also go entirely virtual in 2020.

For more information on TACA and its new initiative, visit its website.

— Arnold Wayne Jones

LGBT Law Section, others condemn State Bar board president’s comments
With the State Bar of Texas Board of Directors scheduled to hold a public meeting next Monday, July 27, “to accept comments, discuss, and consider action regarding online commentary posted by State Bar of Texas President Larry McDougal and other officers and directors,” the LGBT Law Section of the State Bar recently joined eight other State Bar sections and committees in issuing a joint statement condemning McDougal’s recent racist comments and earlier questionable comments.

Others, including some members of the State Bar board, are calling outright for McDougal to be ousted from his position. McDougal, who recently underwent surgery, has said through a spokesperson that he does not intend to resign.

The controversy began July 10 when McDougal posted on Facebook a photo of a poll worker wearing a “Black Lives Matter” shirt at a polling location during early voting for the recent runoff election, saying that the Black Lives Matter movement is “affiliated with a political party and that wearing the T-shirt violated a state law barring electioneering at the polls” and that “the woman in the shirt should have been removed and issued a citation,” according to Law.com.

Outraged by what they considered a racist comment, other attorneys then began re-posting comments McDougal made online before he ran for the State Bar president seat, including comments McDougal made online before he ran for the State Bar president seat, including one in which he called Black Lives Matter a “terrorist group,” and another social media post that included a photo of a police officer pinning a man to the ground with the caption “Justice: It usually happens before the trial.”

They also re-posted one of McDougal’s Facebook posts about a female lawyer caught practicing law with a suspended license, in which he wrote, “She is hot in her Texas Bar picture, but she has meth head written all over her today.”

The State Bar board’s immediate past president, Randy Sorrels, said McDougal’s comments have “impacted the whole bar and its mission,” while directors Jason Smith and Diane St. Ives have both called for his resignation.

In the joint letter issued July 17, the nine sections and committees of the State Bar wrote that McDougal’s comments “are shocking to the conscience, misinformation, and, at best, display a severe level of misunderstanding and a lack of empathy.” They added that, “In the interest of the integrity of the State Bar of Texas, its members and the people its members serve, we express our strong disappointment in his behavior and are calling on all members of the Bar to raise and maintain its standards as an organization of attorneys, judges and the supporting staff that works with them.”

Those signing in the statement in addition to the LGBT Law Section were the African American Lawyers Section, the Asian Pacific Interest Section, the Diversity in Profession Committee, the Hispanic Issues Section, the Native American Law Section, the Texas Minority Counsel Program Steering Committee, the Women and the Law Section and the Women in the Profession Committee.

— Tammye Nash

DPD bans projectiles and tear gas against peaceful protesters
Dallas Police Chief Renee Hall this week revamped the Dallas Police Department’s procedures in managing future peaceful demonstrations in the city.

“Tear gas will no longer be used to deter or control the movement of peaceful demonstrators,” DPD said in a press release. “Additionally, pepper ball or foam kinetic impact projectiles..."
Pet of the week • Belinda

Meet Belinda. She is a senior among her fellow dogs and is 8-and-a-half years old. She is a mixed-breed dog with a short, silky, black-and-white coat, and she weighs 38 pounds. Belinda, who is blind, came to the SPCA of Texas through a cruelty case. She was in really rough shape but still is as sweet and mellow as they come. She is a homebody and would love nothing more than to spend her days snoozing on a dog bed and being by her human’s side. She may bump into walls once in a while, but she still gets around just fine. She needs a calm home without kids under age 12 and a securely fenced back yard where she can roam freely, as leash-walking is not an option due to her blindness. Belinda will do well with other furry companions as long as they are calm and laidback like her. If you’re looking for a couch potato to share your lazy days with and you don’t mind that she is blind, then she’s the one for you. Belinda is waiting to meet you at the SPCA of Texas’ Jan-Rees Jones Animal Care Center in Dallas.

In an effort to reduce the potential for spread of COVID-19, the SPCA of Texas’ shelters, clinics, mobile adoption and mobile wellness events remain closed to the public until further notice. Adoptions are available by appointment only. Adopters will need to submit an adoption inquiry form in order to begin the tele-adoption process and schedule an appointment to complete the adoption. Browse our available animals at SPCA.org/findapet, and visit SPCA.org/dogadopt to inquire about a dog or SPCA.org/catadopt to inquire about a cat.

Friday is National Tequila Day; here are ways to celebrate it

Remember way, way back — about two months ago — when the governor decided to reopen restaurants just in time for Cinco de Mayo. Ah, history. May 5 was the last official opportunity you had to celebrate Mexican contributions to food culture, if you don’t count Taco Tuesdays. Well, you have another official chance on Friday, which is National Tequila Day. (We can assume the nation is the U.S., even though tequila is Mexican, for purposes of getting drunk.) While bars may still be shuttered in Texas, some restaurants are stepping up, plus there’s always day drinking at home alone — hich, let’s face it, is a pretty awesome way to spend quarantine.

Here are some places to imbibe more or less in public: Fish City Grill (Lake Highlands and other locations); Primo’s MX Kitchen (Uptown and now The Statler); Te Deseo (Uptown); Miriam Cocina Latina (Klyde Warren Park) and AvoEatery.

— Arnold Wayne Jones
Dallas Pride 2020: The Grand Marshals

Because of the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic this year, instead of submitting grand marshals to the community for a vote, Dallas Pride organizers chose to name the top seven nominees as co-grand marshals of Dallas Pride 2020: The Pride of Texas.

The seven grand marshals are:

Adam Medrano

Adam Medrano who represents District 2 on the Dallas City Council, was first elected to office in June 2013. He is one of three openly-gay members of the council.

Medrano was deputy mayor pro tem during his third term, and now, in his fourth and final term on the council, he has been appointed mayor pro tem by his council colleagues.

Medrano has been chair of the city’s LGBT Taskforce for the last seven years.

Under Medrano’s chairmanship, the taskforce has supported full inclusion of spouses and partners of LGBTQ employees in city pension benefits for civilian and first responder employees, full inclusion of spouses, partners and dependents of LGBTQ employees in city healthcare benefits, and for fully-inclusive city healthcare benefits per WPATH standards for trans employees and their spouses and dependents.

The taskforce organized community leader/Dallas Police Department’s task force meeting at Resource Center to discuss updates regarding attacks in Oak Lawn in 2016, and interfaces with Mobility Planning to explore safety implementations in Oak Lawn area in 2016.

The Taskforce established the Outlast Youth 501(c)(3) organization, installed 10 rainbow crosswalks in Oak Lawn and Cedar Springs and championed a resolution to fly the city of Dallas Pride Flag in June this year and each June thereafter.

Medrano previously served on the Dallas ISD Board of Trustees, elected in 2006.

He was elected first vice president of the school board in 2007, then was elected board president three separate times. He also worked as a supervisor with the city’s Parks and Recreation Department.

Medrano volunteers with a variety of public service projects and organizations.

Danny Cabrera, aka “Liquor Mini”

Danny Cabrera has been a flight attendant for American Airlines for 22 years where he has been a part of the flight service recruitment, image and training departments. He helps organize events with the American Airlines PRIDE Employee Business Resource Group, which in 2018 partnered with Billboard Music to sponsor Capital Pride in D.C. At that event, Cabrera was one of the six drag queens representing American Airlines on the main stage at the festival, and in a marketing video filmed for Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

Last year on the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, Cabrera was the captain for the drag queens in the March for World Pride in New York City. He helped plan and organize the American Airlines events for World Pride and the Stonewall 50th anniversary, including the history-making Pride Flight from Philadelphia to New York City LaGuardia Airport. He was one of the drag queen crew members for that flight.

Cabrera volunteers with the Wings Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization that helps American Airlines flight attendants in need and with several other organizations including co-chaired for Lip Sync Dallas, more than $170,000 so far.

Cabrera described himself as “a proud member of the Dallas recovery community,” and that one of his biggest accomplishments in life was admitting he had a problem with drugs and alcohol. He has been clean and sober for nine-and-a-half years and in 2017 was chair of the Big D Roundup recovery conference in Dallas. He is the reigning Miss Sober World 2015, and speaks at recovery conferences around the country as well as performing in drag show fundraisers benefitting Texas’ recovery community.

Cabrera is the resort director for VACAYA, an LGBTQ travel company that charters cruises and resort destination vacations, and he is the lead flight crew drag queen member for FABSTAYZ, a company specializing in vacation rentals that are safe and friendly for the LGBTQ travelers. He is currently working with Reservoir and Toyota Music Factory to bring the biggest drag brunch ever to the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex and is planning “The Fly Queens,” an online reality mini series starring Liquor Mini and four other drag queens that are also flight attendants by day.

Linze Serrel, aka Bill Lindsey

Bill Lindsey is a hairstylist by trade, but his true passion is advocating for the LGBTQ community. Lindsey has been of fundraising for more than 35 years to assist any cause that needs him, whether that be as Bill Lindsey or as Linze Serrel.

For the last 33 of those 35 years, Lindsey has worked with his then-partner/now-husband Michael Champion, aka Sable Alexander, to raise much-needed funds for organizations and individuals spanning the full spectrum of the LGBTQ community.

Beginning in the late 1980s through the mid-1990s and beyond, the two founded and then led an organization called Glitz-n-Glitter that brought together a variety of performers that staged regular shows benefitting LGBTQ community organizations and, sometimes, individuals in the community who were in need, either due to unexpected circumstances or long-term need.

Lindsey as Linze Serrel is a live singer and a former Voice of Pride semi-finalist. He has won numerous drag titles over the years, including Miss Charity America twice and the Official Miss Gay Texas at Large Pageant in 2005.

But Lindsey considers his most important title to be that of director of fundraising and sponsorships for the Miss Gay Texas State Pageant System, which he and Champion founded and own. The Miss Gay Texas State Pageant System was founded in 2008 and is, like the couple’s other undertakings, focused on fundraising for the community.

Lindsey has such a passion to raise money for the community that he has brought numerous well-known entertainers to the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex to help raise money for worthy causes, and he has been instrumental in raising more than $91,000 for community organizations like the Greg Dollinger Memorial AIDS Fund, Educare, North Texas Pride and many more.

Lindsey/Linze’s motto is “Raising one dollar at a time for any cause!”

Sable Alexander, aka Michael Champion

For his “day job,” Michael Champion is a registered nurse and is nationally certified as a director of nursing in administration. As Sable Alexander, he has
partnered with his then partner/now husband Bill Lindsey, aka Linze Serell, over the last 33 years to help a large variety of organizations and set precedents in fundraising for the LGBTQ community.

In the late 1980s, Champion and Lindsey founded the Glitz-n-Glitter troupe, which brought together a variety of entertainers — from drag queens and drag kings to live singers to even a fire-eater — to stage regular fundraising shows for organizations and individuals in need across the LGBTQ community spectrum.

He is also co-owner with Lindsey of the Miss Gay Texas State Pageant System since 2008, a pageant system based on charity and, for the last five years, has been the chairman of the pageant system.

Sable Alexander is Miss Charity America Emeritus, and he won the Official Miss Gay Texas State at Large Pageant in 2006.

Champion has worked closely with community bars to stage fundraising shows benefitting the Greg Dollgenger Memorial AIDS Fund, EduCare, North Texas Pride, the Miniature Schnauzer Rescue of North Texas and many more.

Champion has worked tirelessly to educate the community about HIV and on dealing with LGBTQ people in the aging and long-term care communities. He receive the National Director of Nursing in Administration award in 2009 and again in 2017, and is a dedicated healthcare worker and a dedicated advocate for the LGBTQ community.

David Hearn

David Hearn, born in Tennessee began working the stock room at JCPenney in 1973 while going to night school. He moved into the company’s visual merchandising department in 1975 and was promoted to be visual manager for the Knoxville JCPenney in 1978. From there, Hearn moved around the country as he moved upward in the JCPenney company until 1988, when he was transferred to JCPenney Corporate Office in Plano. He worked at the corporate headquarters until 2011 when he retired after 38 years with the company.

Hearn has had two partners who died of AIDS. The first was Gerald Kennedy, his partner from 1972 to 1980, who died in 1987, and Greg Dollgenger, his partner from 1989 to Dollgenger’s death in 1994. In 1996, Hearn and a group of his friends founded the Greg Dollgenger Memorial AIDS Fund in memory of Hearn’s partner, and Hearn has served on the organization’s board as president and treasurer since its founding.

Through the years, Hearn has participated in numerous organizations, including being a member of GALA North Texas from 2012-2017, a member of the GALA North Texas Business Group from 2013-2017, and being on the board of AIDS Services of McKinney from 1996-1998, a member of Cathedral of Hope since 1996, and on the board of AIDS Arms — now Prism Health North Texas from 2012-2015. At AIDS Arms/Prism, he was chair of the People and Operation Committee from 2013-2015 and on the Research and Development committee as well as on the committee formed to review the new marketing direction for the organization and as co-chair for the 25th Anniversary Lifewalk.

Hearn has been recognized many times for his volunteer awards, including KRLD Citizen of the Week for volunteering with AIDS Services of McKinney, the 2009 Open Heart Award from C.U.R.E., the Randy Franklin Memorial “I Care” Community Service Award from Dallas Bears, the 2012 Hearts and Heroes Spirit Award from Health Services of North Texas, the 2015 John Leaphart Memorial Award for Community Service from the Leather Knights, the 2016 RVA LGBTRole Award voted on by Dallas Voice Readers, the 2016 Heart and Hands Award from AIDS Arms, the 2018 Linda Sparkman Memorial Spirit Award by the Miss Gay Texas State Pageant System, the Diamond Rose Award from the United Court of the Lone Star Empire.

Cassie Nova, aka James Love

James Love grew up in and around Dallas. He first did drag for a Presidents Day show benefitting the Dallas Gay and Lesbian Alliance, and he was president of DGLA’s youth group, GLYA, in the early 1990s.

James has worked in the Rose Room, the largest show bar in the South, since 1993 and became the Rose Room show director about five years ago. He is also a contributing columnist for Dallas Voice, offering help and humor every other week in his Ask Cassie Nova column.

Love and his husband of 17 years live in Midlothian with their five dogs and a giant tortoise named Ruby.

Kristi Wilson

Kristi Wilson is the national accounts manager for Andrews Distributing and a longtime LGBTQ community advocate. She’s worked for Andrews for 14 years and since the beginning of her career has served as Andrews’ primary representative for the company’s partnership with the Dallas Tavern Guild.

Wilson regularly attends Dallas Tavern Guild meetings and said she appreciates the chance to support the LGBTQ community through building relationships and spreading awareness. Her goal as the voice of Andrews has always been to work hard to earn the trust and confidence of those in the LGBTQ community.

In addition to her work with Dallas Tavern Guild and supporting bars and organizations, Wilson has for the last decade has also worked with Caven Enterprises’ The Holiday Gift Project for Sam Houston Elementary.

Wilson and her husband Mike, an active LGBTQ advocate for the last 25 years, have been married for 15 years and have two children, Garrett and Brylee.

When asked what the Grand Marshal nomination means to her, Wilson said, “It means so much to even be acknowledged as someone who has made an impact in this community; that is what I have wanted from the beginning, I hope to continue to work closely with the Dallas Tavern Guild and all the bars and organizations contributing to this community.

“Pride is not about one day or one event,” she added. “It’s supporting everyone all year. I’m blessed to even be nominated for such an honor.”

Digitizing Pride

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Dallas is digitizing Pride in 2020, and all the fun starts online Saturday, followed Sunday morning by a virtual drag brunch. And Sunday afternoon, Pride organizers are asking Dallasites to get dolled up and put on a properly social distanced Pride display all over town.

All of the events will be streamed online at DallasPride.org and on the Dallas Pride social media channels on both YouTube and Facebook.

Pride events online are free and accessible to everyone with internet access.

Pride weekend officially kicks off at 2 p.m. on Saturday, July 25, with Dallas Pride Livestream, hosted by TV personality Ron Corning and comedian/author/playwright Del Shores. The celebration includes entertainment and celebrity cameos by the likes of queen of Bounce Big Freedia, David Hernandez from the seventh season of American Idol, dance music icon Kristine W, American Idol season 14 top five finisher Rayvon Owen, country music star Ty Herndon, Big Boy Ray from season 13 of America’s Got Talent, Adrian Lea of PRIMADONNA and CrisDee.

There will also be messages from community members, not to mention some special surprises.

The new Dallas Pride interactive marketplace will give attendees the chance to click on tents in the virtual festival to learn more about the organizations and companies that support the LGBTQ community, not to mention finding products and services to purchase and causes to support.

Then at 9 p.m. on Saturday, the party continues with a streaming dance party featuring music from DJ Deanne and Dorian Electra.

Log back in at 11 a.m. on Sunday, July 26, for the Dallas Pride Drag Brunch. Mack “Marsha Dimes” Campbell will host the online fundraising drag show to benefit local LGBTQ causes including Coalition for Aging LGBT, AIDS Services of Dallas, Equality Texas, TGRA, Miss Gay Texas Pageant System and the United Court of the Lone Star Empire.

Starting at 6:30 p.m., Jenny Anchondo and Ron Corning host CW 33’s 30-minute special, The Pride of Texas.” The show will feature highlights from past Alan Ross Texas Freedom Parades along with interviews and “Profiles in Pride” segments. Del Shore returns to help co-host the special program.

Dallas Pride Executive Director Jaron Turnbow suggested that “Everyone can get involved in supporting Dallas Pride,” decorating their homes or putting signs in their yard, and sharing those images on social media with the hashtag #DallasPride.

“This may be our most inclusive celebration yet!” Turnbow enthused. “People who may not have been able to attend our events in the past can be with us this year,” he continued. “Whether you are a member of the LGBTQ community or a friend, family member, other ally or supporter, we really hope you enjoy this event with us.”
The Dinner will be televised

Annual Black Tie fundraiser will be a one-hour event broadcast on WFAA

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
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Black Tie Dinner will televise a one-hour telethon called Black Tie LIVE on WFAA Channel 8 on Sunday, Oct. 18, at 4 p.m. Dubbed a give-a-thon, the show will feature entertainment, segments on LGBTQ history, a live auction and a car raffle.

The goal is to raise as much money as possible for Black Tie Dinner beneficiaries, and to help reach that goal, the BTD committee is beginning the Black Tie Dinner Ambassador Program that can help anyone generate money for this year’s beneficiaries.

Black Tie Co-chair Brad Pritchett said that when the committee held its digital kickoff in early spring, they were confident that by fall, they could hold some sort of event where a certain amount of people would be able to get together. But, “As we monitored best practices, we realized that wasn’t going to be possible,” he said.

So Black Tie sent out a survey to people who’ve attended the dinner in the past to see how they would participate to help raise money for the beneficiaries. Considering the responses, Pritchett said, “I’m glad I have a thick skin.”

He said the survey responses showed there was no interest in attending an event in person and little interest in signing in for another Zoom meeting. There was, he said, a lack of enthusiasm for another online event trying to duplicate a live event, calling it “Zoom Fatigue.”

But Pritchett, his Black Tie Co-chair Jeremy Hawpe and the Black Tie Dinner board were committed to raising funds for their chosen beneficiaries. That left them feeling the pressure to create something the community would love and embrace.

So Pritchett and Hawpe had a conversation with some folks at their broadcast media partner, WFAA Channel 8. The questions they said, was, “How do we re-imagine Black Tie?”

And the answer they landed on was a fundraising broadcast that will jam-pack the history of the organization that has raised millions of dollars for LGBTQ and HIV/AIDS organizations over the last nearly four decades along with information about the beneficiaries plus entertainment and some (short or edited) political speeches all into one hour.

Terry Loftis is the Black Tie entertainment chair, and he “will have lots of flexibility to work with celebrities with shout-outs, performances, short talks,” Pritchett said. In this highly political year, he’s also in contact with political candidates.

The silent auction — “Y’all’s little garage sale,” as Gov. Ann Richards called it — will be conducted online. Pritchett said he hopes to focus that auction on some of the most popular categories and open bidding a month before the broadcast.

For the past few years, online bidding in the silent auction has supplemented bids made at the hotel on dinner night. But in years past, online bidding has only been open for a few days. One requirement for beneficiaries is to contribute auction items worth a certain amount.

As in previous years, Park Place Mercedes has donated a car to be raffled. Beneficiaries are required to sell raffle tickets for the car and are given incentives to sell more than just a minimum number of those tickets.

How ticket sales will be handled online to minimize person-to-person contact during the pandemic is still being worked out, but raffle tickets for the car have been sold online in previous years. The drawing for the car will be held during the broadcast.

The live auction raises more than $100,000 at each dinner, and Pritchett said he hopes to retain some portion of that. Whether a few actual prize packages are auctioned live with bidders calling in or bidding online, or if hosts will simply promote higher end items available in the silent auction site is still bing worked out.

A Raymond Kuchling Humanitarian Award winner will be named and honored during the broadcast. The award honors local individuals who have contributed to equality in the LGBT community in North Texas.

Pritchett said the idea is to keep the show’s focus local, so the media award and the Elizabeth Birch Equality Award won’t be given this year because of their national focus.

Beneficiaries have been relieved of one big responsibility this year — finding table captains who must sell the seats at their tables. Instead of table captains, Black Tie will be unveiling its Ambassador program.

While table captains sold seats $400 at a time, Ambassadors will be individuals raising money via donations, small or large, with a simple ask or by staging small, socially-distanced events or in whatever creative ways they envision. Pritchett said the software for the Ambassador program should be ready to unveil in a few weeks.

Pritchett said he hopes this year’s Black Tie LIVE will be something truly magical for the community. And he hopes parts of this year’s event have legs.

Next year, he added, when Black Tie Dinner is back for its 40th anniversary, Pritchett hopes some pieces of what they’re creating this year become part of the return of the dinner, so they’ll raise even more money than in the past.

As for this year, “We’re still in the process of building this thing out,” Pritchett said, adding that in the face of the pandemic, he feels as if his committee has stumbled onto something that has staying power.

“After all,” he said, “Diamonds are made under pressure.”

Black Tie Dinner’s 2020 beneficiaries:
AIDS Outreach Center
AIDS Services of Dallas
Big Brother Big Sisters
Cathedral of Hope
Celebration Community Church
Coalition for Aging LGBT
Equality Texas Foundation
Health Education Learning Project
Lambda Legal
Legacy Counseling Center
Northaven United Methodist Church
Planned Parenthood
Promise House
Promote House
Resource Center
Turtle Creek Chorale
Uptown Players

Black Tie Dinner’s national beneficiary: Human Rights Campaign Foundation
LIVESTREAM BEGINS: 2:00 P.M.

Dallas Pride LIVESTREAM
Hosted by Ron Corning

SATURDAY
JULY 25TH
2:00 P.M.
9:00 P.M.

DJ'S LIVESTREAM: 9:00 P.M.
HOSTED BY

STREAMING ON:

www.dallaspride.org

* Talent provided by Left of Center Productions

Presented By:

Contributing Sponsors:
Finance professional opens Etsy business after losing his job to COVID

MAT SHAW | Contributing Writer
mathews.yb@gmail.com

Between encouraging friends to make investments for the future, 29-year-old Dallas resident Marcus McNeal decided over the summer to follow his own advice and open an Etsy t-shirt business.

No stranger to the world of finance, the adaptable young professional conceived the idea after being let go from his day job as an account manager for Centrada Solutions LLC due to COVID-19.

“All the jobs I’ve had have really been in finance, and so that’s very analytical and one side of the brain. But I do have a very creative side,” McNeal said.

His new business, Cypress 39 Tees, launched in May and offers 26 items for sale that include shirts, a hat and three baby onesies that say, “Future Artist,” “Future Doctor” and “Future Engineer” — all inspired by his pregnant sister.

His items also have a political message encouraging voting and denouncing racism. In fact, he said his most popular item is a red tank top with a simple message: Vote.

“A lot of my shirts do just say, ‘Vote,’” McNeal said. “Whether you’re on the right or left side of the aisle, you need to go vote.”

The business has already started making sales, even though it isn’t actually officially opening. And the business’s Facebook page, @Cypress39Tees, is already getting likes.

“Any time anyone starts any sort of business, they want it to be very successful,” McNeal said. “Because my niche is very focused on political t-shirts and protest t-shirts and the like, hopefully with this being an election year that will sort of jump start the growth and the store.”

Besides working in finance, McNeal has been a singing member of Turtle Creek Chorale since 2017. But since the coronavirus pandemic began, he has been unable to work or sing, so he has spent much of his time recording daily “Lunch Lessons” advice videos on finance and investments.

Cypress 39 is McNeal’s latest investment, and he hopes it will eventually make up to $1,000 in revenue each month. With that kind of revenue, he said, he would hire a designer because, he admitted, his designing skills are limited.

“What you would see in the store right now, I designed it all,” he proclaimed. “You never know what might catch on with people.”
Dallas Pride Drag Brunch
Hosted by Marsha Dimes

SUNDAY JULY 26TH 11:00 A.M.

STREAMING ON:
www.dallaspride.org

Presented By:
American Airlines
Premier Transportation
Prism Health

Contributing Sponsors:
Walmart

Beneficiary Fundraiser

#DallasPrideDragBrunch
Boys and young men are a forgotten group of victims and a large percent of those are LGBTQ.

David Taffet | Senior Staff Writer

About three years ago, a judge asked Ranch Hand Rescue founder Bob Williams to serve on a task force looking into human trafficking in North Texas. The task force members “talked about girls and women,” Williams said. “I asked them if there was a problem with boys.”

He said a judge answered, saying that, according to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, boys being sex trafficked is “the biggest single problem today.”

That’s when it occurred to Williams that his organization was in a good position to do something about that.

Ranch Hand Rescue works with law enforcement to rescue, treat and find homes for abused and neglected farm animals. Their charges currently include horses, cows, llamas, alpacas, pigs, goats, sheep and donkeys.

But Ranch Hand Rescue isn’t just a place for animals to heal. Children dealing with amputations, grief and abuse and veterans suffering from PTSD are among those who find healing as they work with the animals. Williams said people will tell the animals things they won’t reveal to a counselor.

Izell Bennett is general manager of Ranch Hand Rescue. He said human trafficking is classified as slavery. Traffickers target individuals with violence and threats while controlling them with manipulation. Boys and teens, who cannot legally consent to sex, are coerced into sexual servitude.

The problem is, Williams said, how do we find these boys teens and then address their trauma? He said Denton County Sheriff Tracy Murphree conducted a string of online stings and arrested men trying to pick up young boys. The average age of the boys they were looking for was 13, and “Those boys end up with traffickers who use, exploit and sell them,” Williams said.

Landon Dickeson, a mental health counselor who works with survivors of trafficking at Ranch Hand Rescue, said there’s a difference between trafficking boys and girls. Perpetrators often find boys on gaming sites. They’ll groom them by building a relationship with the end goal of pulling them away from their families.

LGBT teens who’ve been thrown out of their houses are at extra risk.

“So many LGBT kids end up on the streets,” Dickeson said. “Traffickers will offer them money and a place to stay.” And the boys respond by performing what Dickeson called “survival sex,” creating “trauma bonding” between the exploited child and perpetrator.

These boys and teens end up with a confused mind-set — “He hurt me but he’s also taking care of me” — until they eventually believe the trafficker is the only one taking care of them.

Victimization doesn’t always come from a third party. “It could be someone in the family,” Bennett said.

Dickeson added that the incest component happens a lot more than we realize. And in addition to family, some boys and young men are abused and later trafficked by neighbors or family friends.

He told of one patient who was assaulted by family members beginning when he was 3 and lasting until he was 10. Then he was trafficked within and outside the family. After suicide attempts and a year-and-a-half of ups and downs in counseling, that patient finally had an epiphany: “It wasn’t my fault.”

During therapy, the young man was desperate to make a connection with Dickeson’s cat, and one day, after reaching his breakthrough, the cat finally jumped in the boy’s lap. They connected. It was amazing, Dickeson said, to see how an animal made a difference.

Dickeson called the animal piece of therapy “pure, intimate and beautiful,” a big difference from a clinical environment that trafficking victims perceive as unsafe, even compared to their previous life of self-harm, substance abuse and homelessness. He described one young man who was trafficked until the age of 20, and only in the last six months, after several years of therapy, is he beginning to even understand he was trafficked.

Williams said the myth among law enforcement is that boys who are being trafficked can get away if they want.

Bennett described the magnitude of the problem among LGBT youth:

Since LGBT youth make up some 40 percent of homeless teens, LGBT youth are more than twice as likely to be trafficked as straight youth. Half are under the age of 14 when their exploitation begins. LGBT youth are more than seven times more likely to experience acts of sexual violence and are at least three times more likely to engage in survival sex.

Transgender youth are at highest risk for sexual exploitation.

Bennett said there were almost 11,000 victims of human trafficking last year in Texas, with only 64 trauma care beds for them available in the state.

With 28 partner agencies referring clients to Ranch Hand Rescue, Williams said he needs to take his work a step farther. He wants to build Bob’s House of Hope on or near one of his properties to serve as a long-term shelter for boys who’ve been trafficked.

Just as Ranch Hand Rescue takes the most severe cases of animal abuse, so does his counseling center: “Those who’ve been unsuccessful in other programs end up with us,” Dickeson said.

Williams said his shelter would give these young men a place to live while they continue their counseling, learn job skills and build a new life for themselves, safe from their traffickers.

He said they were negotiating for some property earlier in the year. “We hit some snags, and then COVID hit,” Williams said. “We need people in our community to step up and help us.”

One way or another, though, Williams is determined that he’ll build a house for young men who were victims of trafficking to set them on a road to recovery and a productive life.

For more information on Ranch Hand Rescue and Bob’s House of Hope visit RanchHandRescue.org
#DallasPrideParade

Dallas Pride PARADE

Whether you’re going to work, shopping or need to get out of the house, Dallas Pride encourages everyone to dress in your favorite pride outfit, decorate your vehicle and “Parade around town!”

DATE: SUNDAY, JULY 26TH
TIME: ALL DAY

LOCATION: EVERYWHERE
Diverse group of experts address issue in historical and contemporary context

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
taffet@dallasvoice.com

This week, the Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum began a new online series of discussions on race and racism in our community. Museum director Mary Pat Higgins began the series with a discussion with Kamiolah Collins, president of Collins Collaborations, to talk about why the series was important and to define terms to establish a common knowledge base.

Higgins said Collins, who will moderate the future discussions, has consulted with the museum before.

“She worked with the museum’s exhibit designers to make sure we weren’t reinforcing bias,” Higgins explained, adding that Collins has also led workshops for the museum staff and board.

The new Holocaust museum, with its expanded mission of teaching about human rights including the struggle for LGBT equality, opened in September. Less than six months later, the museum building closed for the coronavirus lockdown, and museum officials found new ways to present the history of groups struggling to achieve equal rights.

The monthly series on racism continues in August with a discussion on Dallas’ racial history, with speakers from the Black, Latinx and Native American communities. The final two discussions will be about the present and the future. The present will present personal testimonies of what rac-
ism looks like in Dallas today, what’s been accomplished and what needs to be done.

The series will look at “what issues are still prevalent,” Higgins said. “We’ll try to figure out how to move forward as people of different perspectives discuss their hopes for the future.”

The discussion of Dallas in the future includes strategies to combat systemic racism, including steps to take in areas of education, housing, employment, policing and incarceration. “The discussion of the future is a call to action,” Higgins said. “We’ve presented history and the pain and reality of the present. Now let’s be part of the solution.”

The speakers for upcoming discussions are still being finalized.

The old museum, located across the DART tracks from the new building in the West End, was called the Dallas Holocaust Museum for Education and Tolerance. As they began raising money for the new museum, donors, museum visitors and Holocaust survivors thought we could do better than just tolerate each other in Dallas as the former name suggested.

So while the history of the Holocaust remains the focus of the new museum, the exhibits extend beyond that. The post-Holocaust human rights movement and the continuing history of genocide are also explored. The current special exhibit, “The Fight for Civil Rights in the South,” opened just a month before everything shut down and so has been extended until January. Higgins hopes the museum can open in time for people to get to see it in person. In the meantime, a virtual tour is available on the museum website.

The next exhibit that will run February through May, 2021, is “Stonewall Rising” from the Newseum in Washington, D.C.

Higgins said she’s excited about bringing in that exhibit, but also a little nervous, hoping the building will open in plenty of time to have a full schedule of events around “Stonewall Rising.”

Until the museum reopens, “we pivoted to offering virtual programs,” Higgins said. “One silver lining, we can reach more people.”

Indeed, more than 500 people had already signed up for part one of the discussion on race and racism and more will see the discussion on the museum’s YouTube channel: DHHRM.

She said that even once the museum reopens, they plan to continue virtual programming that is reaching people all over the country and also engaging regular museum visitors more often.

Referring again to the series on racism, Higgins said she considers her museum staff experts on presenting history. But often the museum is called upon to help solve current city problems. Mayor Mike Rawlings appointed Higgins to a committee to figure out what to do with the Robert E. Lee statue that was finally removed from what’s now known as Turtle Creek Park.

But Higgins said she wants to be part of the process to change policies that need to be changed to make Dallas a more inclusive city. “We see our role as being conveners,” she said.

For Higgins that means launching from a deep understanding of history hoping to come up with ideas to lead us into a better future.

To participate live in the discussions on race and racism, visit DHHRM.org, click on programs and calendar to register. After the event, watch the recording on the DHHRM channel on YouTube.com
Patrice Williams takes the helm at AIDS Outreach Center

While taking over during the difficult time of COVID-19, new ED foresees spreading the agency’s footprint

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
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Following a nationwide search, the board of AIDS Outreach Center earlier this month named Patrice Williams as executive director of Tarrant county’s largest HIV service organization. Williams succeeds Shannon Hilgart, who died of cancer earlier this year, as executive director.

Williams brings with her 20 years of healthcare experience, from developing public policy to working in an AIDS service agency. Much of that experience was at United Services for AIDS Foundation in New Orleans where she also served on the New Orleans Regional AIDS Planning Council. Six years ago, she moved to Houston where she was chief operations officer for Houston Area Community Services, Inc.

Williams has an undergraduate degree in psychology and her master’s degree in healthcare management. And she’s a doctoral candidate in business administration. Those touch on just about every facet of running an agency as diverse as AOC.

A year ago, Williams moved to Fort Worth where, she said, she’s spent most of her time just being a mom. What attracted her to AIDS Outreach Center was its mission to provide quality care with dignity and respect.

AOC offers a wide variety of support services for people living with HIV in Tarrant County that are divided among several agencies in Dallas, including HIV and STD testing, case management, dental services, counseling and a food pantry.

In addition, it provides medical care for its clients through a clinic run by AIDS Healthcare Foundation or AHF.

Williams is beginning her new position at a very strange time. And getting to know her staff isn’t the easiest thing she’s ever had to do, since half of them are working from home during the pandemic.

But that doesn’t mean she isn’t already planning on how she’d like to move her agency into the future. Barriers to care, Williams said, have never been more obvious than they have been during the lockdown, and she wants to do what she can to break those barriers down.

Williams said she’s thinking about expanding the number of locations where AOC offers services and partnering with others in the community, where possible, to not duplicate efforts.

AOC is serving about 2,000 clients in Tarrant and surrounding counties but there are more than 9,000 people in Tarrant County alone living with HIV.
the shutdown has affected HIV and STD testing is a great concern to Williams. “We used to have walk-in testing,” she said. But now, with social distancing and the need to keep areas clean, testing has been by appointment only, resulting in fewer people tested. Williams said she’d like to get back to some sort of safe walk-in testing again.

But her goal reaches far beyond expanding HIV testing. “As treatment has evolved over the decades, services have to evolve,” she said.

Her vision is a network of community health centers throughout Tarrant County, and she said there’s grant money for that sort of expansion.

During the pandemic, AOC is seeing more people apply for its rental assistance program. Funded by the county and only available to its clients who live in Tarrant County, the program helps people living with HIV who are having trouble paying their rent or utilities.

Keeping people in stable housing is an important part of stopping the spread of HIV. Those without stable housing are the first to fall out of treatment and off their medication. So the rental assistance program has been an effective tool to stop the spread of HIV, Williams said.

Her vision for expanding services also includes competent healthcare for the transgender community. Currently AOC offers a hormone therapy clinic, but Williams understands the lack of comprehensive care for transgender men and women. She hopes AOC’s hormone clinic will develop into a full transgender healthcare program.

And keeping the rest of the LGB community healthy is a concern as well and is another goal.

But in the time of COVID, Williams said she’s focusing on trying to get services back up and running. AOC’s dental program came to almost a complete halt, treating emergencies only. The problem with doing simple cleanings, she explained, is the dental tools used to clean teeth use air pressure, and that just blows the virus around.

Not that there’s been an epidemic of COVID-19 among her agency’s clients. She said she’s heard of a couple of cases and has seen no evidence that people who are HIV-positive, especially those who are undetectable, are any more susceptible to the novel coronavirus than the population in general.

Williams encouraged everyone to do whatever is needed to get through this moment in history: “Learn to adjust,” she said. “People who are positive learned to adjust years ago.”

That included taking steps to protect themselves from catching infections as well as taking steps to stop the spread of HIV. She urged the community to take similar steps to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

But Williams has looked at how her agency is providing services during the pandemic, and she said it’s forcing everyone to maximize their use of technology. Case management can be done remotely, but testing can’t. Telehealth isn’t an answer to everything but is meeting a lot of clients’ needs and making it safer for those who must have a face-to-face meeting with a someone at AOC.

“COVID is making us become more innovative,” Williams said.

While everything feels like it’s in limbo, she said, this period of time is allowing for more planning. “Once we can move forward,” she added, “We’ll make a greater impact on our community than we’ve done in 35 years. I’m very excited to be here.”
Back in the saddle

Dallasite Kameron Ross is looking to reignite his country music career as a proud gay man

TAMMYE NASH | Managing Editor
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Kameron Ross was still a teenager when he recorded his first album, “When I’m Done Lovin’ You,” produced by country music heavy hitters Kelly Lang and T.G. Sheppard. But not long after, Ross started coming to terms with his own sexuality, and his budding career in country music was put on the back burner. Now, Ross has long since come to terms with who he is — a proud gay man — and thanks the TV show America’s Got Talent, his music career is heating up again.

Ross started making headlines immediately after his July 14 AGT audition: He started out singing “Red Dirt Road” by Brooks and Dunn, one of his childhood favorites. But about halfway through, judge Simon Cowell interrupted, asking Ross to instead choose a different song to sing a cappella, telling him to “prove the point you’ve been trying to prove.”

So Ross launched into Chris Young’s “If I Stay,” with no backing track, and the audience immediately knew that is what I wanted to do! I feel it was a combination of both? I feel it was a combination of both. I was completely confident in being gay at first, but it is now healthy and living her life to the fullest. But I lost both of my grandparents within the same year. Then, within the same year, my mother was diagnosed with cancer. Thankfully she is in remission now.

When things like this take place, everything else gets put on hold a little bit, because you start to realize you want to enjoy every moment you can with all of your loved ones. With that being said, my family members are my biggest supporters. Any and every performance I have, they’re right there, front and center, cheering me on. I couldn’t be more grateful for such a supportive family.

When I come out to my family, my sisters didn’t blink an eye. They did not look at me any differently. With my parents, it took just a little bit to adjust to the news, but it’s made my bond with my parents so much stronger. My parents are absolutely supportive and proud of me being gay.

You said that the internal battle between embracing and expressing your identity and your career as a country singer caused your “flight in the country music world to dim and eventually fade out a little.” Do you mean that homophobia in the country music world hampered your career, or do you feel like it was your own internal struggle that had more of an effect? Maybe it was a combination of both? I feel it was a combination of both. I was not completely confident in being gay at first, but it is who I am and part of me. I am completely confident now with who I am as a person. But while discovering who I was as a person and trying to make it in the country music industry, there was this fear that I would never make it in the country music world.

[Being openly gay] is not something that was common in the music industry then, and certainly not in the country music
industry. Then the artists that were openly gay in country music were met with many challenges. I was scared that I would lose everything that I worked towards for almost all of my life and that my dream would slip between my fingers.

But once I became comfortable with who I was as a person, I wanted to make sure I was still pushing forward, trying to make it in the music industry. I was ready to prove to everyone that I can be who I am and be extremely successful as an artist. I want to be able to open up doors for others like myself.

Chely Wright came out in 2010 and then Ty Herndon followed in 2014. They were the first “big names” in country music to come out, and Chely Wright has said that coming out hurt her career. Now, though, there are other people in country music who are openly gay and who are having successful careers – Brandi Carlile, Billy Gilman and even Lil Nas X.

Have their stories and experiences influenced you in your decision to return to singing as a career? Who in the country music industry do you look to as role models?

A lot of the artists who are out in the country music came out after having some success in the industry. I am so extremely proud of people like Lil Nas X, Brandi and Billy. Seeing them succeed lit a fire in me. I wanted to make them proud.

What is a little different with me is that I am trying to break through in the industry as an openly gay man. I would hope that people can accept me for who I am and enjoy the gift I was given and that I want to share with the world.

It’s been 10 years since your performance at the Day in the Country event and since you started coming to terms with your identity. What has changed since then that makes you believe it will be possible for you to have a career in country music as an openly gay man?

The country music industry is starting to get introduced to people who are happy with who they are as a person and are supportive of others. I grew up singing with Kacey Musgraves, and to see her success with being who she wants to be as a person – that is something and she is someone to look up to! She’s a huge supporter of the gay community. I watched an interview with her some time ago where she said, “I love the gays,” and I remember getting the biggest and proudest smile on my face. A lot of the people who have had success in the country music industry have come out after they’ve had some success. I am coming back into the country music industry openly gay and happy. I feel that it is time for someone like me in the industry.

Win or lose, your appearance on America’s Got Talent certainly has the potential to change your life. How has it changed things so far, and what impact do you expect it to have from here on?

What do you see in your future? I could not be more humbled, blessed, grateful and happy for my experience with America’s Got Talent. I am doing my best to try and respond back to everyone providing me feedback and reaching out to me. I want everyone to know and feel that I’m listening and loving their encouragement and support. Since my appearance on America’s Got Talent, I’ve had so many people reach out telling me their stories and wishing me luck. I’ve had celebrities like Leslie Jordan reach out to me, supporting who I am as a person and as a performer.

What have I not asked about that you want to talk about? My experience with America’s Got Talent has been amazing! They have such a great team to work with. There is so much long and hard work that goes into such an amazing production and every single person plays such an important role. I appreciate every single person on the America’s Got Talent team. Also, I want to say thank you! Thank you to everyone who has supported and believed in me. I am extremely grateful for having this opportunity with America’s Got Talent while being allowed and accepted to be my true self.
LGBTQ activists, advocates and allies remember Civil Rights icon

CHRIS JOHNSON  | Washington Blade
Courtesy of the National LGBT Media Association

GAY RIGHTS supporters are mourning the loss of Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., a civil rights icon who worked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1960s and who has been a leading voice for civil rights for all people throughout his tenure in government.

Lewis, 80, died late Friday, July 17, after a battle with pancreatic cancer.

Alphonso David, president of the Human Rights Campaign, said in a statement that Lewis was “a hero and civil rights icon who pushed our country closer to the promise of a more perfect union.”

“Future generations will learn how he faced down discrimination with courage and defiance, boldly challenging the United States to envision a future where every person, no matter their race, sexual orientation or gender identity, has an equal chance at the American Dream,” David said. “His legacy will live on in the work we do every day to further his mission and continue to get into ‘good trouble’ in the name of equality and justice.”

U.S. Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson of Dallas, who has served with Lewis since she was first elected to Congress in 1992, said this week, “This nation, and the world, are better today because of the courage, dignity, kindness, love, decency and fierce commitment to justice of my dear friend and colleague, Congressman John Lewis.

“Throughout the halls of Congress and sitting next to each other in the House chamber, we discussed together the complex laws, details of our work and how we can better serve our constituents regardless of their faith, ethnicity, or sexual preference,” Johnson continued. “Whenever I asked him to visit Dallas, he never hesitated and was always among the first to offer his help and support. I am forever grateful for his wisdom, inspiration, and guidance.

“We shared triumphs and trials together,” she added. “One of those trying times came when we were arrested together in 2006 for peacefully protesting outside the Embassy of Sudan. After being arrested we were held in separate cells. I could not see him. Then soon I heard his voice directing us to sing civil rights songs — we sang loud, strong and long. We kept up so much noise that we were allowed to bail-out in four hours. I will remember and keep alive his relentless fight for equality. My prayers are with his family.”

In the 1960s, Lewis was a leader of the Civil Rights Movement, which fought for voting rights for Black Americans and the end to legalized segregation in the United States. Lewis helped organize the 1963 March on Washington, where King delivered his iconic “I Have a Dream” speech and was the youngest person to speak from the stage at that march.

Lewis also took part in the Selma to Montgomery marches in 1965, when in an event later known as “Bloody Sunday,” Alabama state troopers beat Black demonstrators seeking to register Black Americans to vote after they stopped to pray peacefully.

During his long service as a lawmaker representing Georgia in the U.S. House beginning in 1987, Lewis would describe those events in contemporary tellings as “good trouble” and “necessary trouble.” Former President Barack Obama awarded Lewis the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Janson Wu, executive director of the New England-based GLBTQ Advocates & Defenders, said in a statement Lewis’s death “is a tremendous loss at a moment when his moral conviction and clarity are needed perhaps more than ever.

“But his legacy and vision are alive in a new generation of young leaders pushing today to dismantle the systemic racism and white supremacy that persist within our institutions of power,” Wu said. “His insistence on believing that America could be a country where true justice prevails for everyone is both an inspiration and a challenge to us all to stay engaged in that work.”

Lewis was a strong supporter of LGBTQ rights in Congress, lending his support to the Equality Act, legislation that would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1965 to ban anti-LGBTQ discrimination. Lewis also was lead sponsor of the Every Child Deserves a Family Act, legislation that would prohibit anti-LGBTQ discrimination in adoption.

Kevin Jennings, CEO of Lambda Legal, said in a statement Lewis demonstrated a commitment to LGBTQ people in face of anti-LGBTQ attacks from the Trump administration.

“As an LGBT advocate, John Lewis was not only a champion of marriage equality, but he introduced the Equality Act, a bill to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in employment, housing, credit, education and jury service,” Jennings said. “He has stood with our communities against the recent attacks from the Trump administration that we are fighting in court, including the ban on transgender service members and the anti-transgender health care rule.”

President Barack Obama issued a statement saying that “America is a constant work in progress” and that Lewis recognized the power of ordinary citizens to enact change.

“In so many ways, John’s life was exceptional,” Obama said. "But he never believed that what he did was more than any citizen of this country might
do. He believed that in all of us, there exists the capacity for great courage, a longing to do what’s right, a willingness to love all people and to extend to them their God-given rights to dignity and respect. And it’s because he saw the best in all of us that he will continue, even in his passing, to serve as a beacon in that long journey towards a more perfect union.”

The AIDS Healthcare Foundation also issued a statement mourning Lewis’ death, with AHF President Michael Weinstein thanking the congressman for “his tireless, lifelong work — on civil rights, social justice, health care and more — far beyond the reach and accomplishment of most men.” AHF Board Chair Cynthia Davis added, “The African-American community and country have lost a stalwart from the Civil Rights Movement and a giant among men. … May his passion for civil rights, social justice and health equity live on and continue to affect the hearts and minds of a new generation of social and political activists.”

And Imara Canady, chair of AHF’s Atlanta-based Black Leadership AIDS Crisis Coalition, called Lewis “a servant-leader. … No matter the issue, no matter your sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status, he represented all people. Even with all that was on his plate, he never missed an opportunity to be with his constituents and had a unique ability to make everyone he encountered feel important. He was relentless in the ongoing fight for justice for all people, stood up against foolery and gave new meaning to the transformative impact of fearless advocacy.”

Here in Texas, openly lesbian Texas Congressional District 23 candidate and Iraq War veteran District Gina Ortiz Jones issued a statement Friday saying she was “heartbroken by the news” of Lewis’ death.

“Our country has lost a leader, a Civil Rights hero and a relentless champion for justice who changed our nation for the better. Tonight we mourn. Tomorrow we will continue making good trouble in his honor,” Ortiz Jones said.

And Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson called Lewis “a true civil rights icon and an American hero. His commitment to the fight for justice, fairness, and equality was universally admired. He will be sorely missed.”

Chris Johnson is chief political and White House reporter for the Washington Blade and is a member of the White House Correspondents’ Association.

Dallas Voice Managing Editor Tammye Nash contributed to this report.
Northaven Church held its own socially-distanced Pride event several Sundays ago at its north Dallas campus. Several other groups, including Congregation Beth El Binah that meets at Northaven, and Pegasus Squares that meets at Grace UMC, were also represented in the Pride celebration.

According to Northaven pastor the Rev. Marti Soper, this was Northaven’s first Pride celebration.

Several dozen members gathered to decorate their cars in rainbow colors and make several loops through the parking lot, onto Northaven Road, down Preston Road and back into the parking lot to repeat the route. One group marched with a Northaven banner, with marchers masked and trying to maintain some social distancing.

Soper said the Pride event was the first time since the lockdown that the Northaven congregation has come together on the property for a joyous occasion; church members did, however, stage an outdoor Black Lives Matter protest after the May 25 death of George Floyd.

About Pride, Soper said, “It was important for us to come together in a way that was safe.” She called it a perfect event because it “captured our sense of joy and witnessed what we believe.”

Northaven has been one of the more prominent United Methodist churches in the Dallas area in the denomination’s split over the issue of ordaining gay clergy and performing wedding ceremonies for same-sex couples. The “United Methodist” on the Northaven sign has been covered by rainbow colors since the denomination voted to maintain its traditional plan at its worldwide conference a year ago.

That rainbow sign has been ripped down several times in the last year. One Highland Park man was arrested after he was caught on church property destroying the sign. He has been charged with an anti-gay hate crime.

Some of the cars in the procession just waved small Pride flag banners. Others created more elaborate decorations for their cars. And one member even decorated her cat with rainbow regalia and then marched with the cat on a leash.

Soper and her husband Jack led the parade in their red convertible. Pastor, husband and car were all adorned in rainbow feathers. Soper said the Northaven Pride parade was the very first time she ever wore a clerical collar and that she felt it was appropriate that it was accessorized with a rainbow boa.

See more photos from Northaven’s Pride in this week’s Scene section.

— David Taffet
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HAPPY PRIDE!
Life changes

Don’t let it pass without being true to yourself

This past year, I came out to my father as transgender more than 100 times. My father is 92, and dementia has started setting in. Actually, he worked until he was 90, and, physically, he is fine. But his short-term memory is really bad.

I remember the first time I told him I was transgender; Gosh, it was really hard. I was overwhelmed by so many emotions. I had already told my brothers, and my father was next in line.

He is such a nice guy. After I told him, he said he would keep it a secret and not tell my brothers or anyone else. I told him it was okay, that my brothers already knew. We hugged; I cried. It was a very nice moment.

But because of his short-term memory problems, he promptly forgot.

Over the next several months, after several auditions, I would go by and see him. I would wear whatever I had worn to my auditions, I think I used this as a way for him to get accustomed to seeing me in female attire. He would never ask me, but he would always ask others, why I was wearing women’s clothes. They would tell him because of my acting, and he would seem to be okay with it. But he found it quite funny.

When I went fulltime, I wore dresses for most of my first year. My dad would chuckle then ask why I was in a dress. Well, it went more like: “What are you wearing?” I’d say, “A dress, Dad.” He would ask, “Why are you wearing that?” I’d say, “Because I am transgender dad.”

One day I thought maybe he didn’t know what that meant, so I tried to rationalize it for him. But after a while I gave up. And so did he, after about three months of seeing me four to five times a week in a dress.

Most of the time he does not understand that I am transgender. This makes for interesting conversations. This has moved into an assisted living home, and when I go to visit, he always introduces me as his son. He’s proud of having four boys.

I usually tell who ever he is talking to that he had three boys and me. He has never been mean about it, but that’s because he is such a nice guy. He thought that me wearing a dress was funny. I think this is a generational thing. So, what do you do? I can tell you what I did. I just went with the flow. It has never really bothered me, because I know he loves me. Also, he has such a good heart.

I usually go out to eat with my dad once a week, and he has never been embarrassed going places with me, even when I am in a dress. It’s a fairly small town, but not that small. It confuses him when people refer to me as she. I think he’s finally getting it after almost a year, but for me it’s a small price to pay to let him know who I am.

I never got the chance to tell my mother, and she was actually the first person besides my wife that I wanted to tell. I tried on several occasions but always chickened out. The last time I tried to tell her, I had decided that, no matter what, I would tell her that day.

But when I started talking, she asked if it were okay for my aunt and grandmother to listen. I asked her what she was talking about, because my aunt and grandmother both had died 20 years prior. She said, “They are right there,” and pointed to nothing.

At that point I asked myself, “Why am I doing this? Is it for me or for her?” And as I looked at her, I just couldn’t do it. I rationalized that it would be mean, because she wouldn’t understand. So, I didn’t tell her.

A week later she collapsed in a coma and died. My brother died on that same weekend.

This event was the catalyst that started my real journey to be me. Within two years I came out, and six months later, I went full time. But I learned: Don’t let people you love die without letting them know who you are. I did and still regret it to this day. I miss you Mom.

NOTE: This article was written B.C. (Before Corona). Since the onset of the epidemic, I have missed my lunches with my dad. Because he is in an assisted living home, I have not been able to visit him recently, which makes me sad. I have talked to him on the phone while standing outside his window several times. Again, the lesson is, life changes in a blink of an eye. Don’t let it change without being true to yourself. As always love, light, and peace, Sophie.
A harsh lesson in the reality of COVID-19

For Tony Green, the coronavirus pandemic was just a ‘scamdemic’ — until truth hit home hard

Imagine the sound and vibration of an old-fashioned electric heater going through your whole body. Imagine gasping for air with every step you take. Imagine rubbing Icy Hot all over your head to soothe a painful headache. Imagine your eyes in a bowl of water while you’re still seeing through them. Imagine collapsing and waking up in the ER only to find out COVID-19 attacked your central nervous system, and the doctor had just saved you from a stroke.

If that were the worst of it, it would be bad enough. But that’s not the worst of it. This is the story of one family’s harrowing fight with COVID-19.

Full disclosure: I am a gay conservative, someone that often juggles persecution for my sexuality while being true to my values. Such a combination requires a lot of tenacity to earn respect from either group.

I admit I voted for Donald Trump in 2016. I admit traveling deep into the conspiracy trap over COVID-19. All the defiant behavior of Trump’s more radical and rowdy cult followers, I participated in it. I was a hard-ass that stood up for my “God-given rights.”

In great haste, I began prognosticating the alphabet soup about this “scamdemic.” I believed the virus to be a hoax. I believed the mainstream media and the Democrats were using it to create panic, crash the economy and destroy Trump’s chances at re-election.

And so, believing the pandemic to be a hoax, my partner and I hosted family members on Saturday, June 13. On Sunday, June 14, I woke up sick.

By Monday, June 15, my partner and my parents were all sick. That same Monday, my in-laws traveled to witness the birth of their first grandchild. They took with them my father-in-law’s mother and one of my partner’s sisters. That night my father-in-law became ill. Then my mother-in-law and their daughter began feeling sick. So they cut their trip short.

Two days later, my father-in-law’s mother got sick. The new mommy and daddy got sick, too. We all tested positive for COVID-19. Only the newborn was spared.

My father-in-law and I both went to the hospital on June 24. The virus had attacked my central nervous system, and the staff stopped me from having a stroke.

My father-in-law’s mother was admitted a day later. On July 1, she died of COVID-19/pneumonia. The chaplain wanted the family to break the news to my father-in-law, and he learned how his mother lay on her deathbed and then drifted off without any family by her side, even though he was in the room next to hers.

On the day of her funeral, which was July 14, five more of our family members tested positive for the virus. That evening, my father-in-law was put on a ventilator.

You cannot imagine the guilt I feel, knowing that I hosted the gathering that led to so much suffering. You cannot imagine my guilt at having been a denier, carelessly shuffling through this pandemic, making fun of those wearing masks and social distancing. You cannot imagine my guilt at knowing that my actions convinced both our families it was safe when it wasn’t.

For those who deny the virus exists or who downplay its severity, let me assure you: The coronavirus is very real and extremely contagious. Before you even know you have it, you’ve passed it along to your friends, family, coworkers and neighbors.

And now, husbands, wives and children are being separated. The sick are taking care of the sick while those without symptoms are self-quarantining. I am aware of how my bias could discredit me with some, but trust me, you do not want this virus. And you do not want your loved ones suffering and dying from this because you are taking a “political stand” or protecting the economy over their lives.

We are all at the precipice of a common heartache.

The next time you’re put out because your favorite spots are closed or because you don’t let you enter without wearing a mask, and you decide to defy them rather than comply because you’re defending your rights and freedoms from being trampled, just remember: Your family and friends may be next.

Is that too harsh? Try imagining someone you care about on life support. Try being the one to pick the only 10 people allowed to attend a funeral for a loved one. But don’t fret; you’ve got time to ponder, because the mortuary is booked out for at least a week.

Now imagine one more thing: That pool party, the mixer or family reunion you’re pushing for resulting in you being cold and alone in a hospital bed, fighting for your life. Imagine the only human contact you feel is a stranger’s rubber glove giving you medication, checking your vitals and changing your diaper.

That is exactly what has happened to our family.

America, this is not going to go away without sacrifice. Either way, we are going to pay a price. Governments are faced with making difficult decisions, and they cannot appease and satisfy everyone.

But to do nothing is to be foolish. To ignore or question the validity of this virus, its contagiousness or the consequences of selfish attitudes is — at this stage — completely stupid.

I am calling myself out first, but now this is personal, and I fell on my sword. And I promise you, if we continue being more worried about the disruption to our lives than we are about stopping this virus, not one American will be spared.

Not one.

Tony Green is a consultant and cultural transformation coach to prisons and inmates in four states, a lobbyist for reform and the author of Maxed Out: The Criminal Justice System Running Amok. A GoFundMe page has been created, https://tinyurl.com/y2o6adpq, to help his in-laws pay medical bills resulting from their illness.
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Rufus Wainwright is older, but his gifts as a singer-songwriter have never been more in evidence.

When I first interviewed Rufus Wainwright back in 2004, he was at the height of his twinkdom. Only 31 then, he already had four albums under his belt in just six years yet still sported a tousled mane and clean-scrubbed freshness that accompanies early acclaim and popularity. So when you see the cover photo on his new album, *Unfollow the Rules*, for the first time, be prepared: At 46, the twink is now full-on zaddy.

“I know!” he laughs. “I went from the boyish dandy to the mannish daddy.” Yet it’s not just the scruffy, gunmetal whiskers that tumbleweed down his chin but the brush of upswept hair, the slight droop in his lips and the doleful, puppy-dog eyes (always one of his most distinctive physical features) framed with weariness. It’s the same face yet somehow different — the map of a life lived. And lived hard.

“I have to say, when I was young — and even just a bit younger than now — I never felt totally [at ease] in my skin, especially in my 20s when I was cavorting around town trying my best to seduce the universe,” Wainwright says. “There was always this inkling that I was a bit of a fraud. Now it is an easier fit. And given my fanbase, I hear [feedback] that it’s a good look for me.” Amazingly, the voice has remained much the same over the past 20-plus years. Still a throaty tenor capable of both falsettoque highs and the rich timbre of a baritone, it pours like a viscous cabernet over the ears, undulating with unusual melodic and lyrical...
structures. How do you even describe Wainwright’s style? Wainwrightian? Rufusque? It borders occasionally on Americana (though he grew up mostly in Canada; his parents are Loudon Wainwright III and the late Kate McGarrigle) then dances into cabaret. There’s a whimsy to many songs (on the new album, the Dr. John-ish “You Ain’t Big” stands out) but never they digress into novelty; while influenced by opera — he’s composed two full-length operas himself — his pop albums are nevertheless pop... or as close as Rufus can come. Call it baroque-and-roll. He’s simply unique: an instantly unforgettable voice with an arresting musicality.

“I, to this day, am flummoxed by how to define what I do,” Wainwright concedes.

He certainly fits within the image of the visionary West Coast singer-songwriter, folks like Harry Nilsson and Randy Newman who meddled in — and mastered — many genres. Unfollow the Rules exemplifies his eclectic, hard-to-categorize tastes, from the driving guitar on his ode to domesticity (“Peaceful Afternoon”) to the rootsy “You Ain’t Big.”

“If I was gonna put down money, I would say this song and that recording is a really important asset of my career,” he says of the latter. There is this kind of country style that is in there but not totally explored yet [on my other albums]. My grandmother was from Georgia, and I think there’s a kind of southern quality, and for better or worse, it shows I can sing that stuff.”

Unfollow the Rules is his first notable foray into that pop sound for nearly a decade. His last two studio albums — his first opera, then a song cycle set to Shakespeare’s sonnets — didn’t exactly soar up the Hot 100. Even his prior, Mark Ronson-produced collection, Out of the Game, which Wainwright insisted contained his danciest songs, exuded a classical feel with its plentiful arpeggios (it is, though, his highest-charting album). He senses a lot of opera influences on this album, too, although some of that is more about his approach than the sound.

“In preparing to do press for this album, I found myself thinking a lot about other artists, particularly male, who at my age put out some of their best work: Paul Simon did Graceland and, and John Lennon’s final album [Double Fantasy], and I would think, ‘Somehow I would like to emulate that process.’ I think the one difference though is, in a fun way, it’s not so much a departure from, but a recap of, my career. I think through triumph and failure I have developed a kind of clarity of what I’m trying to put forth, which
Upon the 45th anniversary of ‘A Chorus Line,’ original B’way cast member Michael Serrecchia reflects on the impact of that one singular sensation on the arts, culture and himself.

ARNOLD WAYNE JONES | Executive Editor
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A little more than five years ago, when live theater was still very much a thing, Michael Serrecchia flew to New York with his husband Michael Robinson to see a preview performance of a new musical that was destined to open soon on Broadway. It was April 16, 2015, and after listening to a brief medley, Serrecchia was invited onstage at the Public Theater to take a bow.

It wasn’t a new experience for him — in fact, it was an amazing bit of deja-vu. Because exactly 40 years earlier, on April 16, 1975, upon that very stage, it was not that new show — called Hamilton — that was performed, but the Off-Broadway opening night of A Chorus Line. And the American musical theater hasn’t been the same since. Indeed, in many concrete ways, Hamilton wouldn’t — couldn’t — exist if A Chorus Line hadn’t paved the way.

This week (July 25, to be exact) marks the 45th anniversary of the day that ACL moved from the Public to the Shubert Theatre on 44th Street, making the transition from Off- to Broadway proper and into … well, not just history, but legend.

“Someone from England [contacted me recently] and said, ‘You know that you’re one infinitesimal part of a group that achieved international impact, right? This doesn’t happen to people,’” Serrecchia recalls. Oh, he knows.

There was a time when musical theater was as much a part of the fabric of society as the internet is today. “Broadway was where Americans got their music,” Serrecchia, who teaches theater in Dallas now, explains. “Before the integrated book musical [was introduced by Oklahoma in 1943], the composers would all write songs for the show — songs! Intended to be sung, not part of the plot. Music drove the cart; after Oklahoma, story drove the cart. That led to the big change in the hierarchy of the musical director being king to the stage director.
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Bob the Drag Queen on creating connection during Pride in era of COVID-19

Maintaining a packed schedule can be tricky for drag queens at the best of times, but for Bob the Drag Queen, even a global pandemic can’t keep her down. Despite heading into a Pride season filled with nearly across-the-board event cancellations and postponements due to the novel coronavirus, the Season 8 winner of RuPaul’s Drag Race is regularly making appearances across the virtual stage everywhere. Fans can catch Bob in the HBO series We’re Here, brand-new comedy special Bob the Drag Queen: Live at Caroline’s, MTV’s Drag My Dad, on her Sibling Rivalry podcast with fellow Drag Race winner Monét X Change and across YouTube.

But as much as this showcases Bob’s wide range as a performer, she’s also using some of her platforms as an opportunity to make note of, and show support to, the nationwide police brutality protests. In the midst of a packed-depite-the-odds schedule, we caught up with Bob to get a feel for drag in the age of COVID-19, the importance of increased visibility for black queer performers and the deep personal connec-
Dallas Voice: What does it feel like to be a drag queen during a summer that has celebrated Pride virtually? Bob the Drag Queen: Well, I mean, I’m not saddened by it. I think that Pride is different not only because of COVID-19 but because of the Black Lives Matter Movement, and I think that the world is going to be focusing on Black queer stories.

A lot of Prides are certainly taking a similar approach. New York City Pride used its platform to protest police brutality, and there’s a lot of talk about how the first Pride was a riot and really going back to Stonewall’s beginnings. Do you think, given the roots of drag and gay culture stemming from people like Marsha P. Johnson, that it’s the responsibility of fans and performers of drag to really educate themselves on the culture? I think it would give you a more fruitful experience in terms of celebrating Pride. I think if you want to have a fruitful experience with Pride, a fully well-rounded experience to know what it is you’re celebrating, then yeah, you’re gonna wanna do your research, which, by the way, is not even hard. Like, it’s not like this is 1999 where you have to go down to the library or get an Encyclopedia Britannica or something. There’s tons of documentaries and movies, articles [and] entire Instagram accounts dedicated to this stuff.

I was looking at your YouTube channel and you’ve had conversations with fellow Drag Race performer Peppermint about racism in the drag community. How do you confront conversations about race in drag, whether it be face-to-face or online? Well, every once in a while, I will have to confront things face-to-face if I experience a microaggression or an aggression-aggression against myself or my tribe. And online it happens a lot. People feel bold online to say potentially whatever they want to say because they don’t actually have to see your face. And if I think there’s a moment for growth, then I’ll address it. And if not, then, especially if it’s online, I’ll just let it fly over my head because you know, some people online are just trolling. You know, looking to elicit a response.

Now more than ever it seems that performers have to be aware of what’s socially and politically going on. Does being “on” all the time in that way get exhausting? I felt exhausted kind of as a person in general, and I haven’t done drag in over a week, and I just didn’t feel up to it. I canceled a couple of things, quite frankly, because I just felt so affected. But then again, I would also say as a black queer artist I do think that it is important for me to share my success stories and let people know that there are — you know, I know how much it means for me to see those things from Black queer artists. So I’m definitely picking myself up by the wig straps and getting back in there, because I think it’s important for people out there to see a successful Black drag artist, quite frankly.

About your HBO show We’re Here, which was just renewed for a second season: What was your reaction when you heard the pitch that you’re going to go to small-town America and do drag? Well, at first I was nervous that it was going to be a show where I go from town to town and just go and put a bunch of straight people into drag, and that I didn’t want to do. But when I found out that wasn’t the pitch — I was really excited. There’s no shade or nothing against any show that does do that. But I just felt like I would like to have a different impact on a different show. And I’m so proud of the show; I’m so happy with the way it turned out and the fact that we’re telling diverse stories. That I’m probably the most proud of.

You’re from the South originally. Did doing the show actually make you confront some of your issues with small-town America or go face-to-face with that? I moved all around the South a lot as a kid, and I did have this feeling of, “I have no community here,” especially once I was out of college. Once I got out of college, I was like, “Once I’m out of college all the other theater department people leave, and I’m going to have no one.” And what I’m realizing now is that there almost certainly was a community in probably all of those towns — even if they’re small, they probably were reflective of the population, and maybe I would have never felt so compelled to leave. I didn’t necessarily leave the South with a great case of, “I’m out for the South,” you know?

Do you think that sometimes drag is not thought of as high of an art form as it could be? Well, I think it depends on who you’re talking to. I mean, in my circles it’s regarded as an extremely high art form, but I’m sure there’s someone out there who doesn’t see the value in it. But, I mean, in my experience my craft has been respected. And when I say respected, I mean, like, sometimes you’re doing a TV show or movie, and they want you to do drag and you’re like, “Okay, but this is all the things that go with being in drag.” Like, if we tell you that we need to do drag at a really elevated level, a lot of people don’t realize that it’s really not just going to your local Halloween costume store and buying a couple of costumes. It is a lot of work to craft a really beautiful drag queen from custom garments to custom hair — everything that goes into it. And
Up until the British Invasion, it was always the Broadway shows that drove the music on the radio. After the rise of rock, that changed; it wasn’t until Louis Armstrong had a surprise hit with the single to “Hello Dolly” that Broadway put the Beatles and Elvis on their ears. That wouldn’t last, though. Aside from one-off hits like “Memory” or “All That Jazz,” the era of Broadway shaping popular music tastes has ended.

In a strange irony, nowadays many Broadway musicals are jukeboxes, pulling their songs from preexisting catalogues of pop songs from the likes of ABBA (Mamma Mia), The Four Seasons (Jersey Boys) and the Brill Building (Beautiful).)

But in the early 1970s, there were still enough folks around who were there during the glory days of Broadway that they were anxious to forge a new path — to innovate and rediscover what theater could still accomplish. And one of those was a man named Michael Bennett.

The invention of a new art form

It might be enough to simply be a member of an ensemble who once appeared in a beloved play. But for Serreccia and many other principals from that original production, A Chorus Line represents so much more. You could argue it was the original “verbatim play,” the trend of quasi-documentary modern theater based on interviews with actual participants (think The Laramie Project and a host of others). Because in the early 1970s, Serreccia was one of a handful of dancers — “gypsies” they called themselves — who participated in the soul-baring interviews that formed the basis for ACL script, and forever transformed the face of musicals. Anecdotes he told at a series of sessions circa 1974 became the basis for lyrics and dialogue for a range of characters and entered the theater lexicon.

It all began at a bitch session at Bar-rymore’s, a storied restaurant on 45th Street (long since torn down), between Tony Stevens and Michon Peacock, a generation of gypsies ahead of Serrecc-
had just won three Oscars so had some new musical (and after all, Hamlisch bricks.” Having a hand in inventing a masters,” Koch walking down the streets shouting “It was derelict. We had Ed Ed Serrecchia recalls. “It was so hard to get a job then,” Serrecchia says. “It was derelict. We had Ed Koch walking down the streets shouting out, ‘How’m I doin?’ while dodging bricks.” Having a hand in inventing a new musical (and after all, Hamlisch had just won three Oscars so had some real cred) beat waiting tables.

Even this new methodology was brutal. The original group of storytellers was whittled down to 24, with people actually having to audition to play characters based in part on themselves. (Serrecchia did get to play his “I can’t keep my head up when I dance” self.)

Another of the original members, Nicholas Dante, had told a story of such power that his recollection was placed, almost verbatim, into the show as Paul’s monologue, and he was given a co-authorship credit. After several months, the book was taking shape. But there was still a long way to go.

The next step, following Bennett taking the idea to producer Joseph Papp — “Uncle Joe” as he was belovedly called — was to have what are called “backers auditions.” That’s when some monied theatrical angels come to a rough-draft performance to test their interest in writing checks to get the show off the ground. Papp had only recently founded the Public Theater, and its commitment to new and classic works wasn’t exactly a cash cow; the show needed dollars.

And that first performance was a disaster.

“All we had was one song that didn’t make it into the show, and then a series of 17 monologues with a couple of dance numbers in between. It ran four and a half hours; it was unbearably awful,” Serrecchia recounts.

How awful? Three of the actors quit that night, including one who would have played the leading role of Zach. His name? Barry Bostwick. But Bennett was not dissuaded; he actually walked away with a fistful of seed money that night.

“It wasn’t a show, it was a workshop,” and people understood that. Plus, “Michael [Bennett] could sell ice to an eskimo,” Serrecchia recounts. And he knew he could make the show work. “Michael’s true genius was his ability to edit and surround himself with the best of the best creatively.”

To fit all the stories into a two-hour, intermission-less run time, “the montage was born,” the series of solos that begins with “Hello Twelve, Hello Thirteen, Hello Love.” “Everyone who had an adolescent issue were whomped into the montage,” he says. That includes the three women who work out their story is well-documented.)

“They were there after a show, smoking and drinking and eating those goddamn cheeseburgers, bitching up a storm, mostly about Mitzi Gaynor,” Serrecchia says. “They were high on booze and cigarettes, and started saying ‘Why doesn’t anyone write a show about us? We make all those incompetent stars look good!’”

They took the idea to Michael Bennett, a fellow gypsy who had met with some success already as a choreographer for shows like Promises, Promises and Follies. Bennett invited a bunch of dancers to his studio between Chelsea and 14th Street, and after a class, “he put the tape recorder in the middle of the floor with some bottles of cheap wine,” Serrecchia says. “He said, ‘I have no idea what this is or where it is going. I just want you to tell me why you started dancing.’ He was very smart in the way he did this — he went first — telling us things we didn’t know about him: intimate, personal, vulnerable.”

The gypsies followed suit.

A few months later, many of those in the sessions, including Serrecchia, returned for more interviews, this time at Bennett’s apartment … and with a team of creatives in tow: playwright James Kirkwood, composer Marvin Hamlisch, lyricist Ed Kleban. The group had, in essence, invented the theater workshop: a process whereby a crew gathers to collaborate over time to create a new essence, invented the theater workshop: A process whereby a crew gathers to collaborate over time to create a new work from scratch, not day players hired to fill in the gaps. They spend months honing it. “I honestly can’t remember if we were paid $50 a week or $100 a week — you try living on that for months honing it. “I honestly can’t remember if we were paid $50 a week or $100 a week — you try living on that for a few weeks.”

He was still a long way to go.

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traumas during dance class called “At the Ballet.”

A dream realized

Finally, opening night of the original Off-Broadway run at the Public was upon them. But Serrecchia recalls the experience as one of surprising calm.

“We were so invested in it emotionally — it was more than a show; it was our lives. When we were all together Off-Broadway there was no derision — everybody toed the exact same line. It was the most beautiful spirit of unison playing, the most ethereal, wonderful expression of camaraderie. I don't think we were scared. We weren't doing a show we were talking about ourselves, and it was honest and true and straightforward, and we couldn't wait for people to see it. And they liked it! That was all we cared about. But when we found out how much they liked it…? It was crazy, man.”

Literally from the day after the first preview performance, a seat to A Chorus Line was the hottest ticket in town. You think there was madness over Hamilton? Imagine that ten-fold.

“No one was expecting the sort of reaction, but after the first preview, the theater was sold out every night. Not just sold out: Everybody and their mother wanted tickets,” Serrecchia says. They were unprepared for the impact. The first Playbill was just a mimeographed few pages held together by a staple; Serrecchia still has a copy. And the explosion continued.

“It wasn’t just Broadway — it resuscitated New York City economically. A Chorus Line made such an impact the Shubert Theater became a destination for New Yorkers and international tourists.”

Transformation and legacy

By the late ‘60s came the first inkling of “the triple threat:” Performers who could sing and dance and act. That became solidified with ACL. “The workshop concept meant you weren’t hiring a singing chorus and a dancing chorus and a principal cast — those are three different casts. You had to do it all or there was no room for you on Broadway anymore,” Serrecchia says. It made Broadway more affordable: No more
Serrecchia stayed with the show for four-and-half years of its initial 15-year, record-breaking run. (For seven years in the 1980s, ACL was the longest-running show in Broadway history; it has since been eclipsed by Cats, and later, The Phantom of the Opera.) And for the first while, he loved the association.

"There was a time it was great, when we never paid a cab fare. It was so huge. We were on coffee cups and beach towels at Bloomingdale’s. The difference it made to that city — it became the basis for the ‘I Love New York’ [tourism campaign]. It changed the trajectory of Broadway musicals."

Then it got burdensome. There was the backlash that often accompanies unbridled success: “We were being picked apart everywhere.” The originals were trotted out for every major milestone: Longest run, historic closing, revivals and, of course, the Hamilton experience. Certain resentment lingered.

But he has, as he’s gotten older — he’s now 70 — realized profoundly how the experience changed not just his life, but countless lives across nearly half a century. And he choked back emotions talking about it. He still gets emails from people the world over who find him on the internet, asking about his character; Jonathan Groff is a huge fan. And in many ways, ACL’s legacy will be to inspire the possible in the art form itself.

“As I got older, I realized the intense sense of responsibility. It’s why I teach now — to preserve the craft. We are at a crossroads in history,” Serrecchia says about the impact of coronavirus on live theater, which has shuttered Broadway until at least early 2021. “It only means Broadway will reinvent itself and be bigger and stronger. It always has. It’s really hard teaching singing and dancing and acting over Zoom. But I tell my students that their passion is what will contribute to the universe. We will take musical theater forward.”

And the next generation of gypsies will once again prove the impact in what they did for love.
Announcing the first-ever Black Tie LIVE give-a-thon! Join Black Tie Dinner for a one-hour fundraising telethon for our 2020 beneficiaries on WFAA-TV on Sunday, October 18, 2020 at 4pm for a diverse mix of segments with entertainment, beneficiary spotlights and reflections on LGBTQ progress and challenges, as well as an auction and a drawing to win a brand-new Mercedes-Benz, courtesy of Park Place Motorcars. Find out more by going to blacktie.org!
Diagnosis: Sociopath

The queer niece of the president tells all


No one has to explain to you who Donald Trump is but, for anyone who’s been completely out of the loop, Mary Trump is Donald’s niece (she uses his first name, always, and to avoid confusion, so will we). Trump has a Ph.D. in psychology, worked at Manhattan Psychiatric Center while in school, was once a therapist and taught graduate psychology. In other words, she’s got the chops, and it shows, especially when this book — a look at her family, specifically, her Uncle Donald — reads like something from the True Medicine genre. Indeed, medical-based passages are nearly emotionless in their clinicality.

To fully place us in this story and show us where it leads, Trump begins with brief accounts of her great-grandfather, who came to America from Germany in order to avoid military service. After the elder man died, Trump’s grandfather Fred (father to the president) became business partners with his mother and expanded the
There’s a trope of literature — or maybe it’s just dime-store psychology — that says we are all the hero of our own life story. How could it be otherwise? We don’t, by and large, tent our fingers with an evil laugh while blotting out the sun like some ghoulish Mr. Burns, or lock brown children in cages apart from their parents like you-know-who. If we didn’t buy our own press, how could we live with ourselves?

At its heart, that’s the aching takeaway from writer Doug Wright’s *I Am My Own Wife*. The putative hero of the play is Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, a transgender antiquarian who saves artifacts and lives, after surviving the Nazi regime, by apparently cooperating with the Soviet secret police. How much she cooperated is a matter of some dispute, and the play — which, despite being a solo show performed in this incarnation by Bob Hess, is populated with three dozen characters, with four primary ones, including the playwright himself — wrestles stealthily and discretely with what to believe.

Charlotte is the epitome of the “unreliable narrator;” it’s embedded in her bones. She began life as a boy, then changed her name and identity as a woman, carved out a career as a preservationist of late-19th-century gewgaws, served as den mother to an underground community of homosexuals… and either fulfilled the wishes of her dearest friend or betrayed him. Which is true? What is truth to Charlotte, anyway? *I Am My Own Wife* wallows in its
thank you.

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FARHAD NIROOMAND M.D.

11-time READER’S VOICE AWARD WINNER
How to dress with Pride during the pandemic

Now that the governor has finally mandated masks in public accommodations to stem the spread of COVID-19, we started thinking about the other things you have to wear in polite society… and the best way to do it with a sense of Pride. So here are some stylish suggestions for your corona wardrobe.

— Arnold Wayne Jones

**Shorts**

*Addicted ES Secret Collection.* You won’t have many secrets in the revealing, form-fitting bikinis and breathable trunks from Addicted USA. These boldly colorful bathing suits may make it difficult to keep your social distance, but they (and anything from ES or Addicted’s uber-gay catalogue) will make your summer cooler… and hotter. Available at [AddictedUSA.com](http://AddictedUSA.com) and [ES Collection Dallas, 3926 Cedar Springs Road](http://ESCollectionDallas.com).
Shoes

Ruthie Davis Pride Pump and Jogger. Designer Ruth Davis has a sense of style as well as responsibility and so is donating 20 percent of sales from her rainbow-tastic Pride Pump to NYC’s gay and lesbian center. And if you aren’t one for heels, the Pride Jogger gives the flat of foot a chance to gain a little height and let everyone know they’re here, they’re queer and you should get used to us being fabulous. Available at Ruthie-Davis.com.

Shirts

I Was Born This Way Collection T-shirt. We didn’t need Gaga to tell us this fact, but it was nice she let the rest of the heteroverse know. Now you can complete the circuit with a faboo T from We Have Visual. You can complete the ensemble with a happy mug, tote or pillow, too. Available at WeHaveVisualNYC.com.

Masks

SwaddleDesigns. We’ve all become mask connoisseurs since March, and since they are required now, you need ones that fit well, provide protection and offer a bit of style. The chambray cotton masks from SwaddleDesigns have a sewn-in nose guard to reduce pressure on your honker, a placket on the bottom to more easily grip your chin and several sizes. Colors run from basic black to pink to white to a versatile charcoal grey, as well as a number of patterns. Available at SwaddleDesigns.com.

LIVE PROUD

At Cornerstone Wealth Strategies, we help people recognize the joy found in protecting those who rely on us. And we understand that there are unique financial needs when it comes to working with members of the LGBTQ community. Together we can help you create a legacy to be proud of.

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HBO really, really rose to the occasion. In many of your projects, it seems like you’re connecting with people when you put them in drag. What do you think is so disarming about that process? Well, I think it’s disarming because someone is completely out of their element. They have to trust you, because they don’t know what they’re doing at all. So they’re in your hands, like, “I have to trust you because I’m so clueless.” And I not only want to take advantage of that trust but utilize it to the best of my ability.

Was there a drag moment in one of the projects that you’ve done where there was a connection that occurred that caught you off guard? I really loved the conversation that I had with Nate, Darren and Lady Shug in Shiprock, N.M. That was really beautiful, to hear them talk about what it means to be indigenous and the intersectionality between being queer and indigenous. That’s probably one of my favorite moments, and I also really loved the moment that I had with Tanner in Branson, where I basically told them my story with, you know, Christianity and homosexuality and helping come to a conclusion on that.

Do you think COVID-19 will impact the way people do drag not only in the near future but permanently? As I was navigating the land of the internet and drag shows in quarantine, I realized how many folks were saying, “I’ve never gotten a chance to see you before because I can’t leave the house for a list of reasons.” Some people have anxiety, some people are disabled, some people just don’t have enough money, some people live in an area where they don’t have access, some people are in the closet. And they finally got to see some of their favorite drag queens perform, and I was like, “Maybe I should continue with this.” I would like to be able to keep this going for people who, you know — I mean, maybe not as much as I’m doing now during lockdown — but maybe I can continue these kind of performances for people who can’t get out of the house.

Do you have a message for people who might be feeling especially vulnerable during this Pride season? Just think about it like this — this is something I’m pulling from the church, and I’m not religious, but I did go to church for quite some while. Church isn’t the building, it’s the people. And Pride isn’t the parade. Pride isn’t the parties. It’s the people. It’s what we bring to Pride. So, you can still have Pride without having to be surrounded by thousands of people. Pride is a feeling you have deep inside yourself. That’s why we call it Pride.
WAINWRIGHT From Page 35

sometimes was there and sometimes cluttered by my utter confusion. It’s an interesting concept — very operatic: You explode at the end of your life.”

Not that his life is ending any time soon. He has too much to do for that. But he does see middle age as a turning point, personally and artistically, to survey his career and focus on the essentials. “The album is called Unfollow the Rules, but it’s not about breaking the rules — I’m not an iconoclast; if anything, I’m a severe traditionalist,” he says. “But it represents turning around and examining the path you are on, and what rules to stick with and which ones to guard. It’s about looking at where you’ve been and where you’re going.”

One place he is going is in the direction of preserving the lyrical virtuosity of great songwriting, an element he feels (rightly so) lacking in most contemporary radio-ready playlists. When I point out that one of his songs, “This One’s for the Ladies,” reminded me of Bacharach, he says: “I haven’t thought about it in those terms, but it’s a true possibility, only because Burt Bacharach is, in my opinion, the greatest melodist alive. It’s his sophistication that I adore.

“I worked very hard on this record in terms of the lyrics. If I was to pick one sword to fall on, it would be lyrics. Singing is really second nature and will always exist, but lyrics have to be hammered out. With Leonard passing” — Leonard Cohen, the spiritual swami of art-pop lyricism (and biological grandfather of Wainwright’s daughter) — “I realized there are these titans among us — Burt [Bacharach], Joni [Mitchell], Bob [Dylan] — who won’t be with us forever.”

One dividend of smart lyrics is longevity, and sometimes an unexpected insight into current affairs. It took three years of writing and recording off-and-on, so Unfollow the Rules was completed long before the pandemic, yet still may resonate with listeners.

“It has nothing to do with the pandemic, but [some lyrics] strangely touch on it, or have a sensibility, like on ‘Alone Time’ or ‘Early Morning Madness’ or ‘Devils & Angels.’ It’s almost … clairvoyant. That’s not the first time that has happened to me! But I do find it … eerily comforting.”

Maybe that is what Wainwrightian means.
metaphysical mysteries, charming us as an audience as Charlotte seems to have charmed the Stasi (and Wright, who sold his car to finance his interviews with her). Do we want to believe her because we have so much invested in her being right? Can the good that someone does outweigh a concomitant dose of evil? And who is there to judge it?

If this also sounds heady, even prickly, it’s not. The play is dense with details, but they flow like cool mountain water over us. All the evidence of who Charlotte was sits on those shelves in front of us; she has written her memoir in the attention she has paid to her life’s work… and that work is as much survival as anything.

Horror, humor, hubris — it’s all entrusted to Hess, whose vocal gymnastics are just shy of miraculous. He enters hissing Charlotte’s wheezy, Teutonic broken English, then drops into a guttural drawl as a Texan, a boyish pattern as Wright, a heavy drone as Alfred. It’s a complex role, so much more demanding than just portraying Charlotte herself. Indeed, the genius of the decision to make I Am My Own Wife a solo piece — its structure is mostly as a traditional play, and could have easily have sustained several additional actors — is precisely to keep the audience in the head of all the characters at once.

What creates more ambivalence than the accuser and the accused in one body? Hess holds our attention for the full two hours, and he does so alone in a theater, sans audience (it was recorded and prepared for broadcast in deference to the pandemic), yet fully committed to its theatricality. It’s a delight to have an authentic return to theater as good as this one.

I Am My Own Wife streams on Vimeo through Aug. 2. Use the code CHARLOTTE for a 50 percent discount. WaterTowerTheatre.org.

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Once you get this far into Too Much and Never Enough, it shouldn’t surprise you that none of it will surprise you going forward, because you know how this book ends. Long before that, though, Trump shares details of growing up, noting nuances within the Trump sibling group and the family at large, learning to read silences, and hearing regular racist or homophobic comments that made her, years later, keep mum on her marriage to (and subsequent divorce from) a woman. The cruelty, as she describes it, can sometimes play like a TV documentary on wolves at a kill. Disappointment was thick on both sides.

Readers may occasionally note sour grapes, too, but even that offer more of an understanding of Trump’s observations. While this memoir somewhat culminates with the fight over Trump’s grandfather’s will, a skewed inheritance, subsequent lawsuit and the truth she says she found with the urging of the New York Times, the story — as she indicates — won’t begin to be finished until January, or a January four years hence.

Until then, this is a must-read for left and right alike, but beware that it might leave you feeling mournful — not for any one person, but overall. In general, Too Much and Never Enough contains a lot of sadness.

— Terri Schlichenmeyer
Toast to Life: Sequins and Saddles. So many activities have moved online (there are exceptions, of course, as you'll see elsewhere on this page) that virtual celebrations are the rule more than the exception. The night before Dallas Pride takes to the ether, the Resource Center’s 22nd annual fundraiser, Toast to Life, returns in broadcast form. Themed Sequins and Saddles, the event benefits the center’s many programs. Steve Kemble serves as host of the party with music, auctions and fun. July 25, 7–8 p.m. One.Bidpal.net/toasttolife2020.

An Act of God. Irving MainStage had planned for this hilarious threehander — which was replacing the big, equally hilarious musical Disaster! on its schedule — to be its return to socially-distanced live theater. But with the pandemic surging, this comedy by David Javerbaum about religion has been turned into a streamable experience, with the production available for a week, beginning Saturday. Sherry Etzel plays God (typecasting). Available July 25 (from 7:30 p.m.) through Aug 1. Showtix4u.com/event-details/38789.

Skyline Trapeze. Folks who enjoy the trapeze call it flying, because that’s what it feels like. Skyline Trapeze has been around North Texas for seven years, but for the last three or so, it has been in Lewisville. Now the adventure company has relocated into the Trinity Groves area, where on weekends and occasional weekdays you can see what it’s like to fly for yourself (or make it a group outing). Be forewarned that as easy as it looks — and it is pretty easy to start off — it does give you quite a workout as you learn to swing, flip and get caught by a staffer in a dramatic dismount. Superhero names are at your discretion. 2720 Bataan Road. Wednesdays–Sundays. $55–$60. DallasCircus.com.
Ask Howard
How to do the wrong thing right

All of a sudden, feeling proud this year seems impaled on clinical depression, the worst since the height of the AIDS epidemic. In the LGBT community, we pride ourselves as being, in general, a gregariously affectionate people: It’s a total anathema for us not to immediately shake a friend’s hand when we see him, steal a pithy peck on his cheeks or embrace one another with a big grinning bear hug. Resultantly, our community is being particularly brutalized: Two weeks ago, I didn’t know anybody who even knew someone with COVID-19; today, I know of two former boyfriends, one great medical intern and a best friend’s best friend who’ve caught it... and one of them now, senselessly, is deceased.

Since the Fourth of July, especially here in Texas, that voodoo bitch Rona, has suddenly struck home-turf with a hyena’s vengeance. One can hardly claim that the CDC didn’t well warn us of Grrrrl’s vengeance. One can hardly claim that the CDC didn’t well warn us of Grrrrl’s vengeance. One can hardly claim that the CDC didn’t well warn us of... 

All bodybuilders understand perfectly well that a certain sexual aspect exists to their sport, if only because it exploits the very weapon of carnal attraction: The Body Human, turned caricature. The definition of bodybuilding requires it stay open for “backdoor” dealings (every pun intended) — what with a hundred grand of yearly-taxable, personal expenses (GH, steroids, Synthol), food, coaching-and-travel expenditures) just maintaining the fees to be a bodybuilding requires it stay open for “backdoor” dealings (every pun intended) — what with a hundred grand of yearly-taxable, personal expenses (GH, steroids, Synthol), food, coaching-and-travel expenditures) just maintaining the fees to be a bodybuilder needs “sponsoring.” The “sport” of bodybuilding, in fact, is only alive thanks to the schmoe who sponsor them; thus, its reputation for so many of them being g4p (gay for pay). According to the late, great, enormously buffed Canadian bodybuilder Greg Kovacs, “Gay for pay is as prevalent in the bodybuilding community as protein powder.” Well, hell, another illusion shattered.

Q. What is flip-fucking? A. It’s when two bottoms hook up, having each lied to the other that he’s “fully versatile,” and subsequently end up both having to suck one another, taking turns, just to ensure each of their greedy butts gets what he came over for in the first place.

Q. What is the hell is an EOF? A. Equal Opportunity Fornicator — someone who self-professes that it’s people he’s attracted to, not gender... but whatever gender shows up sure better be swingin’ a juicy fine dick should he opt being bottom.

Q. I’m confused by what “pup play” means — is it some sort of bestiality festish involving dogs? A. Closer more to zoophilia than bestiality, those who enjoy pup play aren’t necessarily sexually attracted to real animals. Pup play merely translates into the enjoyment of a dom using his sub for roleplay fetish scenarios as his pretend pet puppy — replete with all the paraphernalia such a complex setup involves: feeding bowls, cage, muzzle, leash, fire hydrant and sand box — and of course, too, that pre-requisite, cute-wootsie, curled little purple rubber dildo tail wagging, adorably, out of barking Little Buster Bear’s twitching behind.

Q. What is the implication of accusing someone as being “gold star gay?” Is it some kind of classism thing? A. Far from any sort of dubiously derogatory “classism” accusation, a gold star gay is simply someone who has never had sex with a person of their opposite gender. (Extra points if a male was delivered by caesarian and thus has lived an entirely cooch-free life.)

Q. On a hook-up site the other night, someone asked me if I could “do decent gob.” First, I hesitated, then said, “I’ll sure do my best,” and the dude just blocked me off! Howard, what the heck is “gob”? A. Gob is slang for oral sex, but with a twist: The person being blown expects total silence out of you, the gobber, and absolute focus upon your job at hand. Basically, “gob” is the porn dialogue equivalency of “Just shut up and suck, bitch!”

Q. What is agro sex — please, don’t tell me it somehow involves farmyards and hayseed? A. Agro is slang for “aggressively” — overly hostile, confrontationally unprovoked, belligerently malevolent hate sex. That your hayseed sodoming should, perhaps, happen to take place in a farmyard would be purely coincidental.

Q. Have you ever heard of chavs? My brother lives in London and says the city is infested with them, which is why the COVID there is so bad — because they’ll fuck anything, they don’t wear masks, and they’re broke. “I don’t know which is worse, he tells me, “chavs or the scallies, but if you’re single and wantin’ to get laid these days, they’re the only game in town.” Howard, WTF is he talking about?

A. Ah, yes, scally vs chav, and that age-old question: Which has the bigger cocks? Though more or less interchangeable in appearance, scallies and chavs are, to put it politely, the more antisocial counterparts to our own twunks and twotters here across the pond — with chavs (lower-class, miscreant rapsiccations of little schooling and lots of streetwear) being the more twunk representational, and scallies (boisterously disruptive, irresponsible, roguish, jobless and always suspected of committing crimes) being the more twotter representative. Think the movie Trainspotting, or Guy Ritchie’s Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels. They reeked of nothing but chavs and scallies. Talk about rough trade! Hell, even Rona gives a wide birth to these little darlings.

— Howard Lewis Russell

Have a phrase you want defined, or a corona question lingering? Email AskHoward@dallasvoice.com and Howard may get to it.

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Robert Hickman and the UCLSE float in the 2013 Pride parade

Showing Pride in the park

Justin, Patrick, Kenneth, Jacob and Corey

Jason, Joe and the kids

Kyle and Jake

Jordan

T.J., Steve, Reed and David
Myko and Reesh
Barbi Davenport Dupree
The Non-Binary Super Hero of Pride
Casey Max Torre
Chad
Chirs and Ava at Monster Yogurt
Star Michaels shows her Pride colors
Adam Medrano and friends show of the official City of Dallas Pride flag
### Keep it simple

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- 25 “Let’s hit the sheets!”
- 27 Tell a tall tale
- 28 Actor Jude and family
- 30 IRAs, et al.
- 31 Vermont Senator Patrick
- 32 “I don’t feel like sex tonight…”
- 33 Dolts, in Dover
- 37 Turin three
- 38 Marsh wader
- 42 Muscle Mary’s six pack?
- 44 Mapplethorpe pics, e.g.
- 45 Prissy cry of fear
- 46 Marcos of the Philippines
- 49 Sitting Bull, for one
- 51 On account of
- 52 Prod
- 53 River of Cocteau’s country
- 55 Sweet opening?
- 56 Peters out
- 57 Four, usually, to Spencer-Devlin
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