

TORSO

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MAN TO MAN CONTACT

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**THE
SIZZLING
COMEBACK
OF
DICK FISK**

**THE LIFE
OF THE
FIRE ISLAND
HOUSEBOY**

**FRATERNITY
FLESH BY
VICTORIAN
OUTRAGE**

**PUNISHMENT
DETAIL**

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**HOT, HOT
HOUSTON!**



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TRAVEL

BY ROBERT RALPH

HOUSTON SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Houston has been called Boomtown, USA, and The Golden Buckle of the Sun Belt, and rightfully so. Dynamic people on the go, skyscrapers designed by the world's leading architects—including the tallest building west of the Mississippi—entrepreneurs, action—there's an electricity in the air from all the vibrant activity, which is exciting and exhilarating. Things are happening and happening fast, both in business and recreation. No matter what one's interests may be, they can be found in Houston, a city with a truly international flavor.

The city sprawls over approximately 556 square miles on the Texas coast, with a population nearing two million, making a car a real necessity, except in the inner city. The heavy traffic has caused much criticism, but it's a natural element of such a fast-growing metropolis, and one the city is coping with gradually. Also, the frequency of liquid sunshine—rain to the uninitiated—has often been commented on, but it makes the semi-tropical lushness of the city possible.

Outside of San Francisco, Houston has one of the largest gay populations in the country, an estimated three-hundred thousand! It also boasts one of the strongest gay political activist groups anywhere, vying for national prominence. The heaviest concentration of the gay community is in the Montrose area, and an entire book could be written about it. All this makes Houston a fascinating place to live as well as to visit.

HOTELS

The **PLAZA HOTEL** (5020 Montrose Blvd.) and **THE WARWICK** (5701 Main) are both in the Montrose area across from the museums—Museum of Fine Arts, Contemporary Arts Museum, and the Museum of Natural History, and have a distinctive flair of their own. The Plaza is a restored 20's hotel with an Italian feeling and rooms that are affordable. The Warwick is definitely European, old-world elegance with service to match. Be expected to pay a little extra for luxury. Both are in walking distance of many hot spots.

MONTROSE

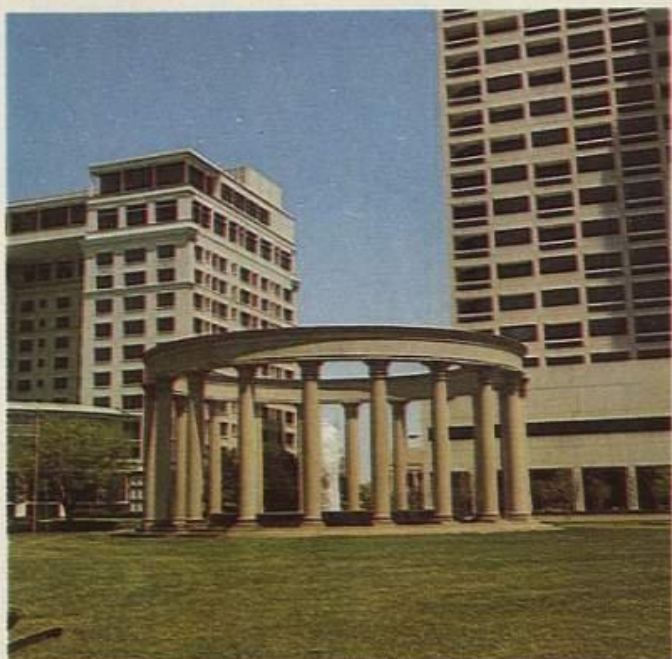
Although many straight people live in Montrose, it undoubtedly belongs to the gay population. All one has to do to realize this is to stroll along Westheimer Road for several blocks, particularly at night, between Montrose Blvd. and downtown. The area is a strong mixture architecturally of turn-of-the-century, Twenties, and Thirties homes, as well as contemporary businesses. Many are being renovated and reclaimed by industrious home owners and speculators, but there are still pockets which time has forgotten, awaiting someone's magic touch, lending a seedy air to some parts. Although the antique shops, specialty stores, and boutiques are heaviest along Westheimer, interesting places to browse dot the entire neighborhood. Montrose really comes to life after dark. At night, huge crowds come out to frequent the hot spots, as Montrose has the majority of gay bars and clubs in the city.

OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS

If architecture is your passion, a drive through **COURTLANDT PLACE** to see the restored Victorian mansions is delightful. **RIVER OAKS**, the bastion of money and power, is filled with stately mansions and vast estates. It's also the scene of the annual Azalea Trail drawing nature lovers from all over the Southwest. **BAYOU BEND** with its collection of American antique furniture and extensive gardens is worth a stop, but be sure to call about time and availability of tours. **THE HEIGHTS** and **WEST UNIVERSITY PLACE** are filled with vintage homes that are restored or in the process of renovation, charming and pleasant for an afternoon drive. Don't overlook **SAM HOUSTON PARK**, near downtown, where completely furnished Victorian houses and shops are grouped in an enchanting park, a truly magical excursion into the past.

HOT SPOTS

OFFICERS CLUB (2700 Albany) is a huge 20's stucco building complete with a swimming pool and lots of palm trees, much in use during the summer. The cruise bar which is done in a military style overflows onto the veranda and patio. On the second floor the **UPPER DECK** is a new disco which attracts some of the leather crowd. The third floor is far more the more adventuresome and known unofficially as "The Orgy Room." **BRAZOS RIVER BOTTOM** (2400 Brazos), **MISS CHARLOTTE'S** (911 W. Drew), and **THE BARN** (710 Pacifica) are Houston's country and



western bars. All are very friendly and make you feel right at home. Brazos has a newly remodeled interior, features theme nights, contests and on weekends, the Mustang Band. Miss Charlotte's also has theme nights, Cajun festivals, live entertainment, and occasionally real cowboys! The Barn is strictly a cruise bar and very laid back. **MON-TROSE MINING CO.** (805 Pacifica) is undoubtedly THE cruise bar of Houston. "The Mine" is famous for its Sunday beer bust and is dimly lit, conducive to whatever you have in mind! **JR'S** (Pacifica) directly across the street from "The Mine" is one of the prettiest in Houston. Its grill serves up yummy hamburgers and if you're lucky, hot-hot men! **THE COPA** (2631 Richmond) is a 70's type glamour-disco with a Central Park motif. THE drag bar, with shows which have been headlined by Divine and Grace Jones, it attracts a younger crowd and is always packed. **NUMBERS 2** (300 Westheimer) is a disco that's been around a while and in its latest chapter features pageants and live entertainment—Sylvester, The

Ritchie Family, Marlena Shaw—newly installed laser systems attract leather, drag, punk, new wave, preppie, transsexual, well, you name it and they'll be there sooner or later! **THE BRIAR PATCH** (2294 W. Holcombe Blvd.) caters to a more mature crowd, generally a neighborhood type bar with regular customers. **MARY'S** (1022 Westheimer) is an absolute must-see for anyone. It's a veritable institutional landmark on the Houston

gay scene. Excellent Bloody Mary's are a specialty and a patio area which can be a lot of fun, although it's considered pretty sleazy by the more hygienically oriented! **THE DRUM** (1731 Westheimer) though often copied remains the absolute leather bar. Boots, chains, chaps, and slave auctions allow customers to live their fantasies to the fullest.

RESTAURANTS

One could spend a lifetime exploring all of Houston's fabulous places to eat, each with unique decor, food, etc. Narrowing it to the most interesting and unusual is almost impossible, but here goes. Catering exclusively to gay clientele is **RASCALS** (2702 Kirby Drive), a choice continental cuisine served in a soft-light romantic atmosphere. Ideal for special occasions or simply an evening out. Adjacent is a little piano bar, intimate, with live entertainment of the highest caliber. **BAJA SAM** (402 Lovett), generally known as Baja's, is much the same feeling, and Houston's original gay res-

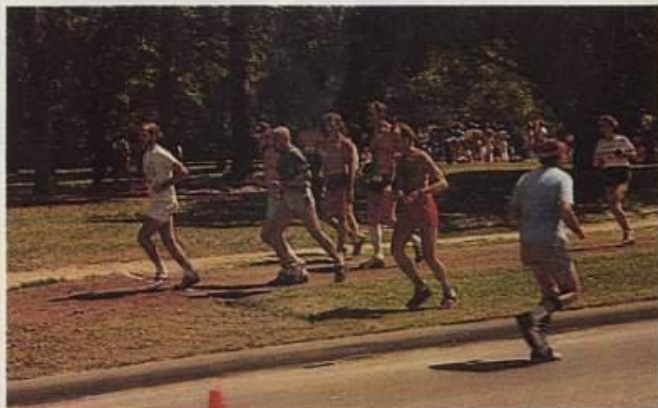
taurant. Upstairs informal dining attracts a large brunch crowd, the downstairs cabaret features live entertainment, both local and international talent. Very crowded on weekends. I feel I must mention other really unusual places which do not cater exclusively to the gay community, but are special in their own way. **THE RAINBOW LODGE** (1 Birdsall) is a charming chalet with a gorgeous view. Be prepared to linger, for the food, service, and ambience will enchant you. Don't be surprised if your bar bill is more than your food, as you will want to stay and drink and drink! For homestyle Southern cooking served up hot and tasty don't miss the **BLACK EYED PEA** (2048 W. Gray) in the River Oaks Shopping Center. If deli is more your style, have lunch at **BUTERA'S DELICATESSEN** (1928 Bissonnet). When weather allows, the alfresco dining on their sidewalk is pleasant, but be prepared for crowds. The word is out! Nearby, lunch at the **MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS RESTAURANT** (1001 Bissonnet) is delightful, with a pleasant sculpture garden to keep you company. **NINO'S RESTAURANT** (2817 W. Dallas) for Italian food or **RUGGLES** (903 Westheimer) for continental cuisine are two more treats. Again, be prepared to brave a crowd. The food is that good. For those who have a sweet tooth to satiate, try **NEAL'S ITALIAN ICES AND ICE CREAM** (2826 Kirby Drive). They speak English but you'll think you're in Napoli when you take that first bite. **THE ORIGINAL HOUSE OF PIES** (3112 Kirby Drive) will send you into sugar-shock trying to make a choice. Or **ANDRE'S**



SWISS CANDIES AND PASTRIES SHOP (2515 River Oaks) will tempt even the staunchest dieter to blow his good intentions to hell and gone. For tasty sandwiches in the heart of Montrose, try **BABA YEGA** (2607 Grant), especially fun on weekends. **TILA'S CANTINA AND TACQUE-RIA** (614 Westheimer) is Art Deco to death, with tons of pink flamingoes, black and white color theme, and good Mexican food. A choice window seat provides a constant panorama of the Montrose scene. For afternoon drinks and entertainment, though a little out of the way, **THE PARADISE BAR AND GRILL** (401 McGowen) is worth a stop.

PARKS

MEMORIAL PARK is a vast expanse of dense trees and beautiful landscaping on the scale of New York's Central Park. All manner of sports activities abound, including scenic jogging trails, tennis, baseball, swimming, picnic grounds and the Arboretum. **HERMANN PARK** located near Montrose, while not as large, is unique in its own right. With the Houston Zoo, Miller Outdoor Theater, bridle trails, and the Rose Garden. Both parks attract a variety of pretty people on sunny days throughout the year.



GYMS

Everyone has heard about the fabulous **FITNESS EXCHANGE** (3131 W. Alabama) and a lot has already been written about it. Also, **JIM'S GYM** (607 Westheimer). Both cater to gay bodybuilders and health enthusiasts. Instruction is available at each and it's also a great way to meet people!

"READING ROOMS"

For your latest issue of **TORSO** magazine check out: **STUDZ** (1132 W. Alabama), **THE ASYLUM** (1201 Richmond), and **BALLPARK** (1830 W. Alabama). While you're there, be sure to pick up a copy of **TWT** (This Week in Texas) for an in depth listing of gay establishments in the state.

BATHS

CLUB BATHS OF HOUSTON (2205 Fannin) and **MIDTOWNE SPA** (3100 Fannin) offer the best in... in... well! For someone whose taste runs to the more out of the ordinary, there is the **TWENTY-THREE O-SIX** (2306 Gene-see) with heavy duty action for men who mean business. No towels or doors on the rooms here. Find a sling and have at it!!



THEATERS

THE RIVER OAKS THEATER (2009 W. Gray) in the River Oaks Shopping Center shows classic films daily as well as unusual offerings generally only available at isolated film festivals or infrequent revivals. **GREENWAY 3 THEATERS** (Five Greenway Plaza East) offers the best in current international films. For those interested in more exotic (ahem!) fare, the **FRENCH QUARTER ALL MALE THEATER** (3201 Louisiana) has the hottest action films imaginable! The audience is hot, too, and provided more action! Other than these specialized theaters, ones offering current films are located conveniently throughout the city.



SHOPPING

THE RIVER OAKS SHOPPING CENTER (W. Gray at Shepherd) is chock-full of antique shops, specialty stores, boutiques, and restaurants where one can spend a delightful afternoon shop-

ping to his heart's content. Graceful palm trees lend a tropical flavor. **THE GAL-ERIA** (Loop 610 between Alabama and Westheimer) is an extensive shopping mall on several levels and has practically everything. **UNION JACK** (1212 Westheimer) is a unique shop located in the heart of Montrose. Sportswear, haircutting, ticket outlet, and generally cruisy. **THE MANHOLE** (1983 W. Gray) has medium-to-expensive clothing and salesmen who can be very helpful. **VERY! THE VILLAGE SHOPPING CENTER** (Kirby Drive at University) is an older conglomeration of antique shops, restaurants, specialty stores, and bookshops, each with its own distinctive personality. An advantage all these areas has in common is that one can park his car once and make a leisurely walking tour at whatever pace suits his mood. Although not in the environs of Houston, for those interested in old uniforms and costumes, **THE STRAND SURPLUS** (2202 Strand) is a *must!* Known affectionately as Colonel Booby's, it's about an hour's drive along excellent highway, situated on Galveston, a seaside island resort. This is the ultimate place to dress up... or down... as the mood strikes you. While on the island, take advantage of the Historic District, Stewart's Beach, the Seawall walk, and countless restaurants. It's worth the drive for a fun Saturday or Sunday.

Obviously, Houston and environs require more than one or two days to do them justice. Many who came for a brief visit are now residents. Houston may not be the Land of Opportunity for all, but it definitely has something for everyone!