A few gifts from the Grinch

Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas, tour at Boch Center Wang Theatre, Boston, through December 9. 800-982-2787 or bochcenter.org

By Jules Becker

Have you ever thought of the Grinch as a green-faced variation on Ebenezer Scrooge? After all, both characters initially hate Christmas but eventually embrace its basic values of human kindness and caring. If the

see THEATER, page 4

Pope says he's worried about homosexuality in the priesthood

VATICAN CITY (AP)—Pope Francis has been quoted in a soon-to-be published book as saying that having gays in the clergy “is something that worries me” and remarking that some societies are considering homosexuality a “fashionable” lifestyle. Italian daily Corriere della Sera’s website Saturday ran excerpts of the book in the form of an interview that Francis gave about religious vocations. Francis was quoted as describing homosexuality within the walls of seminaries, convents and other religious places where clergy live as “a very serious question.”

see POPE, page 2

News from...
The Theater Offensive

On Thursday, November 29 The Theater Offensive hosted Beyond The Stage, a benefit for True Colors OUT Youth Theater. The event raised nearly $50,000. Mike Dively of the Mukti Fund and True Colors alum Kaamila Mohamed were honored with the True Colors Champion and Outstanding Leader Awards. The True Colors OUT Youth The-

see OFFENSIVE, page 5

GOSSIP, GOSSIP, GOSSIP!

find Billy Masters on page 6!
At sunset as I stand on a mountaintop a great bird that was once by my side approaches, he is small in my sight but grows larger on approach, until I am blessed with a full sight of his graceful wings and proud countenance. He lands and looks intently at me, tilts his head as if to say: "it will be OK, I must go now but I will not forget you and I will return soon.

At sunrise, sitting alone, I now see a new bird approaching coming into my sight, he is small in my sight but grows larger on approach, until I am blessed with a full sight of his graceful wings and proud countenance. He lands and sits comfortably by my side and looks intently at me, tilts his head as if to say: "it will be OK, I must go now but I will not forget you and I will return soon.

Joseph James Bennett
November 29, 2009

*Remembered in our hearts always, Gary*
**The History Project**

Join The History Project this Tuesday, December 11 for the a Holiday Get-Together. The event will be held at Club Cafe, 209 Columbus Avenue, 6-8 pm.

Learn about our 2018 accomplishments, our plans for the new year, and discover your connection to Boston’s LGBTQ history! Suggested donation $20

Stonewall50 And The History Project

For several months now, The History Project has been delving into our archives to research what we know (and what we don’t know) about LGBTQ life in Boston just before, during, and just after NYC’s Stonewall Riots in 1969.

We’re digitizing records and publications by early queer activists - groups from Boston - specifically the Demophile Society, the Boston chapter of Daughters of Bilitis, the Homophile Union of Boston, and the Student Homophile League.

An amazing group of donors has pledged to match all donations up to $5000, in support of this Stonewall50 digitization project! We need your help! Any gift to The History Project this November or December has double the impact: A group of donors will match $5000 in donations through December 31, 2018.

With your help, The History Project will be able to provide access to photos, records, and other materials from the early liberation movement. Please contribute to this match and help The History Project make sure that the story of queer Bostonians gets preserved and told.

https://www.gofundme.com/stonewall50

More information at www.historyproject.org

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**Editorial**

Continued from page 1

Fenway Health offered testimony relating to the LGBTQ community: nearly half of LGBTQ youth report that they’ve thought about suicide and 25 percent have attempted it. This is five times the rate of suicide attempts among straight youth. Nearly one-third of LGBTQ adults are more likely to have been diagnosed as depressed as straight adults.

There’s a lot of research showing that LGBTQ people and other minority populations, such as Black people, Latina people, and all racial and religious minorities, suffer disproportionately higher rates of depression and anxiety than the general population. The reasons why are nearly always described in meaningless jargon, such as “minority stress” and “stigma.” But mainstream coverage of the reasons why are nearly always described in meaningless jargon, such as “minority stress” and “stigma.” But mainstream coverage of the reasons why are nearly always described in meaningless jargon, such as “minority stress” and “stigma.” But mainstream coverage of the reasons why are nearly always described in meaningless jargon, such as “minority stress” and “stigma.” But mainstream coverage of the reasons why are nearly always described in meaningless jargon, such as “minority stress” and “stigma.” But mainstream coverage of the reasons why are nearly always described in meaningless jargon, such as “minority stress” and “stigma.” But mainstream coverage of the reasons why are nearly always described in meaningless jargon, such as “minority stress” and “stigma.” But mainstream coverage of the reasons why are nearly always described in meaningless jargon, such as “minority stress” and “stigma.” But mainstream coverage of the reasons why are nearly always described in meaningless jargon, such as “minority stress” and “stigma.” But mainstream coverage of the reasons why are nearly always described in meaningless mangle, such as “minority stress” and “stigma.” But mainstream coverage of the reasons why are nearly always described in meaningless jargon, such as “minority stress” and “stigma.”

The seeds of the growing movement to enact such laws, known as “religious refusal” laws, can be found in the Reagan Administration, where Bush served for eight years as Vice President.

In a 2004 interview with Health Affairs, C. Everett Koop, who was Reagan’s Surgeon General, recalled that the lack of a response to the burgeoning AIDS epidemic during its first five years by Reagan, Bush, and other top Administration officials was because they believed that “AIDS was a disease of prostitutes, homosexuals, and drug abusers, and, after all, didn’t they deserve what they got?”

There is very little difference between ignoring a public health crisis because you believe the only people affected are sinners, and refusing service (including health care treatment) to LGBTQ people because you believe they are living in sin.

There was no mention of any of this in the mainstream coverage of Bush’s death, which was uniformly hagiographic. This is because, in part, the contrast between Bush’s personal civility and that of the current White House occupant is too great to resist. But Bush was a foundational leader in the anti-LGBTQ policies and politicians the Republican Party has produced over the last 30 years.

He refused requests to lift an Eisenhower-era ban on security clearances for LGBTQ federal employees. When the acting chairman of the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) defended criticism of the NEA’s funding of Robert Mapplethorpe (whose graphic images of gay men provoked intense controversy) on free speech grounds, Bush fired him. He then named an interim chair who quickly pulled funding for three gay and lesbian film festivals that had previously received NEA grants. Bush also signed a bill into law that prevented the Washington D.C. Council from offering health care benefits to domestic partners of gay and lesbian city workers.

When reporters, editors, producers, and news talk show hosts ignore this history, they are, in effect, gaslighting LGBTQ Americans. They’re telling them that the suffering they endured during the 1980s wasn’t that big a deal or, worse, they’re pretending that it never even happened.

The cumulative effect of state-sanctioned discrimination and other insults (such be being told that pointing out the monstrous government failure in initially responding to AIDS is a petulant exercise in the “politics of resentment”) results in minority stress.

As part of its testimony before the Boston City Council this week, Fenway offered advice to councilors on how minority stress can be lessened: “Defending the basic right of all people to be treated with respect and dignity is something that you as elected leaders should do frequently.”

Media can do the same by keeping history in mind when reporting on current events. In an essay about coverage of Bush’s death, Buzzfeed reporter Anne Helen Petersen offered this advice to journalists: “Remembering a leader is remembering how power was wielded — which means it’s ultimately also a remembrance of how their power affected, ignored, or elevated the powerless.”
LGBT group in Maine to launch resource guide for community

BANGOR, Maine (AP)—An organization that serves the LGBT community in Maine is launching an online resource guide early next year.

OurInMaine says its website and social calendar will try to bring businesses and organizations together with the LGBT community by offering groups a place to list "gay-inclusive events throughout the state of Maine."

OurInMaine says it started collecting information from organizations such as churches, businesses and schools on Nov. 28, and the website will be launched on Jan. 1. OurInMaine says the new service will offer no-cost and low-cost advertising to organizations, and it will be free to users.

The group says it will connect people with five types of resources: businesses, places of worship, schools, social groups and support organizations.

Maine CDC encourages people to get tested on World AIDS Day

AUGUSTA, Maine (AP)—Health authorities in Maine encouraged people to use World AIDS Day to learn their status about the disease.

World AIDS Day was Saturday. The Maine Center for Disease Control says about 1,800 of the 37 million people diagnosed with HIV worldwide live in Maine. But the agency says that number doesn’t include the one in seven people living with HIV who don’t know what their status is.

The Maine CDC says individuals who don’t know their HIV status should get tested, and there are a number of facilities around Maine that provide that service.

The agency’s also reminding people Maine that HIV care and prevention have dramatically changed since the discovery of the virus in 1984, and many patients are able to live long lives.

Kansas sees LGBT milestones, yet big change may come slowly

By JOHN HANNA

AP Political Writer

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP)—Kansas will swear in its first two openly LGBT state lawmakers next month and the new Democratic governor promises to end a ban on discrimination over sexual orientation or gender identity in state hiring and employment decisions once she takes office.

Yet other goals for LGBT-rights activists, such as expanding the state’s anti-discrimination law covering landlords and private employers, might not be much closer to fruition—despite a historic national wave of victories by LGBT candidates and Gov.-elect Laura Kelly’s promise to break with Republican predecessors on policy.

The GOP still has large majorities in the Legislature, and it will be a little more conservative after this year’s elections. While Kelly’s election likely prevents new laws that LGBT-rights advocates oppose, they probably will struggle to undo policies enacted in recent years when Republicans held the governor’s office.

“It’s not the governor who decides if we get hearings or if bills come out of committee,” said Tom Witt, the executive director of Equality Kansas, the state’s most influential LGBT-rights organization. “That’s going to make it a little more challenging.”

Kelly takes office in January, along with the state’s first LGBT lawmakers, Democratic state Reps. Susan Ruiz and Brandon Woodard. They were elected in Kansas City-area suburbs, which also elected Democrat Sharice Davids, an LGBT and Native American lawyer, to Congress.

Kelly has promised to issue an executive order—possibly on Jan. 14, her first day in office—to end anti-LGBT discrimination in state hiring and employment decisions.

“Gov.-elect Kelly wants to send a message to people across this state, and across the country, that Kansas is an open, welcoming place that does not tolerate discrimination of any kind,” spokeswoman Ashley All said.

But the partisan breakdown in the Legislature did not change, and among Republicans, conservatives gained at least half a dozen House seats at moderates’ expense and elected a new, more conservative majority leader Monday. In the Senate, a moderate senator resigned after being elected state insurance commissioner, and her replacement is all but certain to be more conservative.

“Kansas is still Kansas, and I think most Kansans understand the nature of the family,” said Chuck Weber, executive director of the Kansas Catholic Conference, a former state representative from Wichita.

Kansas voters added a ban on same-sex marriage to the state’s constitution in 2005, with 70 percent approval. It has not been enforced since the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in 2015 legalizing gay marriage nationwide.

In 2007, then-Democratic Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, a friend and political ally of Kelly, issued an executive order banning anti-LGBT discrimination in state employment.

But conservative Republican Gov. Sam Brownback rescinded it in 2015, arguing that such a policy should be set by legislators—who clearly weren’t going to do it.

Brownback resigned in January to become U.S. ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom.

New GOP Gov. Jeff Colyer said his administration would not tolerate discrimination but did not reinstate the formal protections in Sebelius’ order.

Colyer signed a measure in May providing legal protections to adoption agencies that cite faith-based reasons for refusing to place children in homes that violate their religious beliefs. The legislature debate centered on agencies that won’t place children in LGBT homes. Supporters said it is a religious liberties measure, but Kelly has called it an “adoption discrimination law.”

Reflecting social conservatives’ influence, the Kansas Republican Party’s election platform, adopted in June, says: “Kansas is still Kansas, and I think most Kansans understand the nature of the family.”

Stealthy, the Broadway production includes the telling song “You’re a Mean One, Mr. Grinch,” a snappy trio—Old Max. Young Max and the Grinch—with music by Albert Hague and vivid lyrics by Dr. Seuss himself.

The Grinch makes his opening position unequivocal in the busy though extra-ordinary Maxon-Marinov number “I Hate Christmas Eve.” By contrast, the citizens of Whoville affirm their feeling for the holiday both early on and much later in the affecionate Hague-Dr. Seuss winners “Welcome, Christmas.”

The Grinch show does take its title character from vilain—the first focal one in a Dr. Seuss book—to offbeat hero as he restores tree, food and gift that he stole and gets to know the Whos.

Admittedly children in the Boch Center Wang Theatre audience did not seem to mind the no-intermission 90-minute time frame. There are moments when a snow falling effect and details in John Lee Beatty’s Dr. Seuss story-influenced set design may help keep young theatergoers involved. Adults may tire of fairly conventional moves for the Whos in the original choreography of John DeLucia and co-choreography of Bob Richard. They may also be wary of the show’s lack of real comment about the loss of holiday spirit when gifts take center stage.

Still, “Dr. Seuss’ How the Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical” has some occasional treats under Matt August’s somewhat unsuitable direction. Kevin Lee as the Grinch is eye-catching throughout whether capturing the seemingly formidable creature in deep vocal moments with Paul Lynde-recalling attitude or sharply phrased put downs of the holiday. His stage right slide is a vivid highlight.

Mackenzie Mercer (who alternates with Avery Sell) displays remarkable stage presence and a strong voice as Cindy-Lou Who, the family member who seems to have a striking influence on the Grinch—most notably in a due with Lee on “Santa for a Day.”

Ken Land has some touching stretches as Old Max, while Aleksa Kurbalija captures Young Max’s energy and gusto in the reflective dog’s memories. The Whos are more Whas than real characters.

Is this musical as one of a kind as the Grinch? Dr. Seuss would likely say ‘No!’
ater Troupe is developing a brand new theater performance, titled Explode! A Dream of Something Unbroken, that looks at the theme of "a dream deferred."

At this free community performance, audiences will be able to see a staged rough draft of the piece to ask questions and offer feedback to the youth. The True Colors Troupe Community Performance is on Tuesday, December 18, 7-9pm. More information at www.thetheateroffensive.org.
I, your beloved Billy Masters, hold the fate of television in my hands. Yes, this year, I am not only a judge for the Screen Actors Guild Awards, I’m also on the nominating committee for all television categories. As a judge, I am sworn to be fair, impartial, and discreet. But without naming names, let me just say there sure is a lot of crap out there! I should know—my sumptuous West Coast abode is filled to the brim with DVDs of shows I’ve never heard of. Why, oh why, couldn’t I be on the film nominating committee? Not that that’s much better...

I may be powerful, but I am nothing next to Joy Behar. She managed to get Kid Rock fired from being grand marshal of Nashville’s Christmas Parade without doing a thing! It all started when Kid appeared on “Fox & Friends” to promote the parade. “The division in the country right now, it’s so hard for people just to get past that we can disagree and still be cordial with one another.” God forbid you say something a little wrong—you’re racist, homophobic, Islamophobic. People need to calm down, get a little less politically correct.” Until that point, he had me. Then he took that extra step. “And I would say love everybody. Except I’d say screw that Joy Behar bitch. Everybody but that!” Well, co-host Steve Doocy jumped in and said, “You cannot say that. We apologize for that.” Later, anchor Ainsley Earhardt said, “We do need to apologize. We don’t feel that way about Joy Behar. We don’t condone that language.” Of course, since this happened an hour before “The View”, it was catnip for the co-hosts. Sunny Hostin said, “You come for one of us, you come for all of us.” Behar, who has been around longer than most, seemed to enjoy the added attention. “All I can say is this bitch and these bitches would be happy to have you on the show and have a beer.” The fracas got kicked up a notch when a spokesperson for the mayor of Nashville said, “If Kid Rock is still the grand marshal tomorrow, the mayor is inclined not to participate.” Needless to say, Kid was out and the mayor was in. But he can always go have a beer with the ladies of “The View”.

Last week, we commemorated World AIDS Day. In our current political climate, it almost makes sense that the White House would single out Vice President Mike Pence to participate in a ceremony. Why, it’s like OJ Simpson speaking on domestic abuse. And, what better way to combat AIDS than conversion therapy (I say dripping with sarcasm, in case that didn’t come through). If you don’t believe me, you obviously didn’t listen to what Pence had to say—or, rather, what he didn’t say. He somehow managed to talk about several minutes about HIV without ever uttering the word “gay” or mentioning the LGBT community! But he did manage to squeeze in this little factoid—the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (known as PEPFAR) has $100 million earmarked for religious organizations. Is it just me, or does that sound a tad excessive? I mean, how much does it cost to hand out condoms to priests?

In a related story, Pope Francis made it clear where he stands on gay priests. In the book “The Strength of Vocation”, the Pope says that homosexuality in the church “is something that worries me”—of course, he said it in Italian, but happily your Billy is bilingual. “For this reason, the Church urges that persons with this rooted tendency not be accepted into ministry or consecrated life.” This includes priests, monks and nuns—all of whom take vows of celibacy. What if you have those tendencies and are already in the church? Franny has some advice for them, too: “It is better that they leave the priesthood or the consecrated life rather than live a double life.”

Then there are the remarks by Scott Chen, the president of Grindr, which is one of the most popular gay hook-up apps around the world—probably including the Vatican. In a Facebook post commenting on news that HTC (manufacturer of smartphones) was supporting anti-gay causes through their non-profit, Chen said, “Some think marriage is a holy combination of a male and a woman, and I also think it is, but this is your home.” He then claimed that his message got lost in translation. “First, let me translate the comments in Chinese here correctly. Some people think the marriage is a holy matrimony between a man and a woman. And I think so too. But that’s your own business.” Well, aside from tidying up (some of) the grammar, it’s ultimately the same statement, right? So Chen backpedaled. “The reason I said marriage is a holy matrimony between a man and a woman is based on my own personal experience. I am a straight man married to a woman I love.” He goes on and on, but brings it home by saying, “I am a huge advocate for LGBTQ+ rights since I was young. I support gay marriage and I am proud that I can work for Grindr.” I suspect he’d have also liked to add, “So please don’t fire me.”

Speaking of getting fired, a Delta Airlines pilot is hoping to keep his job after sending a Grindr message to a passenger. “I see you’re on my flight. Enjoy the ride to Chicago.” Now, I ask you, in these days of questionable customer service, isn’t that a nice message? Sure “enjoy the ride” on a sex app could be taken a variety of ways, but I’m accepting it as innocuously as I do when a hot flight attendant asks me if I’d like “warm nuts”. Apparently, the recipient of this message was not as blasé as moi. He told the “New York Post”, “My reaction was I knew I needed to get off this plane as fast as I can.” Again, the phrase “get off” is open to interpretation.

Remember a few weeks ago how we told you that porn star Austin Wolf filmed himself fucking a flight attendant in a Delta lavatory? Well, in-flight sex is running rampant. Diego Barros isn’t actually a porn star—he sells underwear and likes to pose in them (and out of them), too. He was recently on a flight where he was sitting in one of those first-class cubby holes. So, what does one do when alone and bored? Yes, exactly. He filmed himself masturbating. I dunno—I guess it’s scandalous. It’s certainly illegal. And you can see it on BillyMasters.com.

Whoever said you can never go home again never met Rita Moreno. The 86-year-old

“I thought the stain was going to be bigger. Y’know, it was so low. To me, it was probably he hadn’t pulled up his pants and just hit her with a wet tip!”

— Wendy Williams' take-away from "The Clinton Affair" documentary.
called for an amendment to the U.S. constitution barring same-sex marriage, drafted so “judges and legislatures cannot make other arrangements equivalent to it.”

“The benefits and privileges of marriage exist only between one man and one woman,” the platform said.

Kansas has been a reliably red state in presidential elections for the past 50 years and until Kelly’s and David’s victories this year, the GOP had won every statewide and congressional race starting in 2010.

Yet GOP conservatives and moderates have feuded enough over the decades to give Democrats opportunities, and Kelly’s victory continued a half-century tradition of alternating control of the governor’s office. Groups such as the Family Policy Alliance of Kansas are preparing for political battles over what they view as attempts to limit religious liberties of social conservatives.

Eric Teetsel, the alliance’s president and a Brownback son-in-law, said Kansas politics “is complicated, and it’s local.”

“This idea that American society or Kansas is just this awfully bigoted, anti-gay culture is belied by what we see around us,” he said. “You can be elected to public office in Kansas as a member of the LGBT community and no one bats an eye at it.”

Ruiz and Woodard ran on platforms that included support for LGBT rights but emphasized issues such as voting rights, education funding, expanding the state’s Medicaid health coverage to more families and lowering the state’s sales tax on groceries.

Ruiz said when she campaigned door-to-door, her sexual orientation “never came up” and voters did not appear to care. She said she doubts that attitude would have been as widespread a decade ago.

Woodard won in a district that had been held by conservative Republicans who’d backed religious objections measures, like the adoption law, and Equality Kansas described his GOP predecessors as strongly anti-LGBT.

But with the state as a whole, he said, “We don’t know how much it has shifted.”

Ruiz and Woodard also expect that it will be harder for colleagues to pass anti-LGBT measures.

“They will see our faces,” Ruiz said. “They will hear us speak.”

Annie Parker, a former Houston mayor, now president and CEO of the Victory Fund, which helps elect LGBT candidates, said this year’s election represented a milestone in Kansas, “but it doesn’t mean sweeping changes.”

“Putting openly LGBT legislators in place changes the debate, changes the dialogue. It actually makes for a healthier dialogue,” Parker said. “But it doesn’t change things overnight.”
Offensive

Continued from page 5

Photos by Ivy Maiorino
Teacher fundraising to bring LGBTQ training to Greeley

By EMILY WENGER

Greeley Tribune

GREELEY, Colo. (AP)—Kelly Cook has been teaching in Greeley for 16 years and feels she’s always been an ally for her students. But Cook recently realized she hasn’t been doing enough.

Last summer, Cook went to a seminar run by two women at the University of Colorado Boulder: A Queer Endeavor.

“It changed my life,” she said. “When you’re 40 and something changes your life you sit up and pay attention.”

As she was driving home after the training, she thought, “This needs to come to Greeley.” So she began a GoFundMe fundraiser to raise $3,000 to pay for the training to come to town. Anything needs to come to Greeley.” So she began a GoFundMe fundraiser to raise $3,000 to pay for the training to come to town. Anything needs to come to Greeley,” she said.

She’s fundraising, she said, because the University of Northern Colorado is already facing budget challenges and Greeley-Evans School District 6 has its money committed to other needed programs and projects.

So far, more than half her donors are former students of hers. “That just makes me bawl,” she said.

A Queer Endeavor works to give teachers tools to be active in their inclusion of LGBTQ students. Though Cook said she’s always tried to curtail the use of the word “gay” as an insult and tries to respond to students who ask for support, the training taught her ways to be more active and less reactive.

“I know that teachers want to protect their kids,” she said.

The way students are treated by their classmates and sometimes their teachers if they are open about their identities at school can cause a lot of pain, Cook said. This year, the Denver Post reported a 9-year-old died by suicide after coming out as gay over the summer and then facing bullying at school in the fall. His death reflects a rise in youth deaths by suicide.

As she was driving home after the training, she thought, “This changed my life,” she said. “When you’re 40 and something changes your life you sit up and pay attention.”

She can waive the $40 fee for those who need it.

“If I knew that teachers want to protect their kids,” she said.

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As she was driving home after the training, she thought, “This changed my life,” she said. “When you’re 40 and something changes your life you sit up and pay attention.”

Cook said she hopes students will know there are teachers whose love. Jimmy on ocean 617-315-7719

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Masters
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EGOT winner is having a third act that rivals her first two. Not only is she enjoying major success on the Netflix reboot of "One Day at a Time," but she’s returning to her roots. As you know, Moreno won her Oscar playing Anita in the film version of "West Side Story". With Steven Spielberg poised to shoot a remake next year, Rita has joined the cast and will be playing Valentina. If you don’t remember her, you ain’t alone—the character didn’t exist. Valentina is actually based on the original character of Doc, who was Tony’s boss at the corner store. By the by, Moreno will also be one of the executive producers of the flick! Felicidades!!

Without further ado, we bring you more of “Billy’s Holiday Gift Giving Suggestions”. Thom Bierdz has the distinction of not only being the first openly gay actor to appear as a regular on a daytime drama, he also played a character who was openly gay. Of course, neither the actor nor the character started out that way. When Phillip Chancellor III was killed off of “The Young and the Restless” in 1989, Bierdz went into something of a freefall. When his character returned from the dead 20 years later—as soap characters do—it was revealed that he faked his death because he wanted to live openly as a gay man. If you think that sounds bizarre, wait till you read “Young, Gay & Restless”. It’s a gripping story of a handsome young man trying to make it in Hollywood, hitting the heights of daytime drama one day, and then barreling into the Soap Opera Digest Awards the next. Dichotomy is a regular part of Bierdz’s life. While he was being pursued by some of the best-looking men in Hollywood, he was still feeling inadequate about his looks and took some drastic measures to change them. Throw in one brother who committed suicide and another who killed their mother, and you have a story that’s stranger than fiction. By the way, Bierdz is marking his second appearance on our “Gift Giving” list. His previous book about the murder of his mother, “Forgiving Troy”, made our list in 2009. You can get his books—and his artwork—at ThomBierdz.com.

The good thing about having lasted so long in this business we call show is that I’ve grown up with many of the people I write about. The acclaimed “Thirsty Burlington” and I go back a LONG way. Long before I started writing this column, I spent years hosting shows in my native Boston. One of the regulars in attendance was the young Scott Townsend. To have watched Scott transform himself into ‘Thirsty Burlington, one of the world’s premier Cher impersonators, has been a joy for me. But that was nothing next to the joy I felt watching the film “Thirsty” and seeing how this extraordinary person developed. It was also a pleasant surprise to see my friend Jonny Beauchamp play Scott in his early years! If you are a fan or new to the Burlington brand, this is a film I cannot recommend enough. You can grab it on Amazon or watch it on Amazon Prime.

When I’m still Thirsty for more Burlington, it’s time to end another column. I forgot the worst part of the holidays—peppermint bark. Don’t get me wrong, I love it...a bit too much. So while I am out doing a few extra thousand steps, you can check out www.BillyMasters.com—the site that’s always a step ahead of everyone else. But even while exercising (or eating), I can respond to your every need. Drop a note to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Pope Francis starts giving out Bibles with a strip of condoms as a bookmark! So, until next time, remember, one man’s filth is another man’s bible.

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Retired firefighter alleges discrimination because he’s gay

NORFOLK, Va. (AP)—A former firefighter in Virginia claims the city of Norfolk discriminated against him because he’s gay.

The Virginian-Pilot reported Tuesday that 55-year-old Scott Phillips-Gartner is suing the city for allegedly creating a hostile work environment. He claims he was forced to retire and endured verbal abuse after marrying his longtime boyfriend. Phillips-Gartner served as a 911 operator for Norfolk Fire-Rescue and later as an assistant fire marshal and bomb squad technician. He said his bosses learned he was gay after he got married in 2014.

The suit claims Gartner was stripped of his law-enforcement powers and denied routine bomb-squad training. He’s seeking unspecified damages.

Norfolk Fire-Rescue spokesman Harry Worley and Deputy City Attorney Heather Mullen declined to comment on the suit because they said it’s a personnel matter.

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