

HITTING A BLUE NOTE

Bald is Bluetiful: The Blue Man Group plays Milwaukee, Madison.

WiGOUT! Page 18



THE VOICE OF PROGRESS FOR WISCONSIN'S LGBT COMMUNITY

December 29, 2011 | Vol. 3, No. 4

A year of upheaval

TOP LOCAL STORIES

By Louis Weisberg

Staff writer

The year 2011 marked a turning point in Wisconsin's history, but the ultimate direction of that turn has yet to be determined. The most important stories of the year for the state's LGBT residents and their progressive allies include:

I. POLITICAL UPHEAVAL

Wisconsin's top news story of 2011 unfolded in numerous headlines that together represent a seminal moment in state history.

It all started in January, when Gov. Scott Walker and the Wisconsin GOP took control of state government and wrenched it in a wholly new direction – without warning, discussion or public approval, according to critics.

The new majority unilaterally enacted laws and policies more reflective of Mississippi and Texas than of a state with Wisconsin's progressive tradition.

Rather than working to sell their ideas, Walker and the state's GOP leaders launched a campaign to destroy or disenfranchise their foes. Organized labor, the most influential Democratic Party constituent, took the first hit when Walker proposed a budget plan that included stripping public unions of collective bargaining rights. Notably exempt from the measure were the police and firefighters unions, which endorsed Walker in his gubernatorial bid. Republicans also passed a new voter photo ID law – one of the strictest in the nation – designed to make it more difficult for traditionally Democratic voters, including minorities, college students, the handicapped and the elderly, to vote.

Walker's budget rewarded his corporate backers with huge tax cuts that were positioned as "job-creation" measures. So were new laws that erased environmental regulations and limited corporate liability. At the same time, Walker hired unqualified political cronies to head major departments and divisions of government and awarded them shocking raises over their predecessors.

LOCAL page 8

TOP NATIONAL STORIES OF 2011



ICONIC KISS

The full repeal of "don't ask, don't tell" in September paved the way for this historic kiss in December. See story page 10.

PHOTO: AP PHOTO/ THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT/BRIAN J. CLARK

'Don't ask' repeal tops year's events

By Lisa Neff

Staff writer

The year ending Dec. 31 proved that LGBT Americans are on an inevitable path to equality. WiG's picks for top national stories of the year, in order of importance, are:

I. DADT'S DONE: THE LIFTING OF THE MILITARY BAN

"Don't ask, don't tell" officially ended at 12:01 a.m. on Sept. 20, a date greeted like a holiday by the politicians and activists who fought for repeal, by gay servicemembers who were previously forced to live in the closet, and by military veterans who felt disrespected.

DADT was enacted 18 years ago. Bill Clinton, who courted the gay vote, had campaigned on a promise to lift the long-standing ban against gays in the military. But facing staunch opposition from a conservative Congress, Clinton agreed to a "compromise" that did not end but rather codified the ban. DADT barred military officers from asking recruits and servicemembers about their sexual orientation, but it also barred gay servicemembers from disclosing their sexual orientation.

From 1993 through 2011, at least 14,346 men and women were discharged under DADT.

President Barack Obama issued a mid-morning statement confirming

full repeal on Sept. 20, about nine hours after gay bars in major cities hosted gay sailors, marines, soldiers and pilots at coming-out parties.

"As of today, patriotic Americans in uniform will no longer have to lie about who they are in order to serve the country they love," the president said. "As of today, our Armed Forces will no longer lose the extraordinary skills and combat experience of so many gay and lesbian servicemembers. And today, as commander in chief, I want those who were discharged under this law to know that your country deeply values your service."

At the Pentagon, Defense Secretary **NATIONAL** page 10

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inside and online at [wisconsinGazette.com](http://wisconsin Gazette.com)

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STREEP'S 'IRON LADY,' CRAIG'S IRON PECS GRACE FILMS PAGES 20, 22

LGBT news with a twist



By Lisa Neff & Louis Weisberg

PARTY IMPLOSION

Minnesota Republican state Sen. Amy Koch abruptly resigned her position as majority leader on Dec. 15 amid allegations she had an improper relationship with a male employee. Koch, who is married, was a champion of a proposed constitutional amendment to "preserve the sanctity of marriage" by denying same-sex couples the right to marry in the state. Within days of the Koch scandal, the leading contender to take control of the financially troubled Minnesota GOP dropped out of the race after revelations of an arrest for an expired car registration and an earlier sexual harassment lawsuit. And a Republican candidate challenging popular Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar next year admitted a 2005 arrest for carrying a loaded gun at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.



WARDROBE MALFUNCTION

Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., was widely ridiculed following the broadcast of a speech from the floor of the U.S. House in which the outlines of his pendulous pecs and perky nipples were on full display. Frank was wearing a tight, sky-blue crew-neck shirt. A jacket, which might have saved him the embarrassment, was draped over his shoulders. The jacket's sleeve apparently wouldn't fit over a large cast on Frank's left hand. The congressman recently had surgery on ligaments in his thumb.

PLATFORM HEEL

Taking a swipe at current first lady Michelle Obama, Marcus Bachmann said he would not focus on children's health if he replaced her in the White House. "I've decided my cause is not going to be happy meals," he said during an Iowa campaign stop. Instead, Bachmann said his platform as first lady would be to denounce same-sex relationships.

SPREADING HIS SEED

Bill Johnson, a 2009 conservative Christian candidate for governor of Alabama, has acknowledged making sperm donations to at least nine women, including lesbian couples. According to the New Zealand Herald, the 52-year-old met the women on the Internet. The newspaper

reported that three of the women are pregnant. One of the pregnant women, who is in a same-sex relationship, described Johnson as a "really nice ... really supportive guy." But Johnson's wife Kathy, who had a hysterectomy 10 years ago, said she was unaware of her husband's sperm donations. She told the Alabama Press-Register, "This is a really, really difficult time for our family. I'm still in disbelief and very hurt, and our family has a lot of healing to do."

GROSS RECEIPTS

Greg Davis, the mayor of Southaven, Miss., inadvertently outed himself when he used the city's charge card to make a \$67 purchase at a gay sex shop in Toronto. In 2008, Davis mounted an unsuccessful campaign for Congress, describing himself as a "conservative pro-life Republican" and a "happily married man." The Mississippi auditor has demanded that Davis pay back a total of more than \$170,000 for personal expenses that he billed to taxpayers, much of it for expensive meals and liquor.

DOWNSIZING

Ellen DeGeneres and her wife Portia De Rossi recently purchased Brad Pitt's Malibu manse for \$12 million, according to People magazine. The couple put their current home, which was featured in Architectural Digest, on the market for \$49 million. The couple will be downsizing from a 15,000-square-foot home to a mere 4,000 square feet of space.

REALITY TV CHECK

Has Sarah Palin's 15 minutes of fame run out? The former Republican vice presidential candidate has failed to generate interest in a new reality TV show focusing on her husband Todd's career as a championship snowmobile racer. Despite teaming up with reality TV guru Mark Burnett on the project, Palin has gotten a thumbs-down from both TLC and A&E — the same two networks that battled over Palin's reality show "Alaska." Network insiders reportedly said Palin's asking price of \$1 million per episode was too high for a celebrity whose fame could be on the wane.

IMAGE UPGRADE

The number of gays depicted in advertising has soared over the past decade, according to a new study by the University of Miami School of Communication.

The image of gays in advertising has improved along with the rising numbers, found the study, which was published in the Journal of Advertising. Today's media often portrays gays as stylish consumers with high-end taste. But the research found more work needs to be done. Ads that depict support for gay families are often limited to gay media. And there is not enough racial diversity and too few bisexual and transgender subjects in the ads, researchers said.

Best of 2011



LADY IN '11

Lady Gaga arrived at the Grammy Awards in February in an egg, which hatched onstage. "Born This Way" was born and a movement began. AP's Entertainer of the Year traveled the world promoting tolerance and battling bigotry and bullies. Discussing her own troubles in the classroom and schoolyard, she became an It Gets Better icon.



MAKING AMENDS

Actor-comic Tracy Morgan apologized repeatedly for saying he'd stab his son if he were gay. Morgan wasn't the only celeb to apologize to LGBT people in 2011. Lessers than the A-list said "sorry." Remember the words of Patti Stanger, Adam Carolla, Roger McDowell, Kelly Osbourne, Wayne Simmonds, Joakim Noah and Kobe Bryant? Or, perhaps, the names already are forgotten?



TRANSITIONS

Transgender civil rights advocate Chaz Salvatore Bono transitioned in front of the world in "Becoming Chaz" on the Oprah Winfrey Network. Then he showed off his footwork on "Dancing with the Stars" on ABC. He undertook the television tour with determination and courage. The beat goes on.



HERNANDEZ AS HERO

Daniel Hernandez had been working as a congressional intern for just five days when his boss, U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Arizona, was shot and critically injured outside a Tucson grocery store. The young gay man worked to stop the flow of blood from Giffords' head while awaiting the arrival of paramedics. He was hailed as a hero — from Tucson to D.C. to Milwaukee PrideFest.



GLOBAL DEGENERES

Ellen DeGeneres took home a Daytime Emmy Award in 2011 for "Outstanding Talk Show." She also earned another honor in late 2011 — not a golden statue but an appointment by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to serve as a special envoy for AIDS awareness. "The fight against AIDS is something that has always been close to my heart," DeGeneres said.



JOKINGLEE

Jane Lynch began 2011 with a Golden Globe for best supporting actress in a series — Fox's "Glee." Then the openly lesbian actress became the first woman to ever solo host the Emmys. She's closing the year with an agreement to host the telecast again in 2012. "I'm looking forward to singing, dancing and sporting my finest tracksuit," Lynch said.



REGIONAL GAZE

Got news? Tell us managingeditor@wisconsin-gazette.com.

Foley & Lardner docked for anti-gay activities

By Louis Weisberg
Staff writer

The Milwaukee-based law firm Foley & Lardner was one of three companies to be penalized on the Human Rights Campaign's annual Corporate Equality Index for engaging in activities that undermine LGBT equality.

Foley & Lardner was docked 25 points for representing the anti-gay National Organization for Marriage in its campaigns against marriage equality in the District of Columbia and Minnesota. The firm received an overall rating of 60 out of 100 possible points on the index.

The recently released 2012 edition of the Corporate Equality Index rated 636 major companies based on their LGBT-related employment practices. This year was the first in which HRC handed out negative scores.

ExxonMobil was the

only company to receive an overall negative score. The Irving, Texas-based oil giant, which ranks No. 2 on the Fortune 500, failed to meet any of the criteria for the 2012 index. In addition, HRC deducted 25 points from the company's score, giving it a score of minus-25.

Before Exxon and Mobil merged in 1999, Mobil offered domestic partnership benefits and had an employment nondiscrimination policy that included sexual orientation. ExxonMobil did away with both the benefits and the policy after the merger, and has repeatedly resisted shareholder efforts to amend the policy to protect gay employees.

"For over a decade, HRC has urged ExxonMobil to re-evaluate its employment practices and policies regarding LGBT employ-

FOR THE RECORD

Other Wisconsin companies that received ratings — on a scale of zero to 100 — included:

- Rockwell Automation Inc., Milwaukee, 90
- Quarles & Brady LLP, Milwaukee, 85
- Robert W. Baird & Co. Incorporated, Milwaukee, 79
- American Family Insurance, Madison, 55
- Aliant Energy, Madison, 50
- Manpower Group, Milwaukee, 50
- Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance, 50
- CUNA Insurance Group, Madison, 30
- Johnson Controls, Milwaukee 30
- Fiserv Inc., Brookfield, 15
- Harley Davidson Corp., Milwaukee 15
- Kohl's Corp., Menomonee Falls, 15
- Oshkosh Group, Oshkosh, 15

— L.W.

ees," HRC spokesman Paul Guequierre said. "They continue to give us, and the entire LGBT community, the cold shoulder."

New York-based Verizon Communications Inc. also received the 25-point deduction for taking action against LGBT equality after it nixed a shareholder resolution to add gender identity to the company's employment non-discrimination policy. Verizon received an overall score of 20.

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CARDINAL COMPARES GAY PRIDE WITH KKK

In an interview with a Chicago Fox affiliate, Cardinal Francis George, the Archbishop of Chicago, compared Chicago's annual Pride parade to a Ku Klux Klan rally.

"You don't want the gay liberation movement to morph into something like the Ku Klux Klan, demonstrating in the streets against Catholicism," George said. He went on to cite similarities between the rhetoric from the KKK and LGBT civil rights advocates.

"The rhetoric of the Ku Klux Klan, the rhetoric of some of the gay liberation people. Who is the enemy? Who is the enemy? The Catholic Church," George said.

George's remarks were in reaction to a new route and later starting time for the Pride parade.

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church leaders said the new route, which would go by the church for the first time, would draw massive crowds and block access to the church's Sunday Masses.

REGIONAL BRIEFS

Parade organizers agreed to a later starting time in order to accommodate the church.

The Pride parade, which is held the last Sunday in June, attracted 800,000 people last year. The new route was proposed following longstanding concerns about crowds, drinking and transportation access. Our Lady officials circulated petitions calling to change the route again.

ANTI-GAY LEADER ALLEGEDLY SHOOK DOWN CANDIDATES FOR IOWA ENDORSEMENT

GOP presidential hopeful Rick Santorum might have paid \$1 million for the endorsement of an influential Iowa hate group leader ahead of the state's Jan. 3 caucuses.

Less than 48 hours after receiving the thumbs-up from Bob Vander Plaats, head of The Family Leader, Santorum admitted that the group wanted money to make the most out of the endorse-

ment. Headquartered in Iowa, The Family Leader holds sway among the state's anti-gay voters, who dominate the Republican caucuses.

Sources familiar with the talks between Vander Plaats and several Republican presidential campaigns described the group's tactics as corrupt. "Clearly the endorsement was for sale — without a doubt," a source told ABC News.

Vander Plaats denied the charges through a press statement. But Santorum, who has made the demonization of gays the cornerstone of his political career, acknowledged in an interview with CNN that money was among the topics he and Vander Plaats discussed ahead of the endorsement press conference.

"What he talked about was he needed money to promote the endorsement and that that would be important to do that," Santorum told CNN. "There was never a direct ask for me to go out and raise money for it."

That admission, how-

ever, differed from an earlier statement by the former Pennsylvania senator. At a campaign event in Indianola, Iowa, Santorum said the issue of money never came up in his conversations with the anti-gay leader.

Though Santorum did not specify the dollar amount he and Vander Plaats discussed, multiple sources said Vander Plaats was soliciting as much as \$1 million from candidates.

WALKER SUED FOR DISCRIMINATION

A woman passed over for Marinette County register of deeds earlier this year sued Gov. Scott Walker, alleging he violated her rights by hiring a less qualified but more politically connected candidate.

Deputy Register of Deeds Becky Chasensky contends that the governor violated a federal law that prohibits denying people jobs because they have filed for bankruptcy. Chasensky also alleges the Republican governor violated her rights to equal protection

when he passed her up for a more politically connected candidate, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported.

The lawsuit was filed in federal court in Milwaukee.

The newspaper reported last April that Walker initially planned to appoint Chasensky as register of deeds but later changed course. He instead appointed Renee Miller, a friend of Republican state Rep. John Nygren of Marinette who has worked on his campaigns for five years and is married to Nygren's campaign treasurer, Paul Miller.

Renee Miller had no previous experience with land records and vital records, but two other applicants had detailed knowledge of how the office of the register of deeds works.

Records show Walker was first advised to appoint Chasensky to the job. But that plan changed after aides to Walker learned Chasensky filed for bankruptcy in 2009, Walker spokesman Cullen Werwie said at the time.

Before the appointment, a background check was performed on Chasensky, but not on Miller or those who were appointed as registers of deeds in two other counties around the same time.

Walker said his office had acted correctly in the appointment and that the court would affirm his decision.

STRAIGHT COUPLES CHOOSE CIVIL UNIONS

A number of heterosexual couples in Cook County, Ill., chose to formalize their relationships with civil unions instead of marriage in order to show solidarity with same-sex couples, who are not allowed to marry under state law.

A total of 87 heterosexual couples obtained civil union licenses between June 1 and Sept. 19, according to the Cook County Clerk's office. During the same period, 1,383 same-sex couples obtained civil union licenses in the county.

Cook County Clerk David Orr conducted a survey to find out what motivated straights to choose civil unions over marriage.



The Chicago Pride Parade in the heart of Boystown.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Continued

One partner from 46 of the 87 couples who chose civil unions was reached — a response rate of 53 percent. Of those who were reached, 26 percent cited political or ideological reasons such as equality and inclusiveness.

"Some heterosexual couples are clearly making

a statement when they are civilly united rather than married," Orr said. "One respondent put it best when she said this decision was in solidarity with the gay community until they also have the option of getting married."

An unpaid student intern working for the clerk's

office conducted the telephone survey in September. Respondents ranged in age from 19 to 74. Twenty respondents were women and 26 were men.

When asked if they were still planning on getting married at some point, 38 percent of men and 65 percent of women said yes..

MICH. DEPUTIES BAITING GAY MEN

Gay rights activists in western Michigan say sheriff's deputies have been unfairly targeting gay men in Kent County parks by striking up conversations with them while working undercover.

Nearly three dozen men were arrested in the parks in 2010 under Michigan's soliciting law, but many simply were talking or holding hands, critics told county commissioners.

"In these cases, it's the officers who are making the approaches. It's the officers who are doing the accosting and soliciting," said Miriam Aukerman of the American Civil Liberties Union.

The Grand Rapids Press reported that Sheriff Larry Stelma defended his deputies and said they're simply trying to keep parks safe.

"This is sensationalizing and a distortion of what's happening," Stelma said. "We do not arrest anybody, male or female, for holding hands."

Michigan law makes it illegal for someone to use a public place to invite another to commit a "lewd or

immoral act."

"If you look at the exact language of the statute, you could apply it to what happens in bars and restaurants in Kent County on any Friday or Saturday night," Aukerman said. "We have concerns about laws that limit the behavior of consenting adults."

She said there's nothing illegal about flirting.

Kent County attorney Dan Ophoff said changes in how deputies deal with such situations are already in the works, although authorities believe past arrests complied with the law. He said some cases were dropped before getting to court.

ACLU VOWS SUIT OVER MICH. LAW

Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder, R, has signed controversial legislation that prohibits public workers in Michigan from sharing health benefits with their domestic partners.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan has vowed to challenge the constitutionality of the law on behalf of families who

lose their health protections. Snyder said the legislation does not apply to public universities or union-represented state employees. Under Michigan's Constitution, public universities have constitutional authority to make many of their own policies.

But the law's anti-gay supporters insist that it does apply to the state's universities. And everyone agrees that the measure applies to municipal and school employees, both those in same-sex and opposite-sex domestic partnerships.

Lead sponsor Rep. David Agema, R-Grandville, praised the new law. "Time and again, Michigan residents have said 'no' to paying for the health benefits of the roommates and unmarried partners of public employees, and the governor's signature today gives the people's voice the rule of law," he said.

But Kary Moss, executive director of the ACLU of Michigan, called the statute "mean-spirited and cruel."

She promised a lawsuit on behalf of "families who will lose their health protections."

—WiG and AP reports

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Immigration service splits up married lesbians

By Dave Gram
AP writer

Frances Herbert and her wife Takako Ueda were looking forward to the New Year's Eve family concert at the Baptist Church in their adopted hometown of Dummerston, Vermont, the town fireworks on the pond and going home to celebrate the arrival of 2012.

But federal immigration authorities have told Ueda she needs to leave the United States for her native Japan by Dec. 31, a move that would split up a couple who have been together more than a decade and married under Vermont law in April.

Herbert, a 51-year-old home care provider, and Ueda, a 56-year-old graphic designer, got letters Dec. 1 from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, a divi-

sion of the Department of Homeland Security, telling them that Ueda had to leave the country within 30 days. Ueda's student visa expired in July.

They had applied for "relative alien" status on the basis that she was the spouse of a U.S. citizen, but the federal agency denied that petition.

The letter to Herbert, who had applied to be Ueda's sponsor, said that under the federal Defense of Marriage Act, the 1996 law saying the government would not recognize same-sex marriages, they couldn't be considered spouses. DOMA defines marriage as "only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife."

"Your spouse is not a person of the opposite sex," wrote Robert Cowan, a U.S. CIS official. "Therefore, under

the DOMA, your petition must be denied."

Federal immigration authorities demand extensive documentation showing a binational couple claiming to be married really is: witness statements, property records, utility and other household bills showing both names and the like often are required. Herbert said she and Ueda submitted 600 pages of such evidence with their application.

"It's despicable," Herbert said in an interview. "We had 600 pages of proof and 599 of them were completely ignored. One line on one page" — the one that said they were both women — "is what they paid attention to."

Experts say there are not reliable numbers on how many couples find themselves in a similar situation

to that of Herbert and Ueda, but it's believed the number is small. Many binational, same-sex couples don't seek spousal status for fear of being rejected because of DOMA.

Steve Ralls, spokesman for Immigration Equality, a non-profit legal aid group that works on immigration and sexual orientation issues, said one San Francisco couple remained together despite getting government notices that one of the men, an Australian, needed to leave the country, while a New Jersey man's partner had been deported to Peru.

President Barack Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder Jr. announced in February that the administration would no longer defend DOMA in court in the cases in which it is being chal-

lenged. But until the issue is resolved, executive branch agencies, including those within the Department of Homeland Security, deem themselves bound by the law.

But Leslie Holmans, second vice president of the American Immigration Lawyers' Association, said that even after getting the types of letters Herbert and Ueda got, some same-sex, binational couples benefit from "prosecutorial discretion" by immigration authorities.

She said many federal prosecutors believe "our systems are so overcrowded that what we really need to be doing is concentrating on people who are a risk to our country. What's happened is that we have seen some same-sex couples go before the immigration court

and ask for prosecutorial discretion." Government lawyers often respond by "either dismissing cases or they're not enforcing the notice of deportation."

Holmans said the situation is far from ideal because affected immigrants are left in "legal limbo," still without recognized immigration status and unable to get a job or seek other government benefits.

Scott Titshaw, a professor at Mercer University Law School in Georgia who has practiced immigration law and written articles on DOMA, said Ueda and Herbert most likely shouldn't fear Ueda's imminent arrest but "still have plenty to worry about." He said if Ueda traveled abroad, she might be barred from re-entering the U.S.

Drive begins to put Prop 8 repeal on 2012 ballot

By Lisa Neff
Staff writer

A Los Angeles gay rights group is knocking on doors to collect signatures in its campaign to knock Proposition 8 out of the California Constitution.

The California Secretary of State gave the LA-based Love, Honor, Cherish the

OK to pursue the ballot campaign in mid-December.

A federal lawsuit to overturn Proposition 8 is at the appeals court level, with a U.S. Supreme Court review possible in 2012 but more likely in 2013.

Prop 8, passed by a majority at the polls in November 2008, amended the California

Constitution to define marriage as the union of a man and a woman and block same-sex marriages. The measure did not invalidate same-sex marriages performed before November 2008.

"It's been more than three years since Prop 8, and a majority of California resi-

dents have realized that it is a mistake to deny loving same-sex couples the right to marry," said Love, Honor, Cherish chair Tom Watson.

May 14 is the deadline for LHC to submit petitions to qualify a question for the 2012 general election ballot, which will include the presidential vote.

In November, voters would be asked to strike from the constitution the sentence, "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California" and add, "Marriage is between only two persons and shall not be restricted on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender, sexual

orientation, or religion."

Love, Honor, Cherish filed the ballot language with the California Secretary of State's office in October.

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Manning awaits determination on court martial

By Lisa Neff
Staff writer

More than 20 prosecution witnesses and two defense witnesses testified in late December at a hearing to determine whether Army Pfc. Bradley Manning will face a court martial. Manning is accused of giving secret documents to WikiLeaks.

The pre-trial hearing took place at Fort Meade, Md., over six days, beginning Dec. 16.

The prosecution team called 21 witnesses to substantiate its case for a court martial of the gay soldier

labeled an anti-war hero by some and an anti-American traitor by others.

The U.S. government accuses the 24-year-old Manning, an intelligence analyst in 2009 and 2010, of stealing about 750,000 documents from the State and Defense departments and providing them to WikiLeaks for distribution. The release included war logs, diplomatic cables and a classified military video of a 2007 American helicopter attack in Iraq that killed 11 men.

One witness for the prosecution was computer hacker

and Army informant Adrian Lamo, who said Manning, under the tag Bradass87, boasted to him about leaking military documents to a "crazy white-haired Aussie."

The defense wanted to call 48 witnesses, including President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, but was allowed, in addition to 10 already on the prosecution's list, only two — Sgt. Daniel Padgett and Capt. Barclay Keay, who served with Manning in Iraq.

Padgett recalled an emotional outburst from Manning



PHOTO: COURTESY SAVEBRADLEY

Gay soldier Bradley Manning faced a preliminary hearing in late December. He now awaits word on whether he will face court martial.

one night in Iraq. The defense has argued that Manning was troubled, in part because of the oppressive "don't ask, don't tell" policy, and that the Army did not provide the counseling he needed or make any effort to lift his security clearance.

Keay testified that Manning seemed like he wanted to be a good soldier but recalled a too-casual atmosphere in the intelligence office.

Manning, according to press reports, has said that he downloaded classified material to a CD while pretending to listen to Lady Gaga music.

He also has said that, with the release of those documents, he sought to lift the "fog of war."

In closing arguments, the army prosecutor alleged that Manning had "abused our trust" and aided enemies.

But defense counsel David Coombs called for reduced charges, saying the document release posed no real threat to U.S. national security of foreign relations.

Outside the Maryland Army base, more than a hundred demonstrators rallied in support of Manning, whose arrest in May 2010 spawned

a "Free Bradley" campaign. Their signs stated, "Blowing the whistle on war crimes is not a crime" and "Bradley Manning: American hero."

With the hearing concluded, Lt. Col. Paul Almanza, the presiding officer, will review the testimony and make a recommendation on whether to convene a court martial. Almanza's recommendation is due by Jan. 16, but he could seek an extension.

If Manning is convicted of the most serious of the 22 charges leveled by the Army, he could face life in prison.



PHOTO: COURTESY SAVEBRADLEY

Demonstrators rally in support of Bradley Manning outside Fort Meade, Md., where Manning appeared for a preliminary hearing in December.

SENATE FAILS TO CONFIRM APONTE AS AMBASSADOR

The U.S. Senate declined to confirm Mari Carmen Aponte's appointment as ambassador to El Salvador in December.

Conservatives raised concerns about Aponte's long-ago romance with a man accused of being a Cuban spy and her 2012 op-ed promoting LGBT Pride.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said he would try to again to confirm Aponte in 2012.

GAY COUPLE WINS CUSTODY BATTLE

A New Jersey judge awarded a gay couple custody of 5-year-old twins, resolving a family lawsuit over who



Mari Carmen Aponte.

could best care for them.

The lawyer for Donald and Sean Hollingsworth said the ruling is a legal victory for tolerance and diversity.

NATIONAL BRIEFS

But the lawyer for Donald Hollingsworth's sister, Angelia Robinson, said gay equality wasn't the issue. Robinson, the attorney said, is the legal mother, having given birth to the girls after carrying a donor embryo fertilized by Sean Hollingsworth.

The judge said parties disagreed on many issues, including what the girls should be told about homosexuality and surrogacy.

TOP POLITICAL VIDEOS: GAY MARRIAGE, OBAMA, PERRY

A young Iowa man's plea for marriage rights for his lesbian parents drew 18.3

million views to become the most-watched political video of the year.

President Barack Obama's speech to the White House Correspondents' Association dinner in April was second and Rick Perry's ad criticizing gays in the military placed third and was the year's most-watched campaign commercial.

TEEN SENTENCED FOR KILLING CLASSMATE

A teen who fatally shot a gay classmate nearly four years ago was sentenced in late December to 21 years in state prison.

Brandon McInerney, 17,

didn't speak at the sentencing, but his lawyer said his client was sorry for killing 15-year-old Larry King.

McInerney pleaded guilty to second-degree murder, voluntary manslaughter and unlawful use of a firearm after jurors deadlocked during his trial as an adult on a first-degree murder charge.

King's father, Greg King, called the jury incompetent.

LESBIANS SUE HAWAII B&B

A California couple has sued a Hawaii bed and breakfast, alleging the business denied them a room because they are lesbians.

Aloha Bed & Breakfast discriminated against Diane Cervelli and Taeko Bufford, claims the lawsuit filed on behalf of the women by Lambda Legal in First Circuit Court in Honolulu.

Cervelli, 42, called the business in 2007 to book a room because it's in Hawaii Kai, the same east Honolulu neighborhood where the friend they were visiting lived. When she specified they would need one bed, the owner asked if they were lesbians. Cervelli responded truthfully and the owner said she was uncomfortable having lesbians in her house because of her religious views, the lawsuit said.

—WiG and AP reports

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Baldwin would be the first out gay person ever elected to the U.S. Senate

LOCAL from I

Walker's budget paid for all his giveaways to financial supporters by shredding the social safety net for the middle-class and economically disadvantaged. He essentially gutted the state's health care and education budgets under the guise of concern about spending taxpayer dollars.

Walker then went on to reward his right-wing religious supporters. He abruptly withdrew funding from Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin, which provides family planning, cancer screening and primary health care services to thousands of uninsured women in the state. He dropped the state's legal defense of a domestic partner registry that affords same-sex couples a small handful of legal rights, such as the right to visit a critically ill partner in the hospital. Walker's Republican colleagues took up an amendment to the state constitution that seeks to declare a fertilized human egg a person — a measure so extreme that

even the voters of Mississippi rejected it.

Walker claimed his aggressive agenda would bring new businesses and jobs to the state, although statistics proved otherwise. In addition to creating a divisive and uncertain political atmosphere that made Wisconsin less attractive to employers, Walker actually turned away job-creating industries that his corporate backers oppose, such as green energy and high-speed rail. As a result, Wisconsin now ranks 43rd in the nation for job growth over the past year.

The backlash against Walker became an even bigger story than his destructive policies. Walker's busting of public unions brought out some of the largest demonstrations ever seen in Madison from February to June 2011. Over the summer two GOP state senators lost their seats in a series of eight recall races inspired by the Walker-induced turmoil. More than \$35 million was spent on these unpre-

cedented elections. Most of that money came from third-party interests, and some of it was funneled through the anti-gay group Wisconsin Family Action.

Now petitioners are collecting signatures to recall Walker along with another GOP state senator in 2012 (a gain of one Senate seat would give Democrats the majority in that chamber). The future of a host of progressive issues, including LGBT equality, women's reproductive rights and environmental protections, hangs in the balance.

On Dec. 15, with a month still left to go, anti-Walker forces announced they'd already obtained 507,000 of the 540,000 signatures needed to force the governor into a recall race. But Walker has access to unlimited campaign cash and the support of a sophisticated right-wing media infrastructure. Whether he succeeds in utilizing these tools to remain in power will undoubtedly be the top

Wisconsin story of 2012.

2. TAMMY & MARK

U.S. Rep. Tammy Baldwin is accustomed to making history. In 1998, she became the first woman elected to represent Wisconsin in Congress — and the first non-incumbent out gay person in the nation to be elected to Congress.

When longtime U.S. Sen. Herb Kohl, D, announced this year that he would not seek re-election in 2012, Baldwin quickly threw her hat into the ring for his position. Now she hopes to add another first to her list — to become the first out person ever elected to the U.S. Senate.

Baldwin is off to a strong start. She has staved off all prospective Democratic challengers so far, allowing progressives to unite behind her candidacy. The historical dimension of her campaign will attract millions in out-of-state funding, giving her a financial edge.

Meanwhile, several Republicans are expected to battle it out in a poten-

tially bruising campaign to win their party's nomination for the seat. Baldwin's GOP opponents include Wisconsin House Speaker Jeff Fitzgerald, who is considered Walker's primary legislative henchman. Also on the short list is far-right former congressman Mark Neumann, who famously said that he'd never hire a gay person.

Former GOP Gov. Tommy Thompson also has launched a bid. A moderate who's trying to reposition himself as a right-wing ideologue, Thompson is the biggest name in the race. But he faces great hurdles, including his record of doubling state spending during his years as governor and rampant rumors of extra-marital affairs.

State Sen. Frank Lasee is also seeking the Republican nomination. Lasee is famous for suggesting that teachers and school administrators carry guns to school in order to protect students.

With Baldwin giving up her House seat to run for

the Senate and Barney Frank retiring next year, only two out gay representatives will be left — Jared Polis, D-Colo., and David Cicilline, D-R.I. But out state Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Madison, hopes to preserve at least one gay seat in Washington by winning Baldwin's 2nd Congressional District seat.

Pocan won the Assembly seat of his friend Baldwin when she moved to Congress. Since then, he's distinguished himself as co-chair of the state's budget committee and as a tireless advocate for his constituents.

Pocan faces a primary battle with State Rep. Kelda Helen Roys. Although Pocan has racked up major endorsements in the race and has the backing of the Human Rights Campaign and the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, he's not taking the race for granted. Considering how few openly gay people there are serving in Washington, neither should the LGBT people of Wisconsin.

If both Baldwin and Pocan prevail, Wisconsin would have the distinction of having the only out Senator in the country and being the only state to have two openly gay elected officials serving in Washington.

3. HEALTHY BENEFITS

As the year closed, Walker threw 65,000 Wisconsinites, including 29,000 children, off Badgercare. The popular program helps people who cannot afford for-profit insurance to obtain healthcare.

Conversely, during 2011 a number of employers in Wisconsin extended health-care coverage to more people by adopting domestic partner policies. Under these policies, gay and lesbian employees can add their partners to their workplace insurance coverage. Although the benefits are taxable, unlike the health benefits that married couples receive, they provide health insurance to people who might otherwise be ineligible for coverage due to pre-existing conditions, cost and other factors.

Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele signed a domestic partner benefits resolution into law on Aug. 3 after the county board



PHOTO: AP/ANDY MANIS

Protesters gathered outside the state Capitol in Madison in February. Republican Gov. Scott Walker set off the protests by pushing ahead with a measure to require government workers to contribute more to their health care and pension costs and largely eliminate their collective bargaining rights.

Continued approved it on July 28 with a supermajority vote of 13-5. The board had previously passed a resolution to study the costs of the benefits in 2009, but then-County Executive Scott Walker vetoed it.

By a vote of 10 to 6, the Appleton Common Council approved a measure extending healthcare and related employment benefits to the registered domestic partners of its city workers on Sept. 7.

In April, Marquette University decided to begin offering healthcare benefits to the registered same-sex partners of its employees beginning in 2012. The move came nearly a year after the Jesuit university provoked a national controversy by breaking a signed contract to hire an out lesbian scholar as dean of its college of arts and sciences.

And, in response to a lobbying campaign spearheaded by Equality Wisconsin, several major health insurance companies operating in Wisconsin were persuaded to begin offering domestic partner policies tailored for small businesses in the state

(those with 50 employees or fewer).

4. FLAMBOYANT JUSTICE

David Prosser, the anger-challenged Wisconsin Supreme Court justice who's rumored to be gay, had a year that's best described as flamboyant. The former Republican lawmaker first made headlines by promising voters he would judicially support Walker's right-wing agenda if they retained him — blind justice be damned. But in the backlash over that same agenda, Prosser nearly lost his seat on the bench to JoAnne Kloppenburg, a little-known state attorney who ran an anemic campaign. Kloppenburg initially claimed victory, but then oddball Waukesha County Clerk Kathy Nickolaus came forward and said she had failed to report all the votes in her county, giving Prosser the win. A statewide recount in May confirmed his victory. But in June, Prosser was back in the headlines when Justice Ann Walsh Bradley accused him of putting her in a chokehold during deliberations on a legal

challenge to Walker's union law. Prosser countered that Bradley had charged him and he was just trying to defend himself. Sauk County District Attorney Patricia Barrett, a Republican serving as a special prosecutor in the case, decided in August not to charge anybody. Still, WiG and other publications called on him to resign.

5. RELIGIOUS AWAKENINGS

During 2011, mainstream Protestant Christianity continued on its long, slow march toward accepting LGBT people, and two major events in Wisconsin served as milestones on this path toward enlightenment.

The Rev. Amy DeLong of Osceola feared that she would lose her clerical credential during a United Methodist Church trial held over the summer — the first trial of its kind in the state. DeLong was charged with being a "self-avowed practicing homosexual" and with breaking church law by performing a 2009 same-sex marriage ceremony in Menominee.

But although DeLong was

found guilty of the latter charge, she was given the relatively mild sentence of a 20-day suspension. She was found not guilty on the former charge, even though she acknowledged being in a same-sex relationship.

Equality supporters in the Methodist Church hailed the trial as further evidence that the denomination is moving toward acceptance of LGBT clergy and relationships.

In October, Wisconsin became the site of the nation's first ordination of an openly gay Presbyterian minister. Scott Anderson, who left the Presbyterian ministry in California 20 years ago after coming out to his congregation, was re-ordained at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Madison before a crowd of hundreds of cheering supporters. His ordination was made possible when the church's national assembly voted last year to remove a ban on gay clergy.



PHOTO: BEN SLANE

U.S. Rep. Tammy Baldwin, D, chats with a voter during a fundraising event.

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Activists pledge to continue pursuing equal rights in the Armed Forces

NATIONAL from I Leon Panetta and Adm. Mike Mullen, then chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, held a news briefing. Panetta hailed Sept. 20 as a historic day, when “we move closer to achieving the goal at the foundation of the values that America’s all about — equality, equal opportunity and dignity for all Americans.”

Obama signed the repeal bill in December 2010, beginning months of reviewing policy and regulations at the Pentagon and in each of the military branches. Training programs, intended to condition servicemembers for DADT’s repeal, then began.

With the demise of DADT came pledges to continue to pursue equal rights in the Armed Forces. The legal marriages of gay and lesbian servicemembers will not be recognized because of the Defense of Marriage Act, so their benefits will still not be the same as those available to heterosexual couples. Female servicemembers continue to be denied some of the opportunities available to men. Transgenders still face barriers in open service.

2. NYME: THE PASSAGE OF MARRIAGE EQUALITY IN NEW YORK

Hundreds of gay couples

dressed in formal suits and striped trousers, gowns and T-shirts recited vows in emotion-choked voices and triumphantly hoisted their long-awaited certificates on July 24, when New York became the sixth and largest state to recognize same-sex marriages.

Couples began saying “I do” at midnight that day from Niagara Falls to Long Island. At the same time, protesters, vowing to sue to stop the marriages, chanted, “You do, But not for long.”

The weddings took place a month after state lawmakers, under the tireless leadership of Gov. Andrew Cuomo, passed the marriage equality bill. The New York Senate sent the bill to Cuomo on June 24, and the Democratic governor wasted no time in signing the measure into law.

Thus, around the world, as many communities in major cities celebrated Pride over the following weekend, passage of the bill was heralded as a momentous development in the state where the modern LGBT civil rights movement began.

“At our founding, what made America different from every other country that existed before was a commitment to an ideal that had never been advanced—that all are created equal, endowed by their Creator with the



PHOTO: COURTESY

A couple celebrates outside the Louis J. Lefkowitz State Office Building in lower Manhattan on July 24, the first day same-sex marriages were legally performed in New York state.

rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” said New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman. “Our history as a nation has been one of striving to make those words ever more true. Today, our state rose to the challenge, and New York, once again, has carried on this great American tradition.”

The New York General Assembly had passed the marriage equality bill 80-63

As negotiations went on inside the Capitol in Albany, demonstrations for and against passage of the bill took place outside, with equality activists chanting and lobbyists touting polls showing 58 percent of New York voters supporting the legislation. A similar bill had stalled at the conclusion of the session two years ago.

The breakthrough came June 24, when the bill reached the Senate floor. It passed 33-29, with four Republicans and 29 Democrats voting “yes.”

Cuomo signed the measure at about 11:55 p.m.

“Love conquers all,” Susan Sommer of New York-based Lambda Legal said. “Our state government rose above the political fray and did the right thing for New York families. Equality prevailed.”

3. AMERICA’S PASTIME: THE PROTEST REGAINS POPULARITY

The protest came back into style in 2011, beginning with the Wisconsin winter uprising in Madison over Republican Gov. Scott Walker’s campaign to terminate collective bargaining for public employees in the state.

The protests — with rallies chanting, “We are one. We are one.” — went on for months and set the tone for other U.S. progressive upris-

might refuse wedding and marital services to same-sex couples.

Cuomo, who made marriage equality a cornerstone of his legislative 2011 agenda, pressed hard, behind the scenes and publicly. He said, “This state has a proud tradition and a proud legacy as the progressive capital of the nation. We led the way, and it’s time for New York to lead the way again.”

On June 15. But, with the legislative session already in overtime, there was uncertainty about whether the bill could reach the Senate floor, where it had the support of 29 Democratic senators and still needed three GOP votes to pass.

On June 23, closed-door negotiations began in earnest to craft an amendment providing additional protections for religious institutions that

Women share 1st kiss at Navy ship’s return

By Brock Vergakis

AP writer

A Navy tradition caught up with the repeal of the U.S. military’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” rule on Dec. 21, when two women sailors became the first to share the coveted “first kiss” on the pier after one of them returned from 80 days at sea.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Marissa Gaeta of Placerville, Calif., descended from the USS Oak Hill amphibious landing ship and shared a quick kiss in the rain with her partner, Petty Officer 3rd Class Citlalic Snell of Los Angeles.

Gaeta, 23, wore her Navy dress uniform while Snell, 22, wore a black leather jacket, scarf and blue jeans. The crowd screamed and waved

flags around them.

“It’s something new, that’s for sure,” Gaeta told reporters after the kiss. “It’s nice to be able to be myself. It’s been a long time coming.”

For the historical significance of the kiss, there was little to differentiate it from countless others when a Navy ship pulls into its home port following a deployment. Neither the Navy nor the couple tried to draw attention to what was happening and many onlookers waiting for their loved ones to come off the ship were busy talking among themselves.

David Bauer, the commanding officer of the USS Oak Hill, said that Gaeta and Snell’s kiss would largely be a non-event and the crew’s reaction upon learning who

ON THE COVER

Petty Officer 2nd Class Marissa Gaeta, left, kisses her girlfriend of two years, Petty Officer 3rd Class Citlalic Snell, at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek in Virginia Beach, Va., Dec. 21 after Gaeta’s ship returned from 80 days at sea. It is a time-honored tradition at Navy homecomings — one lucky sailor is chosen to be first off the ship for the long-awaited kiss with a loved one. On Dec. 21, for the first time, the happily reunited couple was gay.

was selected to have the first kiss was positive.

“It’s going to happen and the crew’s going to enjoy it. We’re going to move on and it won’t overshadow the great things that this crew has accomplished over the past three months,” Bauer said.

The ship returned to Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story following

an 80-day deployment to Central America. The crew of more than 300 participated in exercises involving the militaries of Honduras, Guatemala, Colombia and Panama as part of Amphibious-Southern Partnership Station 2012.

Both women are Navy fire controlmen, who maintain and operate weapons sys-

tems on ships. They met at training school where they were roommates and have been dating for two years, which they said was difficult under “don’t ask, don’t tell.”

“We did have to hide it a lot in the beginning,” Snell said. “A lot of people were not always supportive of it in the beginning, but we can finally be honest about who we are in our relationship, so I’m happy.”

Navy officials said it was the first time on record that a same-sex couple was chosen to kiss first upon a ship’s return. Sailors and their loved ones bought \$1 raffle tickets for the opportunity.

Gaeta said she bought \$50 worth of tickets, a figure that she said pales in comparison to amounts that

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Continued

ings in 2011.

There were many, most notably the Occupy Wall Street movement, which began in late July as an insurrection against corporate greed in New York’s financial district. The demonstrations spread — Occupy as octopus — across the country.

President Barack Obama, responding to the Occupy protests, observed, “I think it expresses the frustrations that the American people feel.”

Protesters, in large numbers, also rallied against increases in California college tuitions, passage of Alabama’s anti-immigrant law, renewed government interest in nuclear power, a proposed transnational pipeline, expanded gas and oil drilling, restrictions on voter rights in Wisconsin, Florida and other states, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, government-sanctioned wolf killings in Idaho and Montana and an anti-gay marriage initiative in North Carolina.

While U.S. progressives returned to their rallying roots, the protest as a revolutionary tool was applied in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. In Mexico, demonstrators marched against the lawlessness of the drug cartels. In Greece and Italy, demonstrators protested failed leadership and policy.

Looking back this month, Time Magazine named “The Protester” as the Person of the Year, stating, “Massive and effective street protest” was a global oxymoron until — suddenly, shockingly — starting exactly a year ago, it

FOR THE RECORD

The top news story of 2011 for the Associated Press was the killing of Osama Bin Laden during a May raid by Navy SEALs on his hideout in Pakistan.

Next was the March disaster in Japan — the earthquake, followed by the tsunami, followed by the worst crisis at a nuclear power plant since Chernobyl.

No. 3 was the Arab Spring, the revolutionary uprisings that began in Tunisia and spread to Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain and Yemen.

No. 4 was the European financial crisis, followed by the struggling U.S. economy at No. 5, the Penn State child sex abuse scandal at No. 6, the toppling of the Gadhafi regime in Libya at No. 7, the partisan showdowns in Congress at No. 8, the Occupy Wall Street protests at No. 9 and the shooting of U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords at No. 10.

Near misses in the Top 10 include the death of Apple icon Steve Jobs, the wrath of both Hurricane Irene and a series of deadly tornadoes and the full repeal of the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy.

— LN.

became the defining trope of our times. And the protester once again became a maker of history.”

4. BATTLING BULLYING: IT GETS BETTER BANDWAGON

The It Gets Better multimedia project originated with writer Dan Savage, who wanted to send a message to youths after a series of gay-related suicides at the start of the 2010-11 school year. Some 10,000 people and organizations — from prominent politicians to average citizens — posted video messages to the It Gets Better website in 2011.

President Barack Obama taped a video, as did Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, other cabinet members and the openly

gay members of Congress. Hollywood stars shared videos.

And athletes and professional sports team, including the San Francisco Giants, winners of the 2010 World Series, also produced powerful messages.

Giants Barry Zito, Matt Cain, Andres Torres, Sergio Romo and Hensley Meulens shared the encouragement that gets tossed around on the field in a video intended to convince LGBT youth that life “gets better.” For the 58-second video, pitchers Cain, Zito and Romo, centerfielder Torres and batting coach Meulens stood in their uniforms in AT&T Park to make their pitch directly to the camera.

Zito said, “We all know how difficult life can be as a teenager.”

Romo added, “We’ve all been there and have had to deal with the pressure to fit in and be accepted by our peers.”

“It’s particularly challenging for LGBT teens who face adversity and intolerance in their daily lives,” said Cain.

In the end, the players promised — in English, Japanese and Spanish — that “it gets better.”

The Giants was the first pro sports team to post a video, but not the last — the Chicago Cubs, Boston Red Sox, Seattle Mariners, Philadelphia Phillies, Tampa Bay Rays and others followed. But not the Milwaukee Brewers, which ignored a Change.org campaign asking the team to join in the effort.

Many ordinary folks — students, teachers, nurses, counselors, reporters, musicians, activists and even reformed bullies — also shared messages, many of them plain-spoken into a web cam, but some scripted, sung, painted, sculpted or shouted.

Plus, by the end of the year, thousands had taken the It Gets Better pledge: “Everyone deserves to be respected for who they are. I pledge to spread this message to my friends, family and neighbors. I’ll speak up against hate and intolerance whenever I see it, at school and at work. I’ll provide hope for lesbian, gay, bi, trans and other bullied teens by letting them know that ‘It Gets Better.’”

5. DEEMED INDEFENSIBLE: ADMINISTRATION DECLINES TO DEFEND DOMA

The Obama administration announced Feb. 23 that it was dropping its legal defense of the federal Defense of Marriage Act, which has been deemed unconstitutional.

“This is a monumental decision for the thousands of same-sex couples and their families who want nothing more than the same rights and dignity afforded to other married couples,” said Joe Solmonese of the Human Rights Campaign, the nation’s largest LGBT advocacy group.

U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder Jr., in statements to the press and to Congress, said the Justice Department would no longer defend DOMA in *Pedersen v. OPM* and *Windsor v. United States*.

Both cases challenge Section 3 of DOMA, which for federal purposes defines marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

Holder said, “In the two years since this administration took office, the Department of Justice has defended Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act on several occasions in federal court. Each of those cases evaluating Section 3 was considered in jurisdictions in which binding circuit court precedents hold that laws singling out people based on sexual orientation, as DOMA does, are constitutional if there is a rational basis for their enactment. While the president opposes DOMA and believes it should be repealed, the department has defended it in court because we were able to advance reasonable arguments under that rational basis standard.”

The administration, however, came to view DOMA, as applied to legally married same-sex couples, as unconstitutional. “Given that conclusion, the president has instructed the department not to defend the statute in such cases. I fully con-

cur with the President’s determination,” Holder said. “Consequently, the department will not defend the constitutionality of Section 3 of DOMA as applied to same-sex married couples in the two cases filed in the Second Circuit.”

The attorney general informed Congress of the decision so that “members who wish to defend the statute may pursue that option.”

Republicans in the House eventually decided they wanted to take up a defense of DOMA, which Bill Clinton reluctantly signed into law in 1996.

Holder observed, “Much of the legal landscape has changed in the 15 years since Congress passed DOMA. The Supreme Court has ruled that laws criminalizing homosexual conduct are unconstitutional. Congress has repealed the military’s ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy. Several lower courts have ruled DOMA itself to be unconstitutional.”

Although the Justice Department dropped its defense of a section of DOMA, the legislation remains in effect.

LOOKING AHEAD: 2012

Here’s the long-range forecast for 2012: a blizzard of political ads, thudery debates, heated attacks, lightning strikes and a Category 5 election.

The “Farmer’s Almanac” and the National Weather Service are now releasing forecasts for 2012 winter, spring, summer and fall. But the battle for the White House and majorities in Congress and state houses likely will produce one season in the next calendar year — the election season.

The first balloting in the presidential contest takes place Jan. 3, with the Iowa Caucuses.

With just days before the vote, longtime political observers are focused on the level of hesitation among voters. As this issue of WiG heads to press, Ron Paul is the apparent frontrunner in the polls. But most polls reveal that voters are uncertain about their choices. A recent Iowa State University poll found just 28 percent of those surveyed had “definitely” decided on their candidate.

By April 3, when Wisconsin voters cast their ballots in the presidential primary, the GOP field — which now includes Gingrich, Paul, Michele Bachmann, Jon Huntsman, Rick Perry, Mitt Romney and Rick Santorum — likely will be diminished.

And well before Aug. 27, when Republicans gather for their convention in Tampa, Fla., Obama’s challenger likely will be known. Obama’s contest with John McCain began in June 2008 — two months before the conventions.

The Democratic convention will take place Sept. 3-6 in Charlotte, N.C., where political observers say the crucial task will be uniting the ever-faithful and the disenfranchised.

Election Day arrives Nov. 6. And then? Maybe a calm before the inaugural storm.

— Lisa Neff



PHOTO: COURTESY

Phillies infielder Chase Utley appears in a team video for the It Gets Better campaign.

{ Editorial }

Political etiquette

The holiday season is traditionally a time when families, friends, co-workers and communities come together in a spirit of love and good cheer. Unfortunately, the unprecedented level of political polarization in Wisconsin made for some tense moments around holiday tables in 2011.

It shouldn't be this way. As President Barack Obama has said, "We can disagree without being disagreeable." Ultimately, people on both sides of the political aisle need to check their tone. Becoming personal and angry fails to enhance any point of view.

The rhetoric will tend to grow even more heated as we head into a presidential election year that's likely to include a wave of hugely combative recall races in Wisconsin. It's up to each one of us to help keep the discourse respectful, honest and productive.

One of the reasons debates have become so testy is that the public today has access to so many questionable sources of conflicting and largely inaccurate information. People on differing sides of the ideological divide hurl "facts" at each other that are barely grounded in truth and often irrelevant to the issue under debate. The best thing that any of us can contribute to a political discussion is focus and truth. That means being armed with actual facts and able to cite credible sources. If you're going to be engaged politically, do your homework and make sure you know what you're talking about.

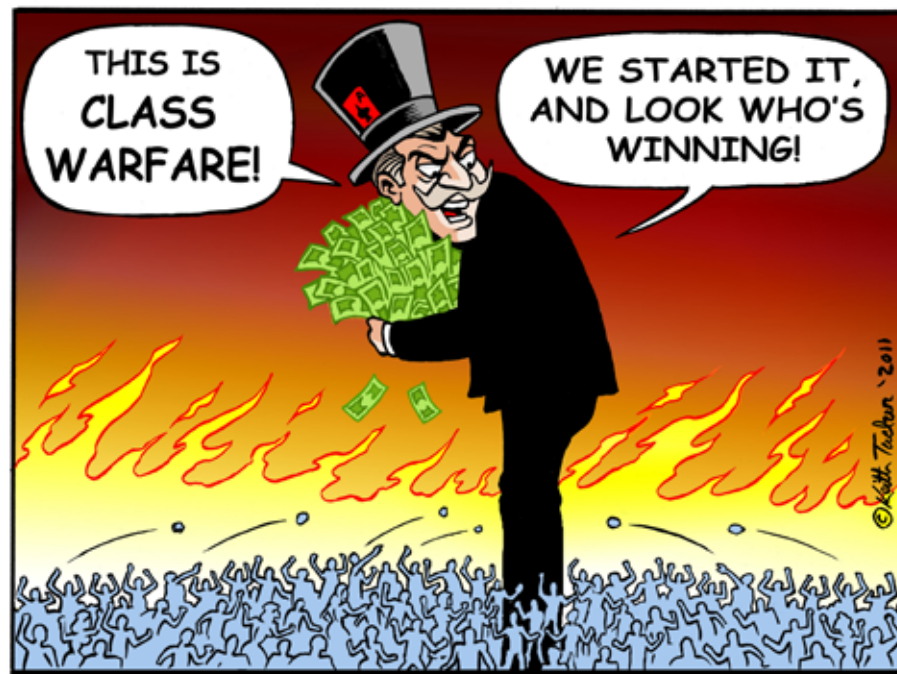
Most of the problems we face as a society today are complex and nuanced. The kind of information needed to make useful decisions about these problems cannot be expressed in pithy sound bites. When someone is spouting simple, rhetorically neat solutions to problems like the national debt, affordable healthcare, global warming and education, beware. If simple solutions to these problems existed, there would be no problem in the first place. Don't try to score points by minimizing the complexity of an issue. You'll just lose credibility for yourself and the viewpoint you represent.

No matter what your political persuasion, remember that no one likes being criticized, let alone screamed at or called a liar. If that's the best you have to offer in a debate or a discussion, then just walk away. You're not going to change anyone's mind with that sort of behavior, so why waste the energy?

If you're really interested in having a meaningful political discussion, be prepared to listen and find common ground with the other side. Meaningful discourse can only occur in an atmosphere of good will and open-mindedness.

Most people's political viewpoints are based on their personal experiences and the influence exerted by their family, social circle and the surrounding media. By asking them about their beliefs in a genuinely interested way, you can get them to think and question. By providing them respectfully with information they might not have otherwise been exposed to, you might open their eyes to new ways of looking at things. But you should be prepared to offer them the same courtesy in return.

Democracy can only survive as long as people are engaged enough to seek out the truth needed to make informed decisions at the polls. We urge our readers to be part of that process and pledge to do the same.



{ Feedback }

WALKER DESERVES BLAME FOR JOB LOSSES

Gov. Scott Walker is sending out his political appointees to take the heat on Wisconsin's dramatic job loss — but the buck stops with him. He needs to stop blaming others and refusing to discuss the terrible job loss trend Wisconsin is experiencing.

Walker has a record of failure on job creation. The facts are clear — as the nation adds jobs every month, Wisconsin has been losing them ever since the budget — the governor's economic plan — passed. It is a curious thing for a state agency to be splitting hairs over just how badly Wisconsin is doing at creating jobs.

Unfortunately, the Republican leaders in the Legislature adjourned their

special session on jobs weeks ago without passing the major jobs bills that were on the agenda.

Democrats offered 10 jobs bills on Jan. 3, the first legislative day of this year. Some were put on the agenda, yet the major jobs initiatives from both parties that were supposed to be implemented this fall were not accomplished. Republicans have not yet shown any support or interest in a series of job training bills offered by Democrats that would bridge the gap between available jobs and job seekers. Worst of all, despite Wisconsin losing jobs while the nation adds jobs, they have absolutely no urgency whatsoever on the leading issue to nearly every Wisconsinite.

Unable to explain five straight months of job loss,

the DWD secretary took the unusual step of issuing a strongly worded release that provided insults but not answers. While the federal government did adjust October job losses so they were fewer, perhaps the governor should explain why Illinois — the state he routinely criticizes — is on pace to create more than 250,000 jobs, the amount he promised. Meanwhile, the governor has no new ideas despite consistently losing jobs for five straight months.

We need to work on job creation — not voter suppression or trampling the First Amendment or taking away women's health care — so Wisconsin can top our rival to the south in more than just football.

Rep. Peter Barca, D-Kenosha

ON THE RECORD

"It is astonishing that gay and lesbian Americans are still treated as second-class citizens. I am confident that, very soon, the laws of this nation will reflect the basic truth that gay and lesbian people — like all human beings — are born equal in dignity and rights."

— ACTOR GEORGE CLOONEY, who's set to star in the West Coast premiere of "8," a play by out Academy Award-winning writer Dustin Lance Black that chronicles the legal challenge to California's Proposition 8. Rob Reiner is directing the one-night-only performance on March 3.

"This is our moment in history. We must decide what kind of people we are and what kind of nation we are going to build."

— ELIZABETH WARREN, a Democrat who's challenging U.S. Sen. Scott Brown, R-Mass, voicing her unmitigated approval for LGBT equality. Brown opposes same-sex marriage, gay adoption and workplace protections for LGBT people. He was the only member of Massachusetts' congressional delegation who refused to participate in the It Gets Better video series.

"He is super gay, this guy! ... Someone who spends the vast majority of their life trying to convert other people from being gay, I believe, has a serious issue with their own sexual impulses."

— ROSIE O'DONNELL sharing her feelings about Marcus Bachmann, the husband of anti-gay GOP presidential candidate Michele Bachmann. Marcus Bachmann has become an object of ridicule for his effeminate mannerisms.

"I miss the closet. Homosexuals, not to speak of the rest of society, were far better off when social pressure forced them to hide their activities."

— GOP PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE RON PAUL writing in the June 1990 issue of his newsletter Ron Paul Political Report. Paul's newsletters were full of anti-gay and racist rants. Another entry noted: "The ACT-UP slogan on stickers plastered all over Manhattan is 'Silence=Death.' But shouldn't it be 'Sodomy = Death?'"

"When you ask somebody a question and you expect them to support all Americans and have everyone's general interest, it's a little bit frustrating and disheartening when you're told to support the other side. That he doesn't need your support."

— SCOTT ARNOLD, a gay man who confronted GOP presidential hopeful Newt Gingrich about his opposition to equality. Gingrich told Arnold to vote for Obama.

"This is fun. It smells good. It feels good. It's great."

— MARCUS BACHMANN, the husband of GOP presidential hopeful Michele Bachmann, commenting to reporters after firing off a couple of rounds from a .45-caliber Kimber pistol at a shooting range in Iowa. The press event was apparently designed to cultivate a butch image for Bachmann, but observers felt his comments fell short of the goal.

Working for a better 2012

In a book I got for Christmas, I discovered this clever slogan of the South End Press charmingly etched in lowercase Courier font with three periods for emphasis: "read. write. revolt."

How bold and succinct! It made me think about how to convey my goals for the New Year. I came up with this variation, less succinct but fueled by a similar determination to create change: "Read more. Buy locally. Reactivate."

First, I don't know if anyone's done research on the plummeting literacy rate in the United States and the demise of intelligent political discourse, but I bet there's a correlation (which is likely to become more pronounced in the years following the gutting of our K-12 and UW systems by Gov. Scott Walker and the GOP). The amount of misinformation, outright lies and bizarre theories promoted not just on talk radio but through media outlets and presidential candidates has reached epidemic proportions.

I've tuned out the 24/7 info glut the past few years and retreated to the haven of reading to escape the noise and nonsense. Taking time to read the great novels, history, biography, public policy — stuff that educates and enlightens — is giving me a broader knowledge base and making me a more thoughtful person with opinions based on evidence and reason.

I'm also more aware of how the right wing thrives on ignorance and am better prepared to counter its lies. I can respond to misinformation, cite references, challenge dubious claims.

Arm yourself in 2012: read more. Next, what is it about buying goods and services locally that people don't get? Over the holidays, I got fed up with friends constantly knocking

Opinion
JAMAKAYA

the Chinese and whining about products made overseas. Although there's not a lot we can do to turn around the manufacturing crisis, there's a lot we can do to support local businesses.

The 3/50 Project, the brainchild of a business consultant in Chicago, urges us to choose three independently owned local businesses we'd really miss if they closed and commit to spending \$50 each month at those businesses. Statistics show that if half of the employed population made that simple monthly commitment, it would generate more than \$42 billion in revenue. The 3/50 Project website says that for every \$100 spent in locally owned stores, \$68 returns to the community (in taxes, payroll, etc.), whereas for \$100 spent at a national chain, only \$43 stays in the locality. When you spend \$100 online, your community gets no benefits.

So identify local businesses, artists and entrepreneurs you want to support. Be curious! Ask about whether places

are locally owned. Check out www.wisconsinmade.com to purchase state products. We don't have to be passive victims of the screwy economy, we can do more to support neighborhood businesses, and we need to stop demonizing the Chinese.

Finally, the New Year presents many options for renewed activism. Foremost in Wisconsin is the campaign to recall Walker, Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch and several state senators for their roles in ending collective bargaining rights for public employees.

Tammy Baldwin's campaign for the U.S. Senate should galvanize progressive communities. The presidential election is apt to be a long haul, with many surprises along the way. Occupy Wall Street is a dynamic young social movement that could develop in all sorts of different directions. Each of us can have an impact on these and so many other issues.

So: Read more. Buy locally. Reactivate.

Sorry, Amy, that my gay marriage caused you to commit adultery

Editor's note: The following is an open letter to former Minnesota Senate Majority Leader Amy Koch, who resigned recently after it was discovered she had an extra-marital affair with a subordinate.

Under her leadership, the Minnesota Senate voted to amend the state constitution to ensure that "a marriage between a man and a woman is the only domestic legal union that shall be valid or recognized in Minnesota." Koch and the others who voted for the bill claim the amendment is necessary to protect the dignity and sanctity of the institution of marriage.

On behalf of all gays and lesbians living in Minnesota, I would like to wholeheartedly apologize for our community's successful efforts to threaten your traditional

Opinion
JOHN MEDEIROS

marriage. We are ashamed of ourselves for causing you to have what the media refers to as an "illicit affair" with your staffer, and we also extend our deepest apologies to him and to his wife. These recent events have made it quite clear that our gay and lesbian tactics have gone too far, affecting even the most respectful of our society.

We apologize that our selfish requests to marry those we love has cheapened and degraded traditional marriage so much that we caused you to stray from your own holy union for something

more cheap and tawdry. And we are doubly remorseful in knowing that many will see this as a form of sexual harassment of a subordinate. It is now clear to us that if we were not so self-focused and myopic, we would have been able to see that the time you wasted diligently writing legislation that would forever seal the definition of marriage as being between one man and one woman, could have been more usefully spent reshaping the legal definition of "adultery."

Forgive us. As you know, we are not church-going people, so we are unable to fully appreciate that "gay marriage" is incompatible with Christian values, despite the fact that those values carry a biblical tradition of adultery

such as yours. We applaud you for keeping that tradition going.

And finally, shame on us for thinking that marriage is a private affair, and that our marriage would have little impact on anyone's family. We now see that marriage is more than that. It is an agreement with society. We should listen to the Minnesota Family Council when it tells us that marriage is about being public, which explains why marriages are public ceremonies. Never did we realize that it is exactly because of this societal agreement that the entire world is looking at you in shame and disappointment instead of minding its own business.

From the bottom of our hearts, we ask that you please accept our apology.

OUR MISSION To inform, engage and empower Wisconsin's LGBT community by providing a professional, independent print and online source for news and commentary, as well as coverage of political and cultural issues.

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Perry's anti-gay Christianity is not my Christianity

Religion

SHAY DAWKINS

Texas Gov. Rick Perry's anti-gay "Strong" TV advertisement has been getting a lot of air time in Iowa in the run up to the Jan. 3 Republican caucus. It's also getting some surprising reaction among his fellow conservatives.

I was happy that his ad failed to win the endorsements of a couple of key anti-gay groups: the American Family Association and Family Leader.

And Perry's Christianity is not my Christianity. I'm a heterosexual, raised in the Pentecostal and Baptist faiths deep in the Bible Belt state of

Perry's Christianity brands gays as evil.

Alabama. I studied the Bible in search of the Scripture that commands Christians to judge homosexuals and I didn't find it. Instead, I found the opposite. For my book, "The Good News: How Revealing Delusions in Christianity Will Bring Peace to All," I also looked for the biblical basis for other "Christian" beliefs, including opposing abortion. I didn't

find it.

In the "Strong" ad, Perry says, "I'm not ashamed to admit that I'm a Christian, but you don't need to be in a pew every Sunday to know there's something wrong in this country when gays can serve openly in the military." Really? Why would it matter whether a soldier is homosexual or heterosexual? If he or she is ready, willing and able to defend us, our country and our freedoms isn't that all that matters?

Perry's Christianity brands gays as evil. It seeks to turn "God-fearing" heterosexuals against their fellow man. That is not my Christianity. The true message of Jesus and the Christian Bible is to bring people comfort, not misery; promote unity, not division; and bring hope, not fear.

It's not Jesus or the Bible that teaches Christians to be intolerant - it is other Christians. The Bible says that we should judge/condemn only people who act with the intent to hurt or harm other people (Romans 14:13). It tells us to love our neighbors, welcome strangers, and even to love our enemies.

Jesus states that "his commandment is to love one another" (John 13:34). The Bible goes as far as stating that "all the law of the world is fulfilled in one command: Love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5:14) and that "without love a person with everything has nothing" (1 Corinthians 13).

Perry likes to conclude his speaking engagements saying, "Here is what I want you to leave with: Somebody's values

are going to decide the issues of the day. ...Somebody's values are going to be instilled. The question is going to be whose values?" He does not understand that his "religious beliefs/values" are based on other men's beliefs and values. Clergy often are taught what to believe in seminary. Perry's "faith" is based on man-made, false religious doctrine - "somebody else's values," as he likes to say.

I've combed through the Scriptures and rather than finding support for Perry's stand on homosexuality, I found a half-dozen verses that tell us homosexuality is not "sinful" for everyone. No one should judge or condemn anyone else for being heterosexual or homosexual, atheist or believer, black or white, fat or skinny, attractive or unat-

tractive. The Bible instructs us to be slow to judge others as "you will be judged by the same amount that you judge others" (Matthew 7:2) and "to not make snap judgments of others" (John 7:24). I'm not sure if peace on Earth is possible, but I do know the world would be a much happier place if everyone lived by the Golden Rule, "treat others as you would like to be treated" or as Jesus stated, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39).

Shay Dawkins is a Tuscaloosa, Ala., businessman who grew up in Baptist and Pentecostal churches. He is the author of "The Good News: How Revealing Delusions in Christianity Will Bring Peace to All" found at www.thegoodnews-book.com.

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- Congregation Shir Hadash**, 414-297-9159, www.cshmilw.org
- Cross Lutheran Church**, 1821 N. 16th St., 53205, 414-344-1746, www.crosslutheranmilwaukee.org
- Divine Word Lutheran Church**, 5505 Lloyd St., 53208, 414-476-3189, divinewordlutheran.org
- Faith United Methodist Church**, 400 S. 91st St., 53214, 414-453-1710, faith.united@att.net
- First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee**, 1342 N. Astor St., 53202, 414-273-5257, www.uumilwaukee.org
- Grace Lutheran Church (ELCA)**, 303 Green Bay Rd., Thiensville, 53092, 262-242-1174, www.grace53092.org
- Lake Park Lutheran Church**, 2647 N. Stowell Ave., 53211, 414-962-9190, lakeparklutheran.com
- Metropolitan Community Church**, 1239 W. Mineral St., 53204, 414-383-1100, www.milccc.org
- Milwaukee Friends Meeting (Quakers)**, 3224 N. Gordon Place, 53212, 414-263-2111, www.milwaukeequakers.org
- Mt. Zion Lutheran Church**, 12012 W. North Ave., Wauwatosa 53226, 414-258-0456, www.mtzionlutheran.org
- Our Savior's Lutheran Church**, 3022 W. Wisconsin Ave., 53208, 414-342-5252, www.oscmilw.org
- Plymouth Church**, 2717 E. Hampshire Ave., 53211, 414-964-1513, www.plymouth-church.org
- St. Mark's Episcopal Church**, 2618 N. Hackett Ave., 53211, 414-962-0500, www.stmarksmilwaukee.org
- St. James Episcopal Church**, 833 W. Wisconsin Ave., 53233, 414-964-1513, www.stjamesmilwaukee.org
- Tippecanoe Church PCUSA-Living Waters Contemplative Life Center**, 125 W. Saveland Ave., Bay View, 53207, 414-481-4680, www.tippechurch.org

- Underwood Memorial Baptist Church**, 1916 Wauwatosa Ave., Wauwatosa 53213, www.underwoodchurch.org
- Unitarian Church North**, 13800 N. Port Washington Rd., 53097, 262-375-3890, www.ucnorth.org
- Unitarian Universalist Church West**, 13001 W. North Ave., Brookfield, WI 53005, 262-782-3535 ext. 12, http://uuwv.org
- Universal Anglican Church - Christ Enlight**, Marion Center for Nonprofits, 3195 S. Superior St., 53207, 414-793-4828, www.uacmilwaukee.org
- Village Church**, 130 E. Juneau Ave., 53202, 414-273-7617, www.villagechurchmilwaukee.org
- Wauwatosa Presbyterian Church**, 2366 N. 80th St., Wauwatosa, 53213, 414-774-5005, www.tosapres.com

MADISON

- Advent Lutheran Church ELCA**, 7118 Old Sauk Rd., 53717, 608-836-1455, www.madisonchristiancommunity.org
- Beth'El Evangelical Lutheran Church**, 101 Bethel Drive, P.O. Box 70, Poynette, WI 53955-0070
- Community of Hope UCC**, 7118 Old Sauk Rd., 53717, 608-836-1455, www.madisonchristiancommunity.org
- First United Methodist Church**, 203 Wisconsin Ave., 53703-2105, 608-256-9061, www.wisconsinumc.org/madison-firstumc/
- James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation**, 2146 E. Johnson St., 53704, 608-242-8887, www.jrucc.org
- Plymouth Congregational UCC**, 2401 Atwood Ave., 53704, 608-249-1537, www.pcucc.org

GREEN BAY

- Angels of Hope MCC**, P.O. Box 672, Green Bay, 54305, 920-983-7452, www.aohmcc.org, aohchurch@netnet.net
- Hope United Church of Christ**, 141 S. 12th Ave., Sturgeon Bay, 54235, 920-743-2701, www.hopechurchdc.org, hopeucc@hopechurchdc.org

- Union Congregational United Church of Christ**, 716 S. Madison St., 54301-3609, 920-437-9266, www.unionucc.com, office@unionucc.com

FOX VALLEY

- Fox Valley UU Fellowship**, 2600 Philip Lane, Appleton, 54915, 920-731-0849, www.fvuuf.org
- SS Cyril and Methodius United Independent Catholic Church**, 3499 Oakridge Road, Neenah, 54956, 920-809-3969, www.uicchurch.homestead.com, sscyrilandmethodius@yahoo.com

KENOSHA/RACINE

- Bradford Community Church-Unitarian Universalist**, 5810 Eighth Ave., 53140, 262-656-0544, www.bradforduu.org
- Olympia Brown Unitarian Universalist Church**, 625 College Ave., 53403, 262-634-0659, www.obuuc.org, mail@obuuc.org
- Sacred Journeys Spiritual Community**, worship at Meadowbrook Country Club, 2149 N. Green Bay Rd., Racine, 53405, 262-312-4890, www.sacredjourneyscc.wordpress.com

OTHER

- First Christian Church**, 1909 Highland Ave., Janesville, 53548, 608-752-3847, www.fccjanesville.org
- First Congregational UCC**, 504 Washington Ave., Sauk City, 53583, 608-643-8387, firstucc@merr.com
- Unitarian Universalist Church of the Lakes**, 319 N. Broad St., Elkhorn, 53121, 262-723-7440, www.uulakes.org
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Rescued cat rescues shelter

From AP

In a reversal of fortunes, a once-unwanted cat has come to the rescue of an animal shelter in need of a new home. However, this orange-and-white tabby named Daniel is no typical cat. He has a near-record 26 toes, a phenomenon that is helping the nonprofit Milwaukee Animal Rescue Center raise money

to relocate to a new building. Most cats have 18 toes, but Daniel has two extra on each foot due to a genetic mutation called polydactylism.

Officials at the center found out their rent at a Milwaukee-area mall was being doubled on Jan. 1. So, the shelter sought small donations of \$26 – or \$1 per toe.

They've collected enough so far – about \$80,000 has been raised since Oct. 24 – to secure the financing. But they hoped to raise enough money to become even more financially stable.

About \$50,000 of the money raised has come from \$26 donations.

"I've always been a firm believer that everything happens for a reason and this is definitely the case," said Amy Rowell, executive director of Milwaukee Animal Rescue Center in Greendale. She found Daniel in October



Daniel. PHOTO: COURTESY

at animal control when she went to pick up another cat. As she bent down to that cat's cage, Daniel stuck his paw out and poked her head.

"He was very clearly saying, 'I need to be rescued, I'd like to be your friend, please pay attention to me,'" she said. "And when a sign is that obvious, we tend to not ignore it."

The shelter takes in animals that might otherwise be euthanized.

Daniel was originally going to be adopted out, but Rowell has decided to keep him as a shelter mascot.

Daniel's 26 toes – two shy of the Guinness World Records number – don't seem to affect his cat activities.

"He runs and he plays and he climbs, he uses a scratching post. He seems to be not bothered by it at all," Rowell said.

To donate, go to www.milwaukeearc.org

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Rampone is an 8-month-old labrador retriever mix with a passion for play.

TIP OF THE WEEK:

Start your puppy off on the right paw by enrolling him in "Puppy ABCs" class at the Wisconsin Humane Society! Your new companion will learn valuable lessons about socialization, manners, and obedience while you both enjoy the fun together. Learn more at wihumane.org.

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Playing the Blues

By Michael Muckian

Contributing writer

Kirk Massey plans to enter the New Year being very blue, but that's something for which he also is very thankful.

Massey is one of the cerulean-faced performers who occupy stages around the world as part of Blue Man Group, the multimedia three-man theatrical troupe known for its percussive antics and dazzling special effects. The latest iteration of Blue Man, as insiders call it, appears Jan. 3-8 at Milwaukee's Marcus Center for the Performing Arts and then on Jan. 24-29 at Madison's Overture Center for the Arts.

"There has been brand new content written for the tour," says Massey, who has

been a Blue Man since 2005. "And most of the classic Blue Man pieces in the show have a new twist to them. If you have only seen our 'Megastar' rock tour, then this will be a very different experience."

But then Blue Man Group itself is a very different experience.

The group was started in 1987 by three performance artists — Chris Wink, Phil Stanton and Matt Goldman — who felt they weren't being sufficiently challenged by the New York performing arts scene. The trio conferred among themselves and with friends about what they would like to see on area stages. The end result was a mime show that infused art, science, music, theater, comedy, vaudeville, rock and

dance party antics into one performance — along with a healthy dose of blue grease paint. It's the face paint that gives the group its name and creates both a similarity and anonymity for each of the three actors on stage.

"The makeup is simply a bald cap and blue theatrical grease paint that takes about 30 minutes to apply," says Massey, a Macon, Ga., native who plays a variety of musical instruments. "We do have our own color — Blue Man Blue — which is trademarked and only available to us."

Although group members spoke to audiences early in Blue Man's developmental stages, the performers now stay in character at all times, offering autographs after the show that are simply blue smudges. The face paint and

lack of voice can make it challenging to be a Blue Man, Massey explains.

"The only real means we have to tell a story and convey emotion is with our eyes," he says. "We can use our bodies and other physical storytelling techniques, but we can only 'act' with our eyes." Massey underwent extensive training to learn how to be a Blue Man. He was taught that there are things Blue Men do and don't do, he says.

"You have to learn the 'rules' of being a Blue Man and what drives him," he says. "There are three Blue Men in each show and you have to break down character differences among the three that are based loosely on the three original guys.

ON STAGE

Blue Man Group appears Jan. 3-8 at Milwaukee's Marcus Center for the Performing Arts (www.marcuscenter.org) and Jan. 24-29 at Madison's Overture Center for the Arts (www.overturecenter.com).

Finally, each actor brings his own personality to the performance."

Although there are three Blue Men on stage during each performance, the traveling troupe consists of four actors and two swing performers who come in as needed to provide relief during a grueling performance schedule.

Although he never started out thinking he would spend his career covered in blue makeup, Massey is happy to be part of a troupe

that performs around the world.

"I always knew my dream was to be a performer in some way, but I could never decide between acting and music," Massey says. "I went to an open casting call in New York seven years ago and found myself training to be a Blue Man. I've signed to do this tour until July, and I have to say that I am enjoying the ride."

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Singer pays homage to the ingénues of yore

Theater

LOUIS WEISBERG

Shirley Jones, Julie Andrews and Barbara Cook defined the term "ingénue" for a generation of musical theatergoers. Wholesomely beautiful, they projected the sort of innocence that could win a man's heart — and the wit to make for an entertaining courtship. Most importantly, their glorious soprano voices gave voice to the golden music of such masters of the musical stage as Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein.

Growing up in Canton, Ohio, Niffer Clarke looked up to these performers as role models. Blessed with natural beauty and a flawless soprano of her own, Clarke sought to emulate her idols, moving to New York after college to pursue a career on the musical stage.

"These three women were a huge influence on my life and what I wanted to be," she says.

Clarke pays tribute to the ingénues who inspired her in the most fitting way possible when she takes the stage on Dec. 30 with her pal Richard Carsey to present "Beyond the Ingénue — Julie Andrews, Shirley Jones, Barbara Cook and Me." She and Carsey have created an evening of song, dance, anecdotes and repartee that celebrates not only the music that these legendary performers made famous but the resilience that kept their careers going long after the sun set on their ingénue days. Skylight

artistic director Bill Thiesen directs.

Included among the anecdotes are some of Clarke's fond memories of working with Jones in concert. Clarke appeared in Jones' touring show "Night at the Oscars with Shirley Jones," which made a stop at Wisconsin Lutheran College in February 2010. Clarke says one of the highlights of her career came when Jones remarked about the similarities in their vocal quality.

"She's a dream," Clarke says of Jones. "She's phenomenal. Radiant and fun and just so generous with her time."

What inspires Clarke the most about Jones and her other musical idols is the way they've kept going despite setbacks, reinventing themselves to overcome career challenges while finding new ways of creative expression.

As an Oscar-winning actress, Jones defied conventional wisdom by transitioning to a successful television career and then to concert performances. She also overcame great personal tragedy, including the tragic death of husband Jack Cassidy, who burned to death after falling asleep on a couch with a lit cigarette.

After combating alcoholism, obesity and depression, Cook managed to establish a new career in later life as a solo performer. At 84, she continues to sing professionally.

Andrews suffered perhaps the greatest setback of the three ingénues, losing her famous four-octave

ON STAGE

"Beyond the Ingénue," featuring Niffer Clarke and Richard Carsey, is at Skylight Opera's Studio Theatre, 158 N. Broadway, Dec. 30 to Jan. 8. Call 414-291-7800.

voice to botched throat surgery in 1997. She turned to a successful career in writing children's books, as well as a second career in acting.

"It fascinates me that despite everything they've all been through, they're all still creating," Clarke says.

Clarke can relate. After setting out for a career on the Broadway stage, her life also took a detour. As John Lennon put it, "Life is what happens while you're busy making other plans."

Clarke got married, had a child and moved to Daytona Beach, Fla., where she started a school of the arts, teaching music to children. "There was a creative outlet in the teaching," Clarke says. "I was feeding my creative side that way. But there was always that part that was definitely missing."

That something was performing. Eventually, Clarke made her way back to New York, where she continued teaching but also began singing again. A turning point came when Skylight Opera Theatre artistic director Bill Thiesen called and invited her to Milwaukee in 2005 to appear in "Honk!" — a musical based on Hans Christian Andersen's classic children's story "The Ugly Duckling."

Clarke found a new cre-



PHOTO: COURTESY

Richard Carsey and Niffer Clarke are teaming up to present "Beyond the Ingénue" at Skylight Opera's Studio Theatre from Dec. 30 to Jan. 8.

ative home in Milwaukee, as well as a friendship and professional relationship with Carsey, a former Skylight artistic director and much-in-demand musical director. The two worked together most recently on Skylight's spectacular production of "The Music Man."

While Clarke's permanent address remains New York, Carsey moved to Milwaukee about 21 years

ago "for what I thought was going to be a two-year stay," he says. He now lives in Bay View with his longtime partner while performing regionally and in New York.

The affection and mutual admiration between Clarke and Carsey, abundantly apparent in a recent interview, should make for terrific stage chemistry. Carsey will accompany Clarke on the piano for numbers from

"Oklahoma," "Carousel," "Follies," "Victor/Victoria," "The Music Man" and other stage classics.

Carsey will step out from behind the piano for a dance number from "L'il Abner."

"Beyond the Ingénue" will have a life beyond Milwaukee. The show has already been booked in Iowa City, Canton, Ohio, and Lewisburg, Pa., in January and February.

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Streep's 'Iron Lady' reignites Thatcher debate

Film

JILL LAWLESS FOR AP

With hairdo, handbag and hubris, she dominated — and divided — Britain for a decade. Now a film about Margaret Thatcher is doing it all over again.

"The Iron Lady" stars Meryl Streep as Britain's first female prime minister, whose neo-Victorian values and free-market ideology helped transform a battered post-imperial country into an economically dynamic but industrially depleted and increasingly unequal society.

But it's the film's focus on the personal, rather than the political, that has made Thatcher's enemies apprehensive and her allies unhappy.

"The Iron Lady" depicts Thatcher, now 86, as a frail, elderly figure with dementia, holding imaginary conversations with her dead husband Denis (a genial Jim Broadbent) as she looks back on her life as a double outsider — both a woman and a lowly grocer's daughter in a male-dominated, patrician Conservative Party.

Streep's eerily evocative, pitch-perfect performance looks likely to earn her a 17th Academy Award nomination and possibly a third acting Oscar. But the intimacy of the movie's portrait has led some Conservatives to accuse it of being disrespectful, distasteful, even faintly idolatrous. One lawmaker has demanded a parliamentary debate, telling the House of Commons he was disturbed by the film.

"I just wonder why the filmmakers had to go so heavily on the mental illness, the dementia side, when Baroness Thatcher has had a very important life in the politics of this country and the world," said Conservative legislator Rob Wilson.

"It left me wondering about the humanity of the filmmakers who are very subtly denigrating someone who was a great prime minister."

Thatcher rarely appears in public these days, and her inner circle releases little information about her health. But her daughter Carol — sympathetically portrayed in

the film by Olivia Colman — wrote about her mother's dementia in a 2008 book.

Conservative grandee Norman Tebbit, a government minister under Thatcher, also criticized the film, saying the former prime minister was nothing like the "half-hysterical, overemotional, overacting woman portrayed by Meryl Streep" — though he admitted he was basing that judgment on the movie's trailer.

The film's director rejects the criticisms, but says she's not surprised by them.

"Those two words — Margaret Thatcher — are provocative in this country," said Phyllida Lloyd, a Briton who also directed Streep in the frothy Abba musical "Mamma Mia!"

"She still has the ability to set people on one another. People think of her either as St. Margaret who saved the nation, or the she-devil who ruined the lives of millions and bred a culture of greed."

Both sides may find their conceptions challenged by the film, which opens in Australia and New Zealand on Monday, in the U.S. Dec.

30 and in Britain on Jan. 6.

"The left wing are nervous about being asked to feel compassion for someone they think they are supposed to hate," Lloyd said. "But all we are doing is making her human. And the right are questioning whether there is something shameful about putting her on the screen with this frailty. But that's if you feel frailty is shameful — and we don't."

Lloyd said she initially hesitated to take on such a polarizing figure. Then she read the script by Abi Morgan ("Brick Lane," "Shame"), and "realized it was not a political film at all."

She says it is something much more subversive — a film about an elderly woman.

"If the film is political it's in wanting to put an old lady at the center of a film," she said.

That approach makes "The Iron Lady" more a character study than a political or historical drama. It touches on a handful of episodes from her 1979-1990 tenure — the 1982 Falklands War, the 1984-85 miners' strike, the 1984 IRA

bombing of the Conservative Party conference hotel in which five people died, and her eventual ousting after a rebellion by browbeaten Cabinet colleagues.

But this is not a film that makes viewers feel they are learning something new about recent and well-remembered events, in the way "The Queen" did with the aftermath of Princess Diana's death.

It is, instead, a portrait of aging and regret whose depiction of personal triumph and tragedy against a backdrop of state power has Shakespearean overtones.

Streep has called the film "Lear for girls" — founding ruler, faithful daughter, false friends — and there's also a touch of "Julius Caesar" in the story of a leader brought down by conspiring colleagues.

"It's a film about power and the loss of power," Lloyd said. "The cost of a huge life to oneself, one's family, one's colleagues" — and about how "our great strengths — conviction, certainty — can become our greatest flaws:

hubris, inflexibility."

The filmmakers' approach may be a canny box office move, allowing viewers to embrace the movie whether or not they support Thatcher's politics.

Initial reactions have been good. Several critics with no love for the Iron Lady say they were moved to tears.

There have not even been the expected howls of outrage at the casting of an American in the role of a British icon.

"I think Meryl has special rights in the U.K.," Lloyd said. "And there is almost a subconscious acknowledgment that to play someone of the magnitude of Thatcher you need a megastar."

Journalist Charles Moore, who is writing Thatcher's authorized biography, predicted the movie would upset Thatcher's friends and family, but said they could take comfort in the fact that it shows her in a positive light.

"The effect of the film is to dramatize very successfully many of the things that made Lady Thatcher so remark-

able," Moore said.

"It is an extraordinary story of somebody who comes from outside the establishment by sex and by class. It's a great tale of achievement, of sacrifices made and difficulties overcome."

He also thinks it marks a turning point, an end to the days when Britons had to choose sides on Thatcher — love her or hate her.

"You have to be over 40 to hate Mrs. Thatcher," Moore said. "Young people just want to know about her."

Still, some of the Thatcherite faithful say they will be staying away from the film.

"There must be something wrong with it if it's converting all these lefty women to the view that she was something rather good," said Bernard Ingham, Thatcher's long-serving press secretary.

He says that if people "want to know what Margaret Thatcher was like they shouldn't go anywhere near it."

"Meryl Streep may be a good actress," he said, "but she ain't Thatcher."

Meryl Streep portrays former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in "The Iron Lady."

PHOTO: COURTESY



The artist, the detective and the girl with the tattoo

Film

GREGG SHAPIRO

'THE ARTIST'

Everything you've heard about Michel Hazanavicius' "The Artist" is true and then some. As innovative as a (mostly) silent, black-and-white film about silent movies can be in 2011, "The Artist" not only restores a lost art form to its former glory but also polishes it up for a contemporary audience. One of the benefits of such a movie — at least at the screening this critic attended — is that the audience sat in silent, rapt attention. No conversations (whispered or otherwise) or ringing mobile phones interrupted the experience.

The tale begins in 1927, when silent film favorite George (Jean Dujardin) is at the top of his game and on top of the box office for the Kinograph movie studio and director Al (John Goodman). George and aspiring actress and fan Peppy (Bérénice Bejo) "meet cute" outside of a mobbed movie theater. George is in a loveless marriage to Doris (Penelope Ann Miller) and is more affectionate with his dog Uggie.

Sadly, things are doomed from the start. There's the 1929 stock market crash. Then there's the birth of the talkies, of which he wants no part. Combine that with the dissolution of his marriage, the ascent of Peppy as a movie star and his increased dependence on alcohol, and you have a first-rate tragedy. But what would the movies (silent or otherwise) be without redemption and second chances? Not to mention tap dances.

The marvelous thing about "The Artist" is the way the actors effortlessly communicate through facial expressions and body language. It's a reminder about how much more there is to acting than a raised voice, an inflated stare or explosions. "The Artist" is a truly artistic achievement.

"MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE - GHOST PROTOCOL" is usually the case with the "Mission: Impossible" movie franchise,

the action in the fourth, "Mission: Impossible - Ghost Protocol," takes place in a variety of exotic and dangerous locations. This time, it's Budapest, Moscow, Dubai and Mumbai, as well as the relatively tame Seattle. Busted out of a Moscow prison where he was doing time for killing the men responsible for the murder of his wife, super spy and master of disguise Ethan (Tom Cruise) is united with new team members Benji (Simon Pegg, who adds a much-needed dose of humor to the series) and Jane (Paula Patton). Their impossible mission is to track down nuclear extremist Hendricks (Michael Nyqvist) aka Cobalt.

Among the things making their mission impossible are the threat of a full-scale nuclear war between the United States and Russia, the deaths of Impossible Mission Force agents and secretaries, soulless enemy assassin Moreau (Léa Seydoux) and mysterious IMF analyst Brandt (Jeremy Renner). Director Brad Bird ("The Incredibles") does a bang-up job of keeping the action explosive and the special effects and stunts special. Especially when viewed in IMAX, audiences will find themselves on the edges of



PHOTO: COURTESY
From "The Artist."

their seats on more than one occasion.

'SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS'

As sequels starring Robert Downey Jr. go, the Sherlock Holmes franchise is faring slightly better than the "Iron Man" series.

This time out, on the eve of the wedding of Holmes' BFF Watson (Jude Law) to Mary (Kelly Reilly), a series of suspicious bombings rattles 1890s Europe. Through brilliant deduction, Holmes comes face to face with the brilliant but unapologetically evil Professor Moriarty (Jared Harris), who has come up with a plan to profit in a big way from the impending world war. Before you can say the honeymoon is over, Holmes pulls Watson away from his new bride. With the assistance of fortune teller Madam Simza (Noomi Rapace), a plan is set in motion to thwart Moriarty.

With his affinity for slow-mo violence, Guy Ritchie continues on the course to becoming the Sam Peckinpah of his generation. One of the most bombastic movies of the season, "Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows" is nevertheless entertaining, and the credit for that belongs to

the homoerotically charged relationship between Holmes and Watson. Makes you wish they'd just have sex and get it over with already.

'THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO'

Following the unprecedented success of the late Stieg Larsson's series of novels and the well-received trio of Swedish film versions of those novels, Hollywood has stepped in to get a slice of the popular pie. Not

much gets lost in translation in this faithful remake by director David Fincher, except perhaps there's less focus on Lisbeth Salander's bisexuality. Rooney Mara does magnetic justice to the role of the volatile, socially outcast computer hacker, portrayed in the Swedish films by Noomi Rapace.

There's a lot to set up and establish before Lisbeth and disgraced journalist and publisher Mikael (Daniel Craig) become a team. Still reeling from his libel case

loss, Mikael is summoned by wealthy industrialist Henrik (Christopher Plummer) to help solve the 40-year-old mystery of the disappearance of Henrik's favorite niece. Accepting the project, Mikael finds himself in the midst of one of the most dysfunctional families ever imagined. Nazis and religious fanatics and psychos, oh my!

Lisbeth, meanwhile, has her own hardships. She is in demand with various legal professionals and high-ranking business officials for her incredible computer and research skills, as well as her photographic memory. But as a ward of the state, she is also captive to the perverse whims of Bjurman (Yorick van Wageningen), the government bureaucrat who signs her allowance checks. Bjurman's abuse of Lisbeth makes for some of the film's most disturbing and graphic sequences. But she gets the chance to serve up a chilled dish of revenge.

Once Mikael becomes aware of Lisbeth, he realizes that he won't be able to complete his investigation without her help. An unlikely team if there ever was one, the combined firepower of Mikael and Lisbeth makes for explosive results. Thrilling, terrifying and highly entertaining, "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" definitely hits its mark.

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PHOTO: COURTESY
From "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo."

Between Bond films, Daniel Craig has banner year

Film

JAKE COYLE FOR AP

The time off from James Bond has been very good to Daniel Craig.

In the three years since the release of "Quantum of Solace," Craig has made his Broadway debut ("A Steady Rain"); starred in the World War II-era tale of Jewish rebellion "Defiance"; joined up with Steven Spielberg again ("The Adventures of Tintin," following their earlier collaboration in "Munich"); and starred in the summer blockbuster "Cowboys & Aliens." Now, he's adding yet another major franchise to his plate, with David Fincher's remake of "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo."

At this point, early misgivings about the "Blond Bond" seem laughable. Craig has emerged as one of the biggest British movie stars. More than that, he's already managed to prove that — maybe more than any previous guardian of the tuxedoed spy — he won't be pigeonholed by the role. Craig has not just grown into Bond, but, perhaps, beyond it.

"It's a very fortunate time for me at the moment," Craig said in a recent interview. "So I'm just trying to grab it with both hands."

Though the 43-year-old actor is known for being careful of his privacy, Craig, dressed casually in a jean jacket and jeans, comes across as relaxed. Self-deprecation is his fallback, and he often laughs sheepishly at his own wit. Though his screen presence is bleak and still, his manner is more loose and jocular. He meets a reporter in the lobby of a New York hotel for a recent interview, but Craig isn't visiting — this is his hometown now.

"It was one of those decisions in my life where it was like going, 'I want to be here.' Thankfully, I've got very good reasons," he says, presumably alluding to his wife Rachel Weisz and her 4-year-old son. Craig and Weisz (his co-star in Jim Sheridan's horror flick "Dream House,"



PHOTO: COURTESY

Daniel Craig in "Casino Royale."

released earlier this year) wed privately in June. He has a teenage daughter from an early marriage.

Though Craig's personal life has become an increasing interest to tabloids, he's maintained a degree of elusiveness. Even in risible concepts such as "Cowboys and Aliens," he seems somehow above the fray, consistently projecting an air of professionalism and intellect.

Fincher calls him the "giant planetary body," of "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo," around which the other characters (such as Rooney Mara's Lisbeth Salander) orbit. The director is clearly taken by Craig, whom he compares to Robert Mitchum and Kirk Douglas — agile leading men with calm exteriors and smoldering eyes.

"He's obviously got a physical presence and a sense of menace," says Fincher. "But he has this ability to be available for the other actor. It's a selflessness. It's a movie star thing. It's knowing how to create a conduit for the

audience.

"It's what he can do in here," Fincher says, gesturing a close-up frame.

In "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo," Craig plays intrepid journalist Mikael Blomkvist, who teams up with Salander to investigate a long-dormant missing woman case that unravels the sordid history of a wealthy Swedish family. It is, of course, based on the best-selling novels of Stieg Larsson, whose books were previously adapted into a trio of Swedish-language movies.

If the film succeeds how Sony hopes it will, it will generate at least two more films — meaning Craig could be simultaneously attached to two big movie series. He's currently a third of the way through shooting his third Bond film, "Skyfall," directed by Sam Mendes (who previously directed Craig in "Road to Perdition"). His contract has an option for a fourth Bond film, but more than that seems likely. Bond producer Michael G. Wilson recently

said he hopes to sign Craig for another five films and make him the longest running 007.

Asked about the prospect of carrying two franchises, Craig says jokingly, "I'm going to be very old. Botox is going to be in there.

"We'll see how 'Dragon Tattoo' does, but, yes, of course, I'd love to come in and do (more)," he says. "This is something I really believe in and I want to put all of my effort in to. I've just got to find time to live and that's really matters now.

"It's not a problem. It's good stuff, I think," he pauses for a beat, then slyly reveals more doubt and a slight confession. "Talk to me in a year. ... I'm talking a good game. I'm trying my best."

Craig, the son of an art teacher and a pub landlord, knew he wanted to be an actor by age 6. At 16, he joined England's National Youth Theatre and later continued into drama school. He started attracting atten-

tion after his performance as Francis Bacon's lover in 1998's "Love Is the Devil: Study for a Portrait of Francis Bacon" an early hint of Craig's daring.

Hollywood first took notice after a respectable supporting performance alongside Angelina Jolie in "Lara Croft: Tomb Raider." He memorably starred in a couple of Roger Mitchell dramas seen more in the U.K., "Enduring Love" and "The Mother," but he also began a continuing run in thrillers — a favorite genre — that included "Road to Perdition" and "Layer Cake."

It was surely his smooth fit — a steely, purposeful presence with a sinewy (and more than occasionally shirtless) frame — in such films that won him the role of Bond, which he began in 2006's "Casino Royale." The film, one of the most acclaimed in the series, restarted Bond, turning him into a more realistic, brooding and postmodern figure.

Before undertaking the

'It's a very fortunate time for me at the moment, (so) I'm just trying to grab it with both hands.'

007 mantle, Craig made his peace with the possibility of being pigeonholed.

"In my head, I very clearly said to myself, 'If it does, it does,'" says Craig. "There's nothing you can do about it. And there's no shame in that, for Christ's sake."

2008's "Quantum of Solace," directed by Marc Forster, was marred by the writers' strike. The film went into production with what Craig calls "a third of a script," which he and Forster had to attempt to fill in. On "Skyfall," more focus was put on the screenplay to avoid such a situation. He says he's currently "incredibly happy" about where he is with Bond, and eager for a new installment that returns some familiar elements.

But finding his equilibrium away from Bond took some adjustment. Craig acknowledges that he initially looked for "roles that were diametrically opposed" before learning he ultimately had to rely on his gut. "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" — European, stylish and lethal — might not have qualified under the older rubric. But Craig can't say no to a good, spine-chilling potboiler.

"I just wanted to be as natural as possible," he says of Blomkvist. "I wanted the audience to just go, 'OK,' so the thriller thing could happen. Without that, no one is in danger. You need to be doing the real thing every time, and then hopefully the audience is taken in by it. We're trying to con them, obviously, but con them in the nicest way possible."

Postcard from the Philippines Author blurs line between real, fictive

Interview

GREGG SHAPIRO

Gay writer R. Zamora Linmark — aka Zack — is the author of two poetry collections, two novels and the play "Rolling The R's," based on his first novel of the same name. His second novel, the marvelous "Leche," is the kind of read that makes the cold winter hours pass quickly.



PHOTO: COURTESY

R. Zamora Linmark.

Gregg Shapiro: **How much of you is Vince, the novel's main character?**

R. Zamora Linmark: I'm glad you asked me that, because one of the things I had to keep in mind while writing the novel was that I was not Vince. ... We may share the parallel experience of having gone back to our childhood home, the Philippines, after being away from it for so long, (but) Vince was not me and I was not him. I was creating a story that is dependent on imagination, a story that, at times, blurs the fictive from the real, the factual from what could be construed as factual. Once I liberated Vince from myself, and vice-versa, another world, as intense and magnificent as mine, opened up.

One of the most prevalent components of "Leche" is the humor.

Humor is a necessary element in "Leche" because it is partly a satire and more importantly, humor — twisted, corny, playful — is an integral part of the Philippine culture. It is their way of dealing with this maddening world — with grief, love and other disappointments.

It's clear that Vince and others in the book have a love/hate relationship with the Philippines. Is that a commonly shared feeling?

I don't know if it's a shared feeling by all Filipinos. Ambivalence, according to John Updike, is "the only kind of love worth writing about."

Dreams also play a role in the book.

Dreams, or my understanding of them, are metaphors for what we have gone or are going

or will go through. For writers, exploring the dreams of their characters is one route to better understanding them. Another is through their desires.

The book does an effective job of depicting the blurring of the lines between superstition and religion.

Many Filipinos are "folk Catholics" (if there is such a term). That is, they believe in superstitions and anting-antings (or amulets) as much as they do in God and miracles. "Blurring" is the operative word. It is what I attempt to do in "Leche" — to blur the lines between two opposing elements or forces, between the real and hyper-fictive world, between the personal and public, between the truth and exaggeration. The aim of fiction is not just to tell a story but to convince the reader that the events in it took place.

You utilize some fascinating devices, including the "postcards" and the "tourist tips."

"Leche" is also a travelogue, a guidebook to Manila as well as a young man's journey into the heart of (his) darkness. Think of Lemuel Gulliver, except that he is going to a foreign place that used to be his home. I thought of postcards and tourist tips because

these are the "tools" of the traveler. The postcards also allow us to see Manila from Vince's perspective.

I really loved the wisdom of beloved movie director Bino Boca and housekeeper Burrnadette, two characters on the opposite ends of the social spectrum.

Both Bino Boca and Burrnadette served as Vince's guides. In fact, many of the characters that Vince meets during his stay in Manila serve like a guide to him. Burrnadette was the closest to being Vince's spiritual guidance, explaining to him, for example, the possible causes of his nightmares and the migratory ways of Filipinos. Bino Boca, on the other hand, was Vince's guide to Manila's High Society 101.

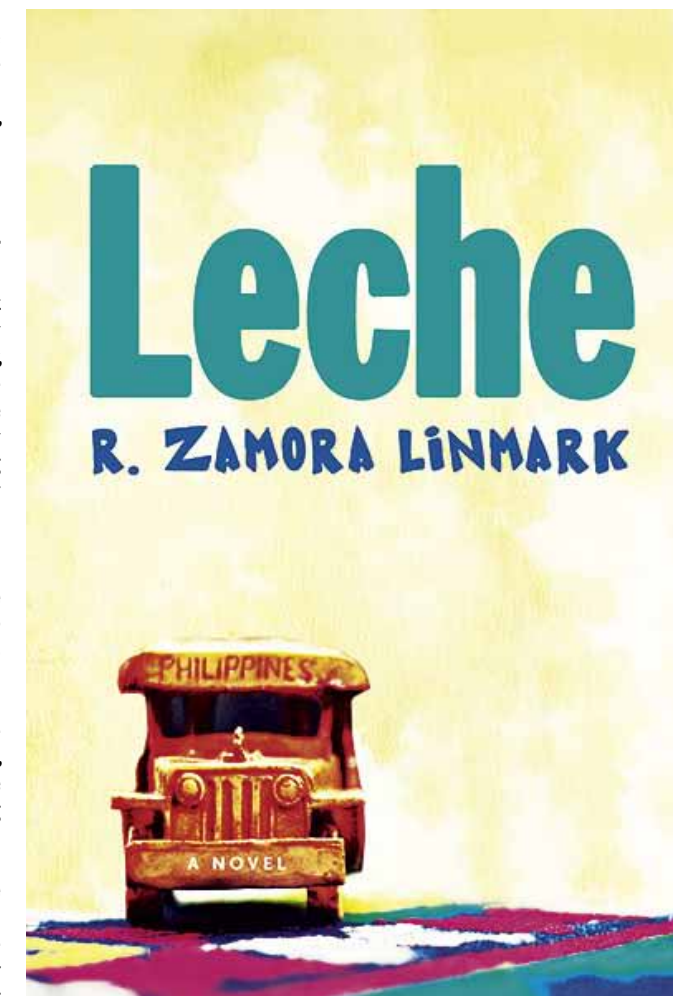
Keeping with the movie theme, there is a cinematic quality to the book. Is that a reflection of the influence of film on Filipino culture?

I write in terms of scenes, which may explain for the book's cinematic quality. The chapters, composed of moments and memories, are broken down according to scenes. Also, the protagonist Vince majored in film (and literature), which explains the number of film references. If anything, "Leche" is an homage to the wonderful world of cinema — to Fellini, Chaplin and Filipino melodrama movies. It was the movies that initiated Vince into the world of the imagination, and it was also the movies that triggered unwanted memories.

"Leche" also deals with the intersection of gay and Filipino culture.

I'm not an advocate of categories, but if "Leche" has a sexuality, it would be "queer." It's neither gay nor straight. It subverts rather than subscribes to our binary ways of thinking and looking at gender. In "Leche," I tried to show that desire cannot be boxed in, that it is as uncategorizable as it is temporary. That it's open season for everyone who dares to catch it.

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DVDiva

GREGG SHAPIRO

'BEGINNERS'

The best movie of 2011 (and possibly the best "gay" movie ever by a straight filmmaker), "Beginners" has a way of staying with you long after it has faded from the screen. Written and directed by Mike Mills ("Thumbsucker"), it's based on his personal experience with his late father coming out as gay following the death of his wife. "Beginners" takes a non-traditional approach to telling a non-traditional story and succeeds on every level. It's the kind of movie that has the power to have you laughing out loud one moment and wiping tears of sadness from your eyes the next.

Oliver (Ewan McGregor) is an artist with serious relationship issues, afraid of repeating his parents' mis-



PHOTO: COURTESY

From "Beginners."

takes. He has just come to terms with his father Hal (Christopher Plummer) in an Oscar-worthy performance) coming out in

his 70s when he learns that Hal is dying of cancer. Shortly after Hal's passing, Oliver meets actress Anna (Melanie Laurent), who

could either be the best possible thing for him or the worst.

Sensitive, artistic and poetic, Mills handles the subject matter with grace and a unique sense of humor. It's well worth watching Oliver, Hal and Anna (and Hal's dog Arthur) navigate their way through the challenging landscape. DVD bonus features include commentary by Mills and a "making of" short.

'MAKING THE BOYS'

This documentary by Crayton Robey fills in the blanks about the classic gay film "The Boys in the Band" and its creator Mart Crowley.

Crowley takes viewers back to his childhood and later to Roddy McDowell's beach house during the summer of 1965, where he mingled with McDowell, Sal Mineo, Jane Fonda, Julie

Andrews, Lauren Bacall, Natalie Wood, Anthony Perkins, Judy Garland, Rock Hudson and others. We follow Crowley from his job as the late Natalie Wood's assistant to his first attempt at screenwriting – the script for "The Bette Davis Show" sitcom pilot.

The doc focuses on the rise of gay culture and awareness during the pre-Stonewall 1960s, paralleled with the story of the original stage production of "The Boys in the Band" (including the casting process). Interviewees, including Robert Wagner, Michael Musto, Andy Cohen, Dan Savage, Ed Koch, Marc Shaiman, Paul Rudnick, Edward Albee, Michael Cunningham, Cheyenne Jackson, Larry Kramer, "Boys in the Band" director William Friedkin, and cast members Laurence Luckinbill and Peter White, trace the play's trajectory from stage to screen. What comes through is a respectful homage to one of the most important and controversial pieces of contemporary gay theater and cinema, and its impact on society at large, as well as the cast. DVD bonus features include the "missing scene," additional "Malibu '65" footage and more.



PHOTO: COURTESY

The guys in "Making the Boys."



In Kate Bush's footsteps

Music

GREGG SHAPIRO

KATE BUSH

It's easy to follow in Kate Bush's footsteps, or rather footprints, when she's walking in the snow, as she does on her frosty new disc "50 Words For Snow." Closest in mood to her 2005 "Aerial" set, right down to the miniepic length of the seven songs (the shortest track clocks in at just under seven minutes), the disc feels like the musical equivalent of a snowstorm. That's especially true of "Snowflake," which triggers the hypnotic sensation that occurs while sitting in a window and watching the snow blanket streets, sidewalks, houses and trees. The weather intensifies on "Lake

Tahoe," although it's not quite a blizzard. Of course, once the snow has fallen, what's left to do but build a snowman – as Bush does on "Misty"? Already a favorite among gays, Bush cements her status with cameos by her royal highness Elton John on "Snowed in at Wheeler Street" and out actor/writer Stephen Fry, who supplies the voice of the character Prof. Joseph Yupik on the dazzling title cut.

TORI AMOS

Tori Amos is probably the artist most frequently compared to Kate Bush. Early in Amos' career, when the focus was on the piano and her voice, the Bush comparisons came fast and furious. With her ambitious new album, the 21st century song cycle "Night of Hunters," she bravely explores another avenue. It's not all that surprising

to find a classically trained musician such as Amos, moving, if only momentarily, in this direction. After all, Rufus Wainwright, the closest thing that Amos has to a contemporary, has written an opera. Joined by daughter Natasha Hawley on several tracks and accompanied by the Apollon Musagète Quartet and Andreas Ottensamer, principal clarinetist of the Berlin Philharmonic, Amos pays homage to Chopin, Satie, Bach, Schumann, Debussy and others through a series of variations based on the composers' themes. In spite of the distinctly non-commercial nature of the recording, Amos fans are certain to find tracks to their liking, such as "Job's Coffin" and "Your Ghost."

EMILIE SIMON

While Miss Tori is off investi-

gating classical pastures, French pop chanteuse Emilie Simon goes for a distinctly vintage Kate Bush vibe on "The Big Machine." The Bush business is especially strong on cuts such as "Rainbow," "Nothing to Do With You," "Chinatown" and "The Devil at My Door." You might think this Kate copycat would get tiresome, but there's actually something charming at work. Simon emerges as her own performer, particularly on "Ballad of the Big Machine," "Dreamland," "Rocket to the Moon" and "This Is Your World."

LIA ICES

You can hear traces of Kate and Tori, as well as Chan Marshall (aka Cat Power) on "Love Is Won," the timeless opener on "Grown Unknown" by Lia Ices. The same can be said of dazzling tracks such as "Little Marriage" and "New Myth." Ices even skirts Enya's environs on the airy "Bag of Wind," then explores uncharted regions on the aptly named title cut. By the way, that's Bon Iver's Justin Vernon on "Daphne."



Kate Bush. PHOTO: COURTESY

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"Next to Normal"

DEC. 29, THURSDAY

"Next to Normal," the Pulitzer- and Tony Award-winning musical, continues at the Milwaukee Rep, 108 E. Wells St., through Jan. 15. Call 414-224-9490 or go to www.MilwaukeeRep.com.

Stand-up comic **Jim Gaffigan** returns to The Pabst Theater, 144 E. Wells St., for his traditional New Year's Eve and New Year's Eve shows. Call 414-286-3663 or go to www.pabsttheater.org.

"Song Man, Dance Man," created by and starring song-and-dance man Jon Peterson, continues at the Milwaukee Repertory Theater's Stackner Cabaret, 108 E. Wells St., through Jan. 8. Call 414-224-9490 or go to www.milwaukeekeerep.com.

DEC. 30, FRIDAY

SAGE Milwaukee presents the **Rootin' Tootin', High-Falutin' Talent Parade and Spaghetti Dinner** at 5:30 p.m. at Plymouth Church UCC, 2717 E. Hampshire. Call 414-224-0517.

Skylight Opera Theatre presents "**Beyond the Ingénue: Julie Andrews, Shirley Jones, Barbara Cook and Me,**" featuring Niffer Clarke and Richard Carsey, through Jan. 8 at Broadway Theatre Center, 158 N. Broadway. Call 414-291-7800.

Conductor Marvin Hamlisch, singer Sylvia McNair, dancer Ryan VanDenBoom, pianist Kevin Cole and the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra pay **tribute to the George and Ira Gershwin songbook** tonight and tomorrow night at 8 p.m. and on Jan. 1, at 2:30 p.m. at the Marcus Center.



DEC. 31, SATURDAY

ART Milwaukee and NEWaukee New Year's Eve have organized **one of the Milwaukee area's most innovative private New Year's Eve parties**, beginning at 8 p.m. at Eisner Museum, 208 N. Water St. Included are an interactive fashion show, ultraviolet live art room, local video DJ and singer/songwriter Joe Wray, multiple ball drops, champagne toast and an oxygen bar. Price starts at \$75 per person. Go to www.nye-mke.com.



EDITED AND COMPILED BY GRIGG SHAPIRO

JAN. 1, SUNDAY

Happy New Year!



"Blue Man Group"

JAN. 3, TUESDAY

"Blue Man Group" opens at the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, at the corner of Water and State in Milwaukee. The bald men in blue paint the town, well, blue, during their five-day engagement in Milwaukee through Jan. 8. Call 414-273-2787.

JAN. 4, WEDNESDAY

High Noon Saloon, 701A E. Washington in Madison, welcomes **Camper Van Beethoven**, featuring out musician Victor Krummenacher, at 8 p.m. Call 608-268-1122.



Comedian Jim Gaffigan on Dec. 29

JAN. 7, SATURDAY

For its Choose concert, Present Music performs "**Souvenir**" by Donald Erb, described as "an audience participation, multi-media, glow-in-the-dark extravaganza for the senses complete with neon dancers, ping pong balls and weather balloons," at 6:30 p.m. at Turner Hall Ballroom, 103 N. Fourth. Call 414-286-3663.

The Racine Theatre Guild, 2519 Northwestern (Highway 38) in Racine, presents comedian Mike Toomey in "**TV and Me**" at 8 p.m. Call 262-633-4218.



Save the Date!

JAN. 13, FRIDAY

"A Tribute to Pine Valley" celebrates 41 years of the beloved ABC soap opera "All My Children," featuring participating "All My Children" cast members Walt Willey (Jackson), Cameron Mathison (Ryan), Vincent Irizarry (David), Darnell Williams (Jesse), Alicia Minshew (Kendall) and Jacob Young (JR), at 7 p.m. at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center, 400 W. College Ave. in Appleton. Call 920-730-3760.



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Edgar Degas, *Woman in a Tub*, ca. 1883 (detail). London, Tate. Bequeathed by Mrs. A.F. Kessler 1983. Photo by © Tate, London, 2011.

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