Style, grace — and bawdy jokes

Scarborough Renaissance Festival performer Marina Petrano loves the circus life
by Tammye Nash, Page 8
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  Marina Petiano of Cirqa Brava. Photo by Tammye Nash. Design by Kevin Thomas

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Jury lets gay man’s killer off easy, thanks to ‘gay panic’ defense

A jury has bypassed the prosecution’s efforts to get a conviction on charges of either murder or manslaughter and instead convicted James Miller of Austin of criminally negligent homicide after he claimed he killed his neighbor, Daniel Spencer, in 2015 because Spencer made a pass at him.

The jury sentenced Miller to 10 years of probation. The judge also ordered Miller to use a portable alcohol monitoring device for at least a year.

While prosecutors argued in court that blood evidence at the scene disputed Miller’s claims, the jury apparently gave more weight to defense attorneys’ arguments that because such violence was so “uncharacteristic” of their client, it had to have been self defense for him to react that way.

Both California and Illinois have banned use of the gay panic defense in trials, and the American Bar Association has called on all other states to do the same.

— Tammye Nash

Valdez and White to debate

Democratic Gubernatorial candidate Lupe Valdez has accepted an invitation to a grassroots debate organized by Texas Young Democrats among a coalition of groups including State Tejano Democrats, Texas Coalition of Black Democrats, Texas Young Democrats, Texas College Democrats, Travis County Democratic County and others.

The debate will be open to the public and is projected to take place at the University of Texas in Austin on Friday, May 11. More information will be released by the organizers in the coming days.

Lupe Valdez released the following statement with regards to the debate:

“Elections should be about the concerns that keep working Texans up at night, not 30-second sound bites. I have always believed candidates should talk about our values, our experience, and our vision. That’s why I’ve been traveling across Texas, meeting folks, and listening to voters and grassroots activists.”

“I’m proud to announce that our campaign has accepted an invitation to debate from a broad coalition of Democratic grassroots organizations on May 11 in Austin. I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again, the grassroots will decide this race, not big donors.

“I look forward to telling my story, and showing how decades of experience delivering progressive solutions and keeping people safe have prepared me to be Texas Governor. I have long known what my values are. I’m a Texas Democrat. I look forward to seeing which opponent shows up the ‘very conservative Democrat or moderate Republican.’ Most importantly, I look forward to discussing the concerns I have heard on the campaign trail from so many Texas families.”

— David Tafet

DIFF kicks off with Yen Tan’s ‘1985’

The Dallas International Film Festival got off to a later start than usual, which means DIFF coincides with DIFFA this year, but don’t get confused. DIFF has a longer run and starts earlier — in fact, it kicked off Thursday with a gay, North Texas-filmed feature called 1985. The writer-director, Yen Tan, pictured, is based in Austin, and a darling of indie film and festivals;

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THE GAY AGENDA

Have an event coming up? Email your information to Managing Editor Tammye Nash at nash@dallasvoice.com or Senior Staff Writer David Taffet at taffet@dallasvoice.com by Wednesday at 5 p.m. for that week’s issue.

MAY
• May 4: Couple Communication Workshop
Candy Marcum, LPC, and Jimmy Owen, LPC, present a four-part Couple Communication Workshop, taking place over two weekends, from 5-7 p.m. May 4 and 11, 10 a.m.-noon on May 5 and 12. Designed to help couples understand each other better by learning effective communication skills. Cost is $450 per couple, which includes two workbooks and eight hours of instruction. Registration is required. For information contact Marcum by phone at 214-521-1278 or by email at candy@candymarcum.com, or visit Candymarcum.com.

• May 4: ASD Founders Day
AIDS Services of Dallas celebrates Founders’ Day from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. in the courtyard at the Revlon Apartments, 720 N. Lancaster Ave. Includes the presentation of the Phil Morrow Memorial Award, the Daryl Moore Memorial Award and special recognition of several organizations, businesses and individuals for outstanding support.

• May 5: NRA protest
While the NRA holds its national convention at the Dallas Convention Center, protesters gather at noon at City Hall Plaza.

• May 5: NAMIWalks Dallas
The 13th annual walk to raise funds and reduce the stigma of mental illness is chaired by lesbian singer songwriter Daphne Willis. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the walk at 10:30 a.m. at Dr Pepper Ballpark, 7300 Rough Riders Trail, Frisco.

• May 11-14: Purple Party
May 11-14: Purple Party
May 12: Gray Pride Prom
Gray Pride for LGBTQ seniors ages 50 and older. Live DJ, dancing, raffle prizes and more from 7-11 p.m. at Resource Center, 5750 Cedar Springs Road.

• May 11: DFW Pride Happy Hour
DFW Pride Happy Hour holds a special happy hour event from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Resource Center, 5750 Cedar Springs Road.

• May 11-14: Purple Party
May 12: An Evening with Chadwick Moore
Log Cabin Republicans of Dallas present former OUT magazine and The Advocate editor Chadwick Moore from 5:30-9 p.m. at a private residence. $40-100. LCRDallas.nationbuilder.com/events.

• May 11-14: Purple Party
May 12: Bridges: LGBTQ+ Then & Now
Gray Pride presents a performance by Flexible Grey featuring monologues based on questions submitted for LGBT seniors by Millennial LGBTs in an effort to bridge the gap between the generations. 7 p.m. in the Borick Auditorium at Resource Center, 5750 Cedar Springs Road. Performances repeat May 16-19.

• May 11-14: Purple Party
May 13: Mother’s Day with The Women’s Chorus of Dallas
TWCD performs at 12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. at Texas Discovery Gardens, 3601 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd.

• May 11-14: Purple Party
May 14: First day of early voting
Early voting for the primary runoff election runs May 14-18. Vote in any early voting location in your county.
• Weekly: Lambda Weekly at 1 p.m. on Sunday in 89.3 KNON-FM with David Taffet, Lerone Landis and the late Patti Fink. Marjory Stoneman Douglas student Lola Sanabria and friends are this week’s guests; Leadership Lambda Toastmasters gay-identified Toastmasters group meets from 6:30-8 p.m. every Monday at the First Unitarian Church, 4016 Normandy Road (does not meet on Mondays that are holidays); United Black Ellument hosts discussion on HIV/AIDS in the black community (UBE Connected) at 7 p.m. every fourth Tuesday of the month at 3918 Harry Hines Blvd.; Core Group Meeting every 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m.; Fuse game night every Monday evening except the last of the month at 8 p.m. at the Fuse space in the 3918 Harry Hines Blvd.; FuseConnect every Wednesday from 7 p.m. For more information call or e-mail Jalenzski at 214-760-9718 ext. 3 or Jalenzski@dallasresourcecenter.org. LGBT square dancing group Pegasus Squares meets every Sunday from 2:30–4:30 p.m. at Grace United Methodist Church, 4105 Junius St. For more info, email pegasussquares@gmail.com; Dallas Frontrunners meet for a walk or run on the Katy Trail at Oak Lawn Park, Turtle Creek and Hall Street, every Wednesday at 7:15 p.m. and every Saturday at 9 a.m.; Leadership Lambda Toastmasters practices and develops speaking and leadership skills from 6:30-8 p.m. on Tuesdays at First Unitarian Church, third floor of the Hallman Building, 4012 St. Andrews; Gray Pride support group from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. followed by mixer every Monday at Resource Center, 5750 Cedar Springs Road; Lambda AA meets at 7 a.m., noon, 6 p.m. 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. and has a men’s meeting at 10 a.m. on Saturdays and meets at 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Sunday at 1575 W. Mockingbird Lane #625. Call 214-267-0222 for details; DTV in Spayse, news and entertainment discussion live streaming every Friday, 4–5 p.m., on the Spayse Station YouTube channel.

Meet Chaco, a 6-year-old, seal point Siamese mix. He’s a friendly, goofy guy who loves to be around people, likes exploring, being petted and curling up for catnaps near his humans. He’s a social guy, and is happiest when he gets to spend time with people. He’s positive for FIV, a manageable but transmittable illness, so he’ll need to be the only cat in the home or will need to live with other FIV-positive cats. If you’re looking for a funny, handsome guy to make you smile, he’s the one for you. Chaco has been neutered, microchipped and has received all age-appropriate vaccinations. Come meet him today! #163086

Chaco is waiting for you at the SPCA of Texas’ Jan Rees-Jones Animal Care Center in Dallas, 2400 Lone Star Drive (near I-30 and Hampton Road). Hours are noon-6 p.m. Sun-Wed and noon-7 p.m. Thurs-Sat. Regular adoption fees are $180 for puppies; and kittens aged 0-6 months, $55 for adult dogs and cats aged 6 months or older, $25 for senior dogs or cats aged 7 years and older and $25 for VIP dogs and cats (available for adoption for 30 days or more). Fee includes spay/neuter surgery, age-appropriate vaccinations, a heartworm test for dogs six months and older and a FIV/FeLV test for cats 4 months and older, initial flea/tick preventative and heartworm preventative, a microchip, 30 days of PetHealth Insurance provided by PetPlan, a free 14-day wellness exam with VCA Animal Hospitals, a free year-long subscription to ActivePets, a rabies tag and a free leash. Call 214-740-SPCA (7722) or visit today.

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Living the circus life

Marina Petrano and her show partner Jennifer Buehlman have made life on the road a family affair.
The circus life

When you think of acrobats on aerial silks, you probably think of elegant, graceful women performing breathtaking feats of strength and skill high above the ground. If you go see a Cirqa Brava out at Scarborough Renaissance Festival, you will certainly see all of that.

But be prepared for plenty more — like a mind-boggling contortionist act, audience participation and bawdy repartee and—innuendo delivered with a wink and a grin by a delightfully impish young woman who’s not afraid to make a fart joke.

By the time she was 14, Marina Petrano was working as a street performer, entertaining tourist on the pier in her hometown of Clearwater, Fla. By the time she was in high school, she barely had a minute to spare.

“I was a competitive sword-spinner” in high school, Petrano said, explaining that she was a member of her school’s performance ensemble, the Seminole Winter Guard.

But between taking “all AP [advanced placement] classes,” touring full time as a performer and a 40-hour a week rehearsal schedule, it didn’t take long for her to get burned out. So she headed north to attend classes at The New York Conservatory for Dramatic Arts, graduating from the school’s intensive program in 2010.

Her training as an actor and her years of experience as a performer helped her land a role in a stage production of Carnival — and that’s where her love of the circus really took root. So, she said, “I ran away to join the circus. Really.”

The circus life

“Joining the circus” translates, first, to studying circus arts with the Aerial Angels and Circus Arts of Tampa Bay. She learned the art of aerial silks and was soon traveling the U.S. and beyond as a member of the Aerial Angels troupe.

While she wanted to focus on learning to work on aerial silks, instructors there quickly decided to also needed to learn to be a contortionist.

“I really didn’t want to be a contortionist, but in circus school, you don’t get to pick your major. So I learned to be a contortionist,” Petrano said. “I spent the next several months with a large Moroccan man trying to bend me in half. The first time I felt my head touch my butt, I got so excited I actually passed out.”

In the fall of 2012, at 18, Petrano moved to Brattleboro, Vt., to study at the New England Center for Circus Arts. She graduated from the Intensive Professional Training Program there the following spring, launching her into even more traveling and performances.

Then, a little more than a year ago, a mutual friend introduced Petrano to aerialist Jennifer Buehlm, and Cirqa Brava was born.

Buehlm has been studying and performing ballet since she was 5. For awhile, in her early 20s, she toured as a dancer for a band. She learned aerial silks and performed with the circus for awhile and performed in her own show for about four years.

In the show as it’s written, Petrano is the one who does all the talking, while Buehlm stays silent, miming her way through as the “straight guy” to Petrano’s jokes and wild antics. In fact, Buehlm is the “straight guy” of the act in more ways than one: While she and Petrano are “show partners,” off stage they each have their own life partners.

Buehlm recently married, and her husband is also a performer. At Scarborough, Renaissance Festival he is the wandering insult comedian.

Petrano and her life partner, Maria, have been together several years. They have a house in Clearwater, but they don’t get to spend much time there. Cirqa Brava is on the road for at least part of 10 months out of the year, and every December Petrano goes to Fargo, N., to teach aerial ballet.

Thankfully though, Maria’s job as a grant writer allows her to work remotely, giving her the ability to travel with Petrano and Buehlm and act as their “roadie,” helping set up for shows and break down afterwards. That comes in especially handy at renfaires and other events where they share a stage and can’t leave props out between shows.

Petrano said she and Maria have had good experiences within the community of traveling performers and the local faire folk, who have in their experience very open and accepting of them as a couple. That isn’t always the case, though, when they wander out of the confines of the faire and into the often-rural communities where such events are located.

“We’ll go out somewhere to eat, and be sitting in a dinner holding hands, and then realize that we are getting some dirty looks from people,” Petrano said.
Into the future

When she and Buehlman met, it was, Petrano said, “instant love.” And they immediately set about creating a show for the two of them that was both funny and “full of woman power.”

And light-hearted innuendo, delivered with a wink and a grin.

And contortionist displays utilizing members of the audience as props, complete with bawdy jokes about bladder control.

And sight gags like Buehlman “warming up” for the show with a glass of champagne poured from a bottle strategically placed on a table at the back of the stage. (“It’s really just water,” Buehlman admits.)

And of course the grace and elegance of their performances on the aerial silks.

And so much more.

The circus life, both women said, is a very demanding one physically. The strength and skill needed for their show demands constant work to stay in shape. And the risk of injury is always there. And both Petrano and Buehlman know they won’t always be able to perform the show as it’s written now.

So what happens when that time comes? “We’ll write a new show,” Petrano declared. “We change, so the show changes.”

Despite the constant travel, the physical demands and the ever-present risks, both women said they love the circus life, not only for what it gives them, but for what it lets them give others.

“The world can be such a grim place these days. There’s just not a lot of magic left,” Buehlman said. “But the circus is magic. It’s one of those few magic things left.”

And Petrano and Buehlman want to keep on sharing that magic with the rest of the world as long as they can.

Scarborough Renaissance Festival, located just off I-35E on FM 66 in Waxahachie, continues each Saturday and Sunday, through May 27, and Memorial Day, Monday, May 28, from 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Cirqa Brava performs each day of faire on the Roundabout Stage in Holly Field at noon, 1:30 p.m., 3 p.m. and 5 p.m.
no and Buehlman know they won’t always be able to perform the show as it’s written now. So what happens when that time comes? “We’ll write a new show,” Petrano declared. “We change, so the show changes.” Despite the constant travel, the physical demands and the ever-present risks, both women said they love the circus life, not only for what it gives them, but for what it lets them give others. “The world can be such a grim place these days. There’s just not a lot of magic left,” Buehlman said. “But the circus is magic. It’s one of those few magic things left.” And Petrano and Buehlman want to keep on sharing that magic with the rest of the world as long as they can.

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Seeking racial healing

After a three-workshop series, planners have scheduled social events to carry on the work begun in discussions addressing race and the LGBT community.

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
taffet@dallasvoice.com

A three-session workshop on racial healing in the LGBT community wrapped up this week with a three-hour conversation at Dallas City Hall. PJ Moton of Abounding Prosperity and Jalenzski Brown of Resource Center moderated the discussion. Resource Center CEO Cece Cox and Abounding Prosperity CEO Kirk Myers joined the panel for this week’s final session.

Although the series is concluded, everyone attending agreed the discussions should continue, and a variety of events are already planned or being discussed.

The first session was “unpacking and addressing” the issues. Brown said it was alright for the discussion to be uncomfortable in what he labeled a brave space rather than a safe space.

Among the issues participants brought up were barriers to getting into the bars, tokenism and attraction.

Getting into the bars has been an issue in the community for decades. At one time, people of color were required to show three forms of ID just to get in the door. Women were turned away from men’s bars if they were wearing open-toed shoes. That problem cropped up recently when singer and reality TV star Tamar Braxton was refused entry to JR.’s Bar & Grill because of what she was wearing.

Attraction, or what Brown called sexual fetish, manifests itself in many different ways. Some people described experiences where someone of a different race would have sex with them, but wouldn’t be seen in public with them. Other talked about dating profiles that excluded all people of another race or their own race.

Brown described tokenism as “including people of color when you need to check off a box, but not empower them.”

“Hope: Creating Solutions” was the theme to the second workshop.

Brown said attendees broke up into groups to discuss topics such as civic engagement and power structures. He said they were looking for ways to get people involved in the election process that included everything from getting out the vote to running for office.

“Creating social spaces and getting to know one another,” was a way Brown said they hoped to begin addressing segregation in the LGBT community. He said that LGBT youth of color are overwhelmingly bullied and even more likely than other LGBT youth to be homeless.

“Name and gender marker changes for transgender people of color is harder,” Brown said, because of legal and financial barriers.

Brown said he’d like to bring back a Dallas LGBT community institution that trained leaders and brought people together in the 1990s and early 2000s — Leader-
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Their legacies live on

Tracts established by Hidden Door’s owners, Jim Roberts and Tony Bobrow, distribute $250K in donations to 3 organizations

TAMMYE NASH | Managing Editor
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Harvey Meissner, president and general manager of The Hidden Door Inc., this week helped carry on the legacies of two LGBT community stalwarts by presenting donations totaling a quarter-million dollars to three community organizations.

AIN (Access and Information Network, formerly AIDS Interfaith Network), Resource Center and Legacy Counseling Center each received checks for $83,333, Meissner said, explaining that the funds came from trusts established by the estates of the two men who owned and operated The Hidden Door during the nearly 40 years since it first opened.

He also stressed that these donations won’t be the last.

The $250,000 in donations this week, Meissner said, marked the last donation from the Jim Roberts Charitable Trust, and the first of many to come from the Anthony Bobrow Trust.

Each of the three organizations also received a second check this week, bringing each one’s total to $87,833. Those extra funds, Meissner said, came from a fund — established in the 1990s and administered by Tony Bobrow — to provide cremations for Dallas County residents who died of AIDS-related causes who might otherwise have gone to a pauper’s grave.

“With advances in medicine, there’s less need for that today,” Meissner said in a press release announcing the donations, “and [Bobrow] instructed that the fund, now totaling $13,500, be divided between Resource Center, Legacy Counseling Center and AIDS Interfaith Network. So each of them [received] checks for an additional $4,500.”

Jim Roberts, known to his friends as “Pollock,” moved to Dallas from Illinois in 1975. Four years later, he opened The Hidden Door, which today remains one of the Dallas LGBT community’s favorite bars. During his 13 years in Dallas, Roberts was known for his dedication to the LGBT community and its organizations. He was a member and/or supporter of a large number of or-
ship Lambda. That group brought together talent from around the community to train people to write grants and learn how to fundraise for their organizations. It taught about the challenges different groups overcame and presented ways various groups could work together.

In the third session, Cox suggested one way to bring people together was to unite on issues overlapping different groups. Cox said she is always looking to answer the question, “What do we have in common?” She suggested groups work together on issues like access to healthcare or gun violence and seek solutions together.

Moton said when people of color are brought into a group, he’s looking for meaningful involvement that includes taking leadership roles.

Former Dallas Mayor pro tem John Loza was glad the conversation was going on, but asked the group at the third workshop, “How do we reach people who aren’t here, but should be?”

“The discussion needs to continue,” Brown said after the conclusion of the series. He said they’ve planned several social events and are scheduling more to keep the discussion going. DFW Pride Happy Hour on May 11 and a town hall meeting with Dallas police on May 24 both take place at Resource Center. Brown also suggested a potluck might be a good summer activity.

“We need to grow this to see if people want to continue having this conversation,” he said.

“HEALING, From Page 12”

ganizations, from the Oak Lawn Counseling Center to the PWA Coalition (which has evolved into what is now AIDS Services of Dallas), to the Dallas Tavern Guild and the Bar Owners Association of Texas, to Oak Lawn Bowling League and TGRA.

When he died at the age of 48, in February 1988, his estate went into a trust, which has through the years donated to worthy causes in the community.

When Roberts died, Anthony “Tony” Bobrow took over as owner of Hidden Door, and as manager of the Jim Roberts Trust. He continued Roberts’ tradition of supporting and contributing to the community until his death in February this year, 30 years later. As he directed, his estate also went into a trust.

“The Jim Roberts Trust was established early on, pretty much upon his death, and it has been in play and making donations for the last 30 years,” Meissner said this week. “And when Tony died rather unexpectedly this year, his will stated that his estate would go into a trust, too. He wanted us to be able to keep on giving back to the community.”

Meissner explained that through the years, Bobrow had been the sole trustee of the Jim Roberts Charitable Trust. With Bobrow’s death, he said, the Roberts trust is being “cleared out and closed down. These donations this week will likely be the last thing involving the Jim Roberts Trust.”

He continued, “The Anthony Bobrow Trust will be the main source, moving forward. His cars, his house and all his investments went into the trust and it is generating income. It is well-founded and it is self-sustaining. And it will be operating and well-funded for years to come, long after I am gone.

“And donations like this, although maybe not so large all at once, are something we will be doing on an annual basis to put money back into the community,” Meissner said.

Meissner has worked for The Hidden Door for 36 years. He was vice president and general manager of company for five years, until taking over as president upon Bobrow’s death. He explained that the bar “will be a significant part of funding the Anthony Bobrow Trust for years to come, too. At the end of the year, when all the expenses are taken care of, money from the bar will go into the trust.”

Meissner said that Roberts and Bobrow both “had faith in the future of our community, and they wanted their legacies to be shared with the community. And the Hidden Door staff looks forward to continuing the work they started by continuing to contribute. That’s what Jim and Tony told us to do, and that’s what we are going to do.”

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Dr. Steven M. Pounders
Students to city council members don’t want the organization in town and want taxpayer money funding the event back

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
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Flags will fly at half staff throughout the National Rifle Association’s Dallas convention this weekend to remember Dallas Police Officer Rogelio Santander who was killed in gun violence last week.

City leaders tried to convince the NRA they weren’t welcome and more than 40,000 people signed a petition to ask the organization to move the convention, but about 80,000 attendees and more than 800 vendors are expected to fill the Dallas Convention Center from May 4-6.

Students are among the protest organizers and, with one police officer remaining in critical condition after her gunshot wound during the same incident that killed Santander, a diverse group of people are expected to turn out.

After the Parkland, Fla. school massacre, Dallas officials tried to convince NRA leaders they might not find a warm welcome here.

At a press conference in February, Mayor pro tem Dwaine Caraway asked the NRA to reconsider coming to Dallas. This week, he said the group is coming and it will generate $42 million in revenue, but, “A kids life is worth more than $42 million.”

Caraway said he’s a gun owner.

“I have five guns myself,” he said. “And I’m a supporter and believer in the Second Amendment.”

But he objects to the NRA’s attitude and level of influence on elected officials. He said he doesn’t blame them for pulling the trigger in recent incidents in Parkland or at the Waffle House, “but their powerful influence can help us end gun violence.”

Dallas resident Jonathon Herzog has collected more than 40,000 signatures on a Care2 petition online entitled The NRA Is Not Welcome in Dallas.

“I love the city of Dallas, it has always been where I call home and I was truly devastated after the Dallas shooting of police officers,” Herzog wrote in his petition. “It’s hard to fathom the city is not only welcoming the NRA, but literally funding the event. Please sign my petition to tell Dallas to rescind their funding of this event.”

When the NRA signed a contract with the city to rent the Dallas Convention Center in 2012, the city gave them a $22,840 discount. Discounts off the full rental price are standard and are based on a number of economic impact factors like hotel room-nights booked.

VisitDallas, the city’s visitor and convention bureau, which is
This time they hit the wrong school

Marjory Stoneman Douglas students vow to keep up the pressure and get some sensible legislation passed

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When I met Lorena Sanabria in a park across the street from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., she and her classmates had just walked out of class to commemorate the 19th anniversary of the first major school shooting — Columbine, Colo.

She introduced herself as a “crisis actor.” Crisis actor is the derogatory name supporters of the National Rifle Association came up with to belittle the MSD H.S. students and deny the shooting in their school ever took place.

Lorena’s reaction? She understands she and her classmates have gotten under the skin of NRA supporters in a way Pulse massacre victims didn’t, in a way the parents of first graders in Sandy Hook didn’t, and in a way hundreds of concertgoers shot and wounded or killed in Las Vegas didn’t.

And her message to the NRA is “We’re not backing down.”

Lorena’s mother said Lorena and her friends are up until 2 a.m. studying and then up at 6 a.m. to get to school to strategize. More than anything, Lorena wanted to be in Dallas to protest the NRA, but she has AP tests next week and has to be home to study. Her mother is helping to keep her focused.

“Emotionally, I wish we could go back to being the people we were before,” Lorena said. “We don’t talk about it much because once we start, it’s impossible to stop. It’s a trigger.”

She said the day of the shooting school started like a normal day. It was Valentine’s Day, so she brought candy and flowers for a few of her friends. The morning routine was interrupted by a fire drill.

“But when we had an alarm sound again at the end of the day, we all thought that..."
a non-profit organization, paid the additional $387,778, so the NRA paid nothing to rent the facility.

What infuriated Herzog more than anything was that after the massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas, donations to the NRA spiked.

“’The NRA has a strong financial incentive to not prevent mass shootings,’” he said.

While it’s unlikely the city will get the $410,000 cost of the convention center for the weekend back directly, the city does expect to earn quite a bit of tax revenue from the more than 20,000 hotel room booked and restaurant bills from 80,000 attendees. VisitDallas estimates an economic impact of more than $42 million from the convention — and that doesn’t include the large number of protesters expected to come into town.

Only one Saturday protest has been issued a city permit. The Dallas student group StudentsMarch.org that organized the local March For Our Lives has planned Rally 4 Reform at Dallas City Hall Plaza at 10 a.m. with voter registration beginning at 9 a.m.

The group’s demands are specific: universal background checks, a ban on bump stocks and a ban on high-capacity magazines.

In a letter, organizer Sophie Conde said, “It’s critical that we support elected officials who stand with students calling for common sense reforms such as universal background checks.”

A number of elected officials agree with her.

State Rep. Eric Johnson was recently recognized by Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America and said, “I am proud to stand up for gun violence prevention and support common sense gun safety.”

Police will protect protesters with uniformed officers separating the crowd from NRA counter-protesters and plain clothes intel officers will be embedded throughout the plaza. However, carrying guns is legal, Assistant Chief Paul Stokes said, and the right to carry will be protected.

Another group has reserved City Hall Plaza through Saturday afternoon and police expect protests on Friday to accompany the presidential and vice presidential visits.

At a press briefing earlier this week, Stokes was tight-lipped about the Trump and Pence appearances. No details were given, so the time of their arrival at Love Field, which could disrupt traffic in Oak Lawn and roads into downtown, is unknown. The convention center does have a helipad, so they could be shuttled from the airport directly to the venue.

Protesters will be kept at Dallas City Hall, although some protesters taking DART could walk alongside the building to get to the protest area from Convention Center Station. A safer, less confrontational route would be a five-block walk from Akard Station to City Hall.

Next Generation Action Network is planning a protest at City Hall on Friday at 6:30 p.m.

“As we reflect on Newtown, Parkland, Sutherland Springs, Ferguson, Chicago and many others, we cannot sit idly by while organizations like the NRA continue to buy off politicians for silence on sensible gun regulation,” the group said in a press release.

Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson also weighed in on Dallas hosting the NRA convention and what Congress should be doing to protect people from gun violence.

“At the NRA hosts its convention in Dallas, I hope its leadership as well as my fellow members of Congress have also taken notice of the high schoolers here in North Texas, and around the country, who have shown their determination to making schools and streets safe. It is past time we adequately address both gun control and gun safety laws as well as mental health concerns that will save the number of American lives lost to senseless violence.

“I am committed to working with anyone to end this terrible plague in our society and working for a safer American future. Congress should support Americans fighting for many common sense measures that will prevent children from becoming innocent victims of gun violence. To name a few: a ban on assault weapons and high capacity magazines; universal background checks; enforceable waiting periods; removing the unlicensed sales loophole in the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act (gun shows, private/internet sales); outlawing gun possession by those with mental illnesses or those on the no fly list; enforceable relinquishment laws; increasing the legal age for gun purchasing.

“There would be no better way to honor the fallen of Sandy Hook, Stoneman Douglas, Las Vegas and too many others.”
was weird,” she said.

She was in the middle of a trig test, but the class began to evacuate.

“I was one of the last to leave,” she said.

She saw a security guard running around, waving his arms and shouting.

“They’re supposed to maintain order,” she said. “Something’s up.”

As she was going downstairs to the exit, she heard a gunshot. Some of the other students were saying it was some sort of simulation. Lorena began to get nervous, so she called her mother so that “she could help me get calm,” she said.

But then she heard more shots. Her teacher directed them into her classroom, taking in more students than just those in her own class before blocking the entrance. Lorena heard some students banging on the door. The teacher refused to unlock the door to let more in, because she thought it would jeopardize those she was already trying to protect.

Students were texting each other across campus; they didn’t know where the shooter was or if it was just one gunman. Lorena hid in a closet in the classroom with about 10 other students for several hours.

Finally, the SWAT team came to the class after 6:30 p.m. and told them to leave everything behind and put their hands on their heads and file out of the building. Lorena said because of the helicopters overhead and the swarm of police cars, “I didn’t feel like school anymore.”

“We exited Douglas,” she said. “I got to the street and saw my mom.”

Since then, she said, her life has changed in so many ways.

After the shooting, Lorena went to Tallahassee and spoke to legislators about changing gun laws. She’s proud of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Safety Act that passed and was signed into law, even though it has a provision students and faculty at the school detest.

The law raises the age for buying a gun and bans bump stocks, both things the students asked for. But it allows schools to participate in arming teachers.

“We don’t want armed teachers,” Lorona said.

Last week, Lorena was in California to speak about the massacre at her school.

“California completely banned AR-15s,” she said. “If they’ve done it, we can too.”

That’s the attitude at Douglas — not only can they do it, but after witnessing gun violence first-hand, they have to.

Lorena said she has to do this, because Joaquin Oliver and Nicholas Dworet were her friends. So were Alaina Petty and Martin Duque. They were four of the 17 students killed on Valentine’s Day. And she knew many of those who were injured. Some of them aren’t strong enough yet to fight for legislation that will prevent this from happening again and again.

In the past, the NRA has taken the lead after a mass shooting by offering thoughts and prayers, diverting attention away from gun violence by calling it a mental health issue and then laughing in the face of survivors when even the mental health legislation they cynically proposed fails to get a single sponsor or get written into a proposed law.

But this time, the Douglas students refused to allow the NRA to run the narrative. The Douglas students want don’t want your thoughts and prayers. One student I met in the park called them disingenuous. Phony. An excuse.

The students at Douglas are a bunch of tough kids. They lived through a horrible event. And they have one message for the NRA and its paid flunkies in Congress: This time a gunman hit the wrong school.
Although same-sex marriage is established law, opponents continue to try to make it as unequal as possible through a barrage of lawsuits.

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Most people were wrong. In the nearly three years since that historic ruling, opponents of same-sex marriage have filed a barrage of lawsuits around the country aimed at making same-sex marriage as unequal as possible. And in some cases, the courts have agreed with them.

While a couple may marry anywhere in the country, they can get fired from their jobs for being LGBT the next day in places around the country that don’t offer municipal or statewide protections from employment discrimination. Texas is among the states that have no protections.

Offering nondiscrimination protections and employment benefits to same-sex couples has been a contentious issue in Texas, especially in Houston.

In 2013, Mayor Annise Parker extended benefits to city employees who were married to same-sex partners. Marriage equality hadn’t been recognized in Texas yet, but...
Pidgeon v. Parker was offered in some surrounding states. So opponents of equality filed a lawsuit, Pidgeon v. Parker, to stop the city from offering married same-sex couples equal benefits. Then, on June 30, 2017, two years after the Obergefell ruling, the Texas Supreme Court ruled married same-sex couples don’t necessarily have a right to the same marriage benefits as opposite-sex couples.

Four days earlier, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a case out of Arkansas regarding who can be listed as a parent on a birth certificate. “The Constitution entitles same-sex couples to civil marriage on the same terms and conditions as opposite-sex couples,” the SCOTUS majority wrote in its opinion.

And yet, despite the Obergefell ruling that said marriage for same-sex couples includes all the “rights, benefits, and responsibilities” of opposite-sex marriage, the Texas Supreme Court questioned whether that case required anything more than issuing a marriage license. The case — since renamed Pidgeon v. Turner after the new mayor, Sylvester Turner, who has vowed to continue fighting for equality — affects Houston city employees only.

In December, the U.S. Supreme Court let the Texas Supreme Court ruling stand by rejecting an appeal without comment. On April 10, the city of Houston was ordered by a district judge to pay attorneys fees for the plaintiffs. Turner said the city would continue to defend the rights of city employees to have equal access to benefits and would appeal again.

One reason the Supreme Court may have rejected hearing Pidgeon in December is that another case already on the docket this session may cover the issue. Best known as the Masterpiece Cake case, this lawsuit deals with whether a business open to the public can discriminate against someone based on religious beliefs.

The court’s decision could be released any day, but in keeping with tradition, if the ruling is written by Justice Anthony Kennedy, it will be issued on June 26, just as his four previous LGBT equality decisions were.

The case deals with a bakery that refused to bake a wedding cake for a same-sex couple. The bakery owners argue that they would be complicit in the wedding, which goes against their religious beliefs, if they baked the cake. The couple asking for the cake argue that a business open to the public can’t pick and choose its customers or refuse service to some.

While Masterpiece Cake seems like a silly case on the surface, it could have far-reaching implications. For example, a doctor could decide not to treat a patient because the patient is transgender and her gender identity goes against the doctor’s religious beliefs.

If the Masterpiece Cake decision is a broad ruling, the court could rule that not only can a business not discriminate against customers, but an employer may not discriminate against employees and those employees are entitled to equal benefits.

To cover benefits, the court may quote from its own Obergefell decision to send a message to lower courts on how to rule in other marriage cases. Benefits are mentioned a number of times throughout the decision, but the right to more than just a license issued by the court is specified several times.

...just as a couple vows to support each other, so does society pledge to support the couple, offering symbolic recognition and material benefits to protect and nourish the union,” Kennedy wrote on page 21 of the Obergefell ruling.

The claim by right-wing antagonists that marriage equality would lead to people marrying inanimate objects came to a head in a Dallas courtroom in March. Plaintiffs in that case included someone who claimed to be an ex-gay and another claiming to be a former transgender person that wanted to enter a polygamous marriage, and someone else who wanted to marry his computer.

U.S. District Judge Sam A. Lindsay threw out the case because the plaintiffs had filed multiple suits and refused to follow the rules of the court. He didn’t rule on the merits of the case.

Lambda Legal has filed a case against the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on behalf of a couple who weren’t allowed to apply to serve as foster parents for refugee children by an organization affiliated with the Catholic bishops because, they were told, they did not “mirror the Holy Family.”

And Freeman v. Turner sues Houston on behalf of three couples whose spouses stand to lose their benefits as a result of Pidgeon.

If a so-called religious freedom bill returns in the next legislature and passes, expect to see a number of new lawsuits cropping up around Texas to protect people from the life-threatening impact of this law that would give doctors, paramedics, firefighters, pharmacists and others the right to refuse service based on religious beliefs.
Taking baby steps

One couple’s not-so-typical road to marriage

W

hen I came out as transgender, I had been married for 33 years. I had two grown daughters and three grandchildren. I also had a great job doing what I loved.

However, it quickly became clear that my marriage was over. So I reluctantly sought a referral for an attorney.

I was referred to an attorney named Katie Sprinkle. We traded emails, and she referred me to someone else to handle my divorce, since she didn’t really handle family law cases. I thanked her and moved on with the process.

Sometime later, Katie sent me an email asking how things were going. We traded emails and texts focused on how my case was going and because we are both transgender, we had some common ground. We also discussed our transition progress and shared resources.

In one way, it was a stereotypical lesbian romance — a few months later, we met face-to-face for the first time, having lunch at the Tin Star in Plano. The next time she saw me, I was driving a U-Haul, moving in to her townhouse in Marble Falls.

Ha-ha. Yuck it up.

But there was more to it than that, and romance was the last thing on either of our minds.

That first night, after struggling to push a queen-size bed up a long flight of stairs, we were both exhausted physically. I was also spent mentally. I had nothing left. I just needed a place where I could recharge. In a very short period of time, I had lost my marriage, my house, my job and most of my stuff.

All of what was familiar to me was gone. I was starting over.

That first night, Katie made me spaghetti. We ate on paper plates. There was no thought of romance on either of our minds.

Katie was stressed at work because she couldn’t fully transition. This led us moving back to Dallas a couple of months later. We moved into a townhouse in Carrollton.

We began dating — but not each other.

And here’s where our path veers from the traditional: We had a lot in common.

Though Katie is nine years younger, it doesn’t feel like it. We both have a wicked sense of humor. We also now work in jobs where we do our best to help those for whom society has no use. We were often inseparable on weekends, so much so that if either of us showed up without the other we were asked “Where’s Leslie?” or “Where’s Katie.”

Everyone we knew assumed we were dating.

And honestly, I had developed a crush on Katie. After we’d been living together for maybe a year, I confessed to her that I had feelings for her beyond mere friendship, and that I could see the relationship we had becoming something more.

Katie, a self described “commit-phobe,” shook it off.

The funny thing was, we already had a joint checking account and never-ever fought about money. In fact, we really never fought about anything. Katie would talk about the future, and knowing I am a dog person she would say things like “when we get a house,” and that would give me butterflies.

But we weren’t “dating.” I was not a girlfriend, and she wouldn’t hold my hand, not in public or private. I respected her boundaries, but everyone around us could sense that we were a couple in every way but in name.

Katie and I would lay on my bed and talk late into the night as I rubbed her back. This would go on for hours, then she’d get up and go into her bedroom. I dreamed of the night she would stay.

Then, 14 months after I moved in with Katie, we had a heart-to-heart and I asked if she would be willing to try us being a couple. She agreed. What followed has been a love story like any other.

My kids adore Katie and loved her right off the bat. They see how happy I am when she’s around.

We rented a house in Coppell for a while and we now have two border collies. And Katie gave me a promise ring in 2015 that brought me to tears. But in typical Katie fashion, she wouldn’t really say what the promise was.

“Baby steps,” she’d say often.

Katie isn’t someone you can rush.

Last year, we bought our own house together. I guess that’s commitment. I love the house and all we’ve done to make it our own.

On March 7 of this year, I came home from work in a great mood. I let the dogs in and loved on them. Katie gave me a long hug then asked if I’d check the guest room.

When I did, there was a big stuffed dog with a sign that said, “Leslie, will you spend the rest of your life with Katie?”

Of course I said yes, and I buried my face in her neck and cried happy tears.

Our wedding will be this September, at our home, with the Rev. Steve Sprinkle (no relation that we know of) presiding.

I’m so lucky to have a woman like Katie. I will cherish her until my last breath on this Earth.

Leslie McMurray, a transgender woman, is a former radio DJ who lives and works in Dallas. Read more of her blogs at lesliemichelle44.wordpress.com.
The ideal wedding

When it comes to your ceremony, ‘perfect’ is in the eye of the beholder

Photography courtesy Lisa Hause
E
drom the minute Robin proposed, we started thinking about what our wedding would look like. We live on a lake, and I told her that I was entirely fine with a lakeside, picnic-style wedding. Appearances aside, I didn’t need anything fancy. My only request was that we didn’t try to put lipstick on a pig, you know? If we were doing backyard, then I wanted it authentically so: checkered tablecloths, games of Cornhole, BBQ and bushels of sunflowers. I didn’t want “fake” fancy. I hate when people try to cover up conference rooms with tulle and folding metal chairs with bows. No amount of carpet is going to cover up the ugly flooring in that church social hall. But the mossy comfort of a well-watered lawn? Perfect, I told Robin. And I meant it.

But lovely as an outdoor to-do would have been, that is definitely not the to-do we to-did.

A couture gown. A gorgeous urban venue. Taking all day to get ready in the bridal suite packed with my “unicorn gang” (all gay men, of course) and way too much champagne. The whole thing was raw, industrial chic perfection called the Astorian was the backdrop for all sorts of fun details. A wall of paper flowers. A bridal suite packed with my “unicorn venue. Taking all day to get ready in the church social hall. But the mossy comfort of a well-watered lawn? Perfect, I told Robin. And I meant it.

And hire a good photographer. A real photographer, not cousin Bob’s niece who’s taking a class at the college and will work for free booze. Get an experienced photographer whose work you’ve looked at and who you’ve spoken to and who gets you as a couple. You may think, “Everyone will have an iPhone. It’s fine.” Or, “Good God. Why on earth would anyone spend that on a photographer?” But the wedding goes so fast. So very, very fast. And there is so much you can’t help but miss.

Having incredible photography is like getting to attend your own wedding. And you get to revisit it over and over forever. We do regret not hiring a videographer. At the time, it just seemed like another over-the-top expense. After the fact, we were grateful friends and family shot at least some video — including the ceremony and some wild drone video of our exit! But it sure would be nice to have a professional video of the whole evening’s festivities.

We were also really, really lucky to have my dad perform the ceremony. He’s a rabbi and one hell of an entertainer. I wrote the ceremony and he performed it and it was beautiful. There were lots of Jewish customs included, like the seven blessings and circling one another to join our spirits and, of course, breaking the glass. We all cried. And we all laughed, especially when he put one arm in the air and told us that the key to a long, happy marriage everyone keeps telling us how much fun they had. And that is what we wanted more than anything; it was everything.

Friends and family came from all over the country, everyone on their best behavior. They all got along despite the fact that there were people there who never would have even spoken to each other in “real life” but set aside any differences, to pack the dancefloor, line up for the GIF booth, toast at the bar and otherwise enjoy bonding over what brought them to this place.

Here’s what I think the magic was: Robin and I compromised and communicated and did our darnedest to remember what was really important that night. Oh, and we hired a wedding planner. (If you’re getting married, hire a planner, and, if you can swing it, get one that’s a designer, too, like we did.) Chad was our tie-breaker, our peacekeeper, our head-leveler, our reality check, our sanity savior. When Robin and I disagreed, he was the voice of reason. And when one or even both of us didn’t want to hear it, we knew his taste was impeccable and his experience was invaluable, so like it or not, he was usually right.

We were also really, really lucky to have our tie-breaker, our peacekeeper, our head-leveler, our reality check, our sanity savior. When Robin and I disagreed, he was the voice of reason. And when one or even both of us didn’t want to hear it, we knew his taste was impeccable and his experience was invaluable, so like it or not, he was usually right.

And hire a good photographer. A real photographer, not cousin Bob’s niece who’s taking a class at the college and will work for free booze. Get an experienced photographer whose work you’ve looked at and who you’ve spoken to and who gets you as a couple. You may think, “Everyone will have an iPhone. It’s fine.” Or, “Good God. Why on earth would anyone spend that on a photographer?” But the wedding goes so fast. So very, very fast. And there is so much you can’t help but miss.

Having incredible photography is like getting to attend your own wedding. And you get to revisit it over and over forever. We do regret not hiring a videographer. At the time, it just seemed like another over-the-top expense. After the fact, we were grateful friends and family shot at least some video — including the ceremony and some wild drone video of our exit! But it sure would be nice to have a professional video of the whole evening’s festivities.

We were also really, really lucky to have my dad perform the ceremony. He’s a rabbi and one hell of an entertainer. I wrote the ceremony and he performed it and it was beautiful. There were lots of Jewish customs included, like the seven blessings and circling one another to join our spirits and, of course, breaking the glass. We all cried. And we all laughed, especially when he put one arm in the air and told us that the key to a long, happy marriage
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If one were to compare a wedding day to a hurricane, Ricardo Tomás would surely be considered the storm’s calm eye. For nearly 15 years, the out wedding planner has helped local couples, including those in the Dallas LGBT community, design and execute their dream weddings. So far, Tomás seems no worse for the wear.

“I would say my strongest attribute is patience,” Tomás says. “I have a lot of patience. If you think about having to deal with families every month for 14 years, it’s a lot. It takes a certain character to be able to handle [stress], especially on the actual wedding day. Stress levels are really high.”

Tomás, who holds a degree in architectural design, explored the idea of becoming a wedding planner while working as an interior designer. When he and a friend enrolled in a weeklong wedding course, Tomás immediately felt intimidated. He was the only male in a group of twenty-some women. Yet Tomás quickly learned that wedding planning complemented his existing skill set.

“Having a design background helped me with the wedding side,” Tomás, who has branded himself a wedding architect, says. “I’m still designing and putting elements together … textures, fabrics, colors,
lighting ... everything you would do for a house. [But with] a wedding, you throw in the element of emotion. It’s the final piece of the puzzle that completes the wedding for me.”

Why use a planner?

While there are many advantages to using a wedding planner’s services, Tomás feels the most important is the peace of mind it affords a couple throughout the process. Planners are experienced in selecting vendors, negotiating contracts and handling myriad details most first-timers may not have even considered. Planners can also make the most of a couple’s wedding budget by sourcing the best values, sometimes by leveraging existing vendor relationships. On the day of a wedding, a planner will manage the venue and vendors and handle any unexpected issues that arise, all of which frees the couple and their guests to enjoy the event.

“They need to be focused on getting married,” Tomás says of his soon-to-be married clients. “They need to have a happy day. They need to be in their own zone. They don’t need distractions to divert them to negative space. They need positive energy the whole day.”

Personalizing the big day

At the beginning of every job, Tomás asks an engaged couple a number of probing questions in order to gain insight into their lifestyles. Do they enjoy travel? What are their pastimes? Do they collect things? As he gathers these details, Tomás begins forming ideas about ways in which he can customize the couple’s wedding to match their personalities.

“I try to pull elements that will make their wedding unique to them and stand out,” Tomás says. “[From a protocol standpoint,] every wedding to me is pretty much standard. But I want people to walk away from your wedding saying, ‘Wow! That was definitely their wedding! It could have been no one else’s wedding.’ Personalization is the big thing.”

Gay weddings

A longstanding stereotype is that little girls dream of one day becoming brides, while men don’t. From an early age, they are thought to collect items for their hope chests and clip magazine pictures to create wedding mood boards. One might imagine, therefore, that working with two brides in a lesbian wedding would be twice the challenge.

Tomás, however, finds the opposite. In his experience, working with two grooms can be unexpectedly detailed and time-consuming. In fact, Tomás recently spent over a year helping one local gay couple plan their wedding.

“When you think of a [traditional] bride and a groom, usually the bride wants bountiful flowers and a big dress,” Tomás says. “The groom sits back and says, ‘Tell me when to show up, and I’ll be there.’ When you have two males, they both have opinions. They usually split responsibilities. One will handle entertainment. One will handle the décor side. My male weddings are very, very detailed ... even over my lesbian couples.”

Wedding day mishaps

No matter how meticulously-planned a wedding might be, unexpected situations often arise. Zippers break. Buttons burst. Brides forget garters. For these reasons, Tomás carries an emergency bag to every wedding filled with necessities like sewing needles, thread, and, yes, even spare garters.

“Right before the garter toss, I’ve had the maid of honor or someone from the wedding party run to me and say, ‘Ricardo, the bride forgot her garter!’ Tomás says. “I have extra garters. I unzip the bag, take out the garter, and hand it to her. She says, ‘Oh my god, you just saved this wedding!’ For
A lot of people take a vacation, including a honeymoon, in big cities or by the beach.

Not me. I’ve lived near both all my life, so when I plan a getaway I want to pack it with come-as-you-are, in-the-wild adventure. Real Davy Crockett-like. You know… if he was gay.

So when my boyfriend and I recently traveled to Colorado Springs for what we hoped would be a fast few days of getting active, reconnecting with one another and making new memories, it occurred to me this would work just as well as a honeymoon for newlyweds.

From hiking frozen waterfalls and practicing yoga fireside to dangling 1,200 feet above the Arkansas River on a zip line, this trip was one of the most romantic we’ve ever taken. Here are unforgettable reasons why.

There are at least nine waterfalls in Colorado Springs to which you can hike (and get all grabby on the way up). We arrived in Colorado Springs well before check-in at the Wyndham’s New Orleans–inspired Mining Exchange Grand Hotel and Spa, and we made the most of our time by driving the rental car straight to the base of Helen Hunt Falls (named in honor of the 19th-century writer and Native American activist and not the Academy Award-winning actress as we had assumed; we’ll take one for the team on this one), located in North Cheyenne Cañon Park.

Despite milder temps than on the East Coast — we narrowly escaped the “bomb cyclone” to get to Colorado — much of the falls was frozen when we arrived, though not solid enough at the bottom that we couldn’t fill our bottles with the ice-cold spring water flowing beneath the cracked surface. Tastiest we’ve ever drunk.

Then we were off. The hike, though steep, was only one-tenth of a mile of escalating, winding trail, which took about 20 minutes to climb. We stopped at a few points to catch our breath and snap photos while admiring nature’s handiwork. This is the first time either one of us had ventured into a legitimate mountain range, so we were keen to soak up the surroundings.

At the top, pure magnificence! Normally falls that flow freely (as it probably does again now), Helen Hunt was solid and stark white. Ice. Frozen in time. A real sight to see.
If you want even more of a workout, there are at least eight other falls in the area to hike, including Silver Cascade Falls, about two-thirds of a mile above Helen Hunt Falls, and Seven Falls, a series of cascading drop-offs, one more scenic than the other.

Ristorante Del Lago at the Broadmoor is the perfect place to get cozy over a carafe of wine. While the Broadmoor resort wasn’t on our initial itinerary, we decided to pop in on our way back from Helen Hunt Falls (GPS will take you directly through the expansive property) because of all the recommendations we received from friends who had spent time in the area. Glad we did. It was an ideal spot to relax after the hike (it’s a meticulously kept five-star, with attentive, friendly staff; everybody said hello to us!), particularly Ristorante Del Lago — just across the lake bridge on the back side of the main entrance — where we plopped on an inviting couch, ordered a carafe of wine and cuddled up in front of the fireplace until warm and toasty.

Mineral-water soaks and fireside yoga will eliminate your collective aches and pains. Just down the road in Manitou Springs (a 10-minute drive from downtown Colorado Springs) is SunWater Spa — which features heated cedar tubs filled with bubbling, body-healing mineral water — an excellent place to strip down to your swimwear (yes, you have to wear something) and relax in the bath. We detoxed in the infrared sauna, took a load off in the indoor therapy pools, then joined our yogi Georgiy for a fireside class where we focused on our breathing and overall consciousness while holding outstretched hands occasionally.

You’ll be in awe of the scenery up to Pikes Peak while taking photos you’ll cherish forever. Our scenic drive up to Pikes Peak — the highest peak in the area at 14,115 feet (and actively climbing!) — was the activity we most looked forward to on our trip because neither of us had ever been that high in the sky. We didn’t know quite what to expect from the 19-mile paved spiral to the top, though we were hopeful for a few magnificent lookout spots and wandering wildlife. It didn’t disappoint. There were plenty of pull-offs with jaw-dropping vistas of snowcapped mountains; large Instagram-ready lakes frozen six-inches thick; never-before-seen-by-us animals, like bighorn sheep clinging to near vertical rises; and, of course, the reward of satisfying chicken soup and fresh, hot doughnuts inside the visitor’s center to commemorate our voyage and this exploratory milestone in our relationship.

A Jeep tour of Royal Gorge will make daredevils out of you. About an hour southwest of Colorado Springs lies Cañon City, where we hopped in one of Colorado Jeep Tours’ all-terrain vehicles for a half-day tour of the Royal Gorge region (our tour guide Steve could teach a master class on the area’s history and geology), which took us through rocky peaks and
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Gene Street and Phil Cobb, co-founders of the Black Eyed Pea, will host a Two-Year Anniversary Party on Wednesday May 23. Street’s will bring back a limited menu of Gene and Phil’s favorite recipes. Raffle tickets will be sold all month for a chance to win a hefty gift basket featuring local items donated from restaurants and stores. All raffle proceeds will be donated to the Resource Center and Legacy Cottage.

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was to love one another, “To infinity and beyond!” It was so special and so intimate and so sweet to have someone who really knows us and loves us to do the ceremony. And it was an extra perk that he’s such a hoot. No one was bored for a second. It was the people who surrounded us that made the night what it was. Our dads walked us down the aisle. Instead of groomsmen or bridesmaids, we followed the Jewish tradition of having a shushavim, a group of friends and family who help you and support you with all things wedding. My crew was almost entirely new friends I have made through Robin — men who are now my ride or die. They did it all. My daughter was my maid of honor, and I have to admit, seeing as she’s busy being a freshman in college and a newly-initiated sorority girl, I was just happy she would be there by my side. But she turned out to be a kick-ass maid of honor, handling all the family requests and keeping tabs on everyone, even making sure my bride and I did not see one another before the appointed time.

My only wish was that we had had just one hour more to dance. It seemed like after the toast from my best friend from high school and Robin’s BFF and the first dance and the father/daughter dances and the bouquet and garter tosses and the cake cutting, even an angel blessing from a friend and artist dressed all in white and dancing with the most elegant, articulated wings to celebrate and bless our day, it was all over in a flash. Everyone tells you that will happen. But damn if they weren’t all too right.

So, what is the takeaway for you? Most specific advice will fly out the window once you follow this suggestion: Make the wedding your own, whoever you and your spouse-to-be are. Don’t fake a thing. Stay true to yourselves and your venue. Keep your eye on the real prize: finding someone to love and share your life with forever. And let the evening be one that will thrill your guests as much as yourselves.

In the end, I’m sure the lake would have been super fun. But I am truly grateful that Robin was so game to just go for it. Her mom was married four times. Her dad three. She says she’s only doing it once, and she means for it to stick. So, when she met me, she wanted it to be a wedding to remember. I know it was a night no one will soon forget. Thank you, to everyone who made it so magical. And thank you to my new wife. It really is a better place since you came along.
the smallest things, I become the hero.”

The payoff

At the end of a wedding day, the best compliment a newly-married couple can give Tomás is that their guests say it was a wedding to remember. Family and friends notice when a wedding day seemingly runs smoothly. And such comments reassure Tomás that his efforts to create a truly memorable event were not in vain.

“I remember a grandmother saying to me, ‘Thank you so much for making my granddaughter’s wedding the best ever. I can see she’s having the most beautiful time,’” Thomas says. “When I hear that, I know I’m in the right career.”

For more information, visit ricardotomjas.com.

Sunrise in Garden of the Gods will take your breath away. Before our early afternoon flight home, we made one last stop at can’t-miss Garden of the Gods, a registered National Natural Landmark, to watch the sunrise. Entering the park before daylight was out of our comfort zone (what kind of animals are lurking where we can’t see them? Just bunnies and bats as it turned out), but that’s what this trip was all about — trying new things together (and clinging to one another for reassurance and safety). And as the sky filled with the fiery pink-orange glow of another day dawning, our romantic getaway was whole with the reveal of 300-foot towering sandstone rock formations in a park with a rich past that dates back to a time when dinosaurs roamed the earth.

Perfect place where you, too, can leave your footprints in Colorado Springs — side by side, for all time, just like in a fairy tale.

— Mikey Rox

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The Humans’ dines at the Winspear

Lots have stories have been woven around the tensions inherent in a holiday get-together with the family, but few have won the Tony for best play or been finalists for the Pulitzer Prize. But Gay playwright Stephen Karam’s The Humans claims both those accolades, as a mom and dad, their straight daughter and son-in-law, their lesbian daughter and a parent with dementia sit down for dinner. Funny and touching, the production features an impressive cast, including Emmy winner Richard Thomas (The Waltons, The Little Foxes) and Tony winner Daisy Eagan (The Secret Garden).

DEETS: Winspear Opera House, 2403 Flora St. ATTPAC.org.

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**ARTSWEEK**

**THEATER**


*Murder Ballad*. This sexy rock musical was an Off-Broadway hit. Margo Jones Theatre, 1121 First Ave. inside Fair Park. Through May 12. ImprintTheatreworks.org.


*The Trials of Sam Houston*. The legendary Texan governor, hero of San Jacinto and metropolis namesake was actually involved in two trials that formed his legacy. Aaron Loeb’s world premiere play, directed by Kevin Moriarty. Kalita Humphreys Theater, 3638 turtle Creek Blvd. Through May 13. DallasTheaterCenter.org.

**OPERA**

*Fort Worth Opera Festival*. The company’s festival opens with *Maria de Buenos Aires*, as well as Donizetti’s *Don Pasquale* and the program Brief Encounters. Bass Performance Hall, 525 Commerce St., Fort Worth. Through Sunday. FWOpera.org.

**FILM**

*Dallas International Film Festival*. The celebration of film takes place mostly at the Magnolia Theater in the West Village. DallasFilm.org.

**FESTIVALS**


**FINE ART**

*Oak Lawn Library Photography Show*. Dallas Voice editor Arnold Wayne Jones is the featured artist at the monthly art show at the Oak Lawn Library, featuring more than a dozen prints of some of his award-winning photography. Oak Lawn Library, 4100 Cedar Springs Road. Through May 31.


*First Sculpture: Handaxe to Figure Stone*. An exhibit of found and modified objects from the Paleolithic era of human enterprise. Nasher Sculpture Center, 2001 Flora St. Through Sunday. NasherScultureCenter.org.


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FRIDAY 05.04
COMMUNITY
Panoptikon. The weekly retro disco dance party, presented by Lord Byron. Red Light, 2911 Main St. Doors 9 p.m.

EXPO

SATURDAY 05.05
COMMUNITY
FrontRunners. Gay jogging/walking group meets weekly at 9 a.m. in Oak Lawn Park at Hall Street and Turtle Creek Boulevard for a run along the Katy Trail.

DANCE
TITAS Command Performance Gala. Annual benefit and showcase of dancers for TITAS. Winspear Opera House, 2403 Flora St. 7:30 p.m. ATTPAC.org.

FILM
Coco. Free outdoor screening of this new family classic, part of the Downtown Dallas Movie Night. Farmers Market, 1010 S. Pearl St. Arrive by 7:45 p.m.; screening begins at 8 p.m. Free.

SUNDAY 05.06
CONCERTS
Suesapalooza Music Fest. The return of the live music show, both pet- and family-friendly. Sue Ellen’s, 3014 Throckmorton St. 1–10 p.m. $10.

CONVERSATION
Rita Moreno. The first performer ever to win a Tony, Grammy, Emmy and Oscar talks about her life and career. Winspear Opera House, 2403 Flora St. 7:30 p.m. ATTPAC.org

TUESDAY 05.08
FILM
Viva Zapata! Marlon Brando stars as the Mexican revolutionary. Screens as part of the Tuesday Big Movie New Classic Series at Landmark’s Magnolia Theatre in the West Village, 3699 McKinney Ave. Screens at 7:30 p.m. and 10 p.m.

THEATER
The Humans. Richard Thomas and Daisy Eagan are among the cast in this national tour of the Tony Award-winning modern comedy about a family at Thanksgiving. Winspear Opera House 2403 Flora St. May 8–20. ATTPAC.org.

WEDNESDAY 05.09
CONCERTS

THURSDAY 05.10
CABARET
Glitterbomb Denton. Weekly queer variety show with a new lineup every Thursday, now at a new locale and new time. Andy’s Bar, 122 N. Locust St., Denton. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY 05.11
COMMUNITY
Purple Party. The annual music circuit party and fundraiser features Ignite (Friday), Rise and the Main Event (Saturday), Revival and Glow (Sunday). Visit PurpleFartyFoundation.org for details.

FILM
Moana. Free outdoor screening of this family classic, part of the Downtown Dallas Movie Night. Farmers Market, 1010 S. Pearl St. Arrive by 7:45 p.m.; screening begins at 8 p.m. Free.

this week’s solution
Rita Moreno, the first performer ever to win a Tony, Grammy, Emmy and Oscar—known as EGOT—talks about her life and career Sunday at the Winspear.
Ask Howard
How to do the wrong thing right

My building’s cheerful mailman—postal deliverer, excuse me — arrives each afternoon straight out of Central Casting: Tall, wiry, the obligatory corona of frazzled gray hair, grizzled complexion, retirement age-ish, and ever-smiling. I’m certain he enjoys a nice relaxing pipe in his favorite armchair, warming his tired pups next to a toasty fire after work. Only too easily can one imagine his gleaming white van out front replaced by a faithful old bicycle with a crooked tag clattering on the back of its wire carrier rack that reads, MY GIRL MAY (named after his wife, naturally, in homage to their 30-plus years of monogamous bliss), which he pedals down any imaginary Main Street of Hollywood yore, tipping his cap.

“Looks like she’ll be another beauty!” he smiles toward wisteria-choked porches bathed in a transformative sunshine that is the entire plotline to his bit-player speaking role in every June Allyson, Jimmy Stewart or Judy Garland film ever made. He rattles beamingly by, holloering back across to whoever’s shelving spring peas in their rocker, “Oh, and Chester tells me the new Sears & Roebuck oughta be gettin’ in just any day now, Mrs. Orchard!”

I try to avoid our postal deliverer if I can help it — not because of his eternal-sunshine-of-the-spotless-mind schtick, but rather because he never quite goes all-out-Mayberry-R.F.D. enough with it. (There are depths to him that MGM did not hire him for.) It’s inevitable our paths cross occasionally, yet he always kicks-starts our languid chitchat to the same topic: Homosexuality.

“I’d love to read your column sometime,” is how it usually begins. Apparently, I represent some rare zoo creature in his world. “Trust me, no, you wouldn’t,” is my stock answer. “I’m very open-minded,” he constantly assures me. “Open-minded to the very last adjective you are,” I assure him. “Besides, you would no more understand what you were reading than if it were written in Martian.” He snorts dismissively, and I sigh. “OK, then, so tell me what you think about, say, watersports; you ever get much into that?” His face lights triumphant, “Absolutely, love ‘em! Why, I even went boogie-boarding just last weekend with.”

“Beautiful weather for your route today.” He concurs, blank-faced. And with that, so ironically conjons our “We Shall Overcome” arrival of same-sex couples’ legalization with mindsets clinging on for dear life to last century’s perfectly imaginary radiance — each of us hopeful that a few reflective rays of illumination refract against the other’s personal peccadillos. Thus, on such a note, bois and girld — speaking of the devil after all — it looks like we may even have just enough room here still remaining for Dallas’ very own gay sex advice columnist to assist you sharpening your very own marriage fangs! Let’s get grinding right to it.

Dear Howard: I got proposed to at the beach Easter weekend by some man I’d known all of a month. Out of nowhere, I heard myself go, “Sure,” it’s a mystery what the dude does for a living. The only two things I know he likes to do is pee down my mouth and listen to his Cyndi Lauper CDs… but on vinyl! Like, I’d never even heard of this woman before Kinky Boots, and now we’re practically a threesome. The only sex me and my fiancée have together: when it’s only us two alone, involves just my throat crammed full of his erection. He barely lets me even touch him otherwise, and it’s a mighty fine show pony he’s packing, too. Only one time did I successfully beg him long enough that he finally caved and agreed to fuck me. It was a disaster. He pulled out three seconds in, and barked I wasn’t clean. I almost cried. I guess he felt bad after that, ’cause the very next day he pulled my face off his dick long enough to hand me a small box. “A gift for our wedding night,” he winked. But when I opened the box, the only thing in it was a gift card for something called a “colonic irrigation.” After googling it, I thought what weird kind of wedding present is this, but then went, “Duh, dummy, it is a gay honeymoon you’re on,” and now I think it’s, honestly, rather thoughtful, you think? — Yryn Dreenx

Dear Mr. WS Enthusiast: Be sure to hold onto that honestly insane thought when, 10 years from now, you’re thoughtfully choosing between arsenic in the orange juice or a tumble down the basement stairs. Quite a splashy little sobriquet you’ve got working, nonetheless: Your current “stage name,” I presume? Why is it, Urinetta, you’re even wanting to marry, at all, particularly this sorry excuse for a lifelong spouse? Understandably, you were of course only doing a bit of escorting on the side (to supplement the “real job” you don’t have) until something better came along, but I can’t imagine someone with such street cred as you getting sucked into the clichéd Hallmark homily, “He completes me.” By calling yourself Urine Drinks, I’m glad you enjoy doing that; someone totally blinded by lust and boulder-dumb as your fiancée is, he surely must possess enough remedial math capabilities to grasp that the real cost of marrying someone just to have a convenient mouth always on hand for exclusive use as his personal depot runs higher than if he instead simply rented you by the hour, every hour, throughout your lives eternal?

What about when things just “arise” sans any scheduled advance-prep? In marriage, you’ll have conjugal clout, too — and every right to request he switch to your other morning-wood, penile-accommodating office occasionally. Inarguably, your fiancée possesses not one scintilla of spontaneity, which ensures he has no sense of humor, which means you’re engaged to a personality-free old maid who brings nothing to the marriage table except spotless sheets. Be forewarned: You are marrying the very man we’ve all met and loathed — the one who drives 10 miles to the next town to save two cents a gallon on gas. You might as well begin selecting either his method of murder or your suicide now, because one or the other is surely coming sooner than later, and for what? Having to put up living with this old roll of cheap toilet paper, for whom love means always having to say you’re too shitty?

Any husband who won’t make spur-of-the-moment love to his own spouse unless their interior is first rinsed cleaner than the insides of a Kenmore means your next post-honeymoon opportunity to enjoy a real erection emptying deep up inside you, will come rotating back around again just soon as it’s time for your first colonoscopy prep — guaranteeing you’ll receive, on average, one solid-clean sparkling fuck about once a decade. But, hey, if real queens can make do with even less sex (Anne of Cleves pops to mind) then why not a regular of manure-stomping/urine-guzzling Texan queen? Love, like a colonic, means never having to say you’re crappy. Money changes everything.

— Howard Lewis Russell
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- Cedar Springs Tap House: Ravin Bones, Sissy 2.0 Kilo Kikii and guests at 9:30 p.m. on Monday, hosted by Puddin’ Pop.
- Club Reflection: Cowtown Leathermen cookout at 4 p.m. on Sunday.
- Dallas Eagle: Pre-TBRU Dance and Pajama party at 9 p.m. on Saturday.
- Hidden Door: Start the week off right with Messy Monday.
- JR.’s Bar & Grill: Asia O’Hara hosts a RuPaul’s Drag Race Season 10 watch party Thursday.
- Liquid Zoo: Comedy Night open mic at 9 p.m. on Thursday.
- Marty’s Live: TRNT Up Tuesday at 9 p.m. featuring Andrea, Becca and Danielle.
- Pekers: Celebrate Cinco de Mayo with Karaoke Night at 9:30 p.m. on Saturday.
- Round-Up Saloon: Jockstrap Sports Happy Hour on Friday. Lost Souls Car Wash from noon-3 p.m. on Saturday.
- Sue Ellen’s: Suesapalooza Music Fest on Sunday. $10 online and $15 at the door.
- The 515 Bar: Queen of the Rodeo candidate show at 5 p.m. on Saturday.
- Urban Cowboy Saloon: Pangina Heals, host of DragRace Thailand from 7 p.m.-2 a.m. on Friday.
- Woody’s Sports & Video Bar: Cinco de Mayo all-day celebration on Saturday. OSO Sexy Bake Sale from 4-7 p.m. on Sunday.
- Zippers: Charlie Phresh plays retro and top 40 flashback hits on Suck Me Sundays.

Scene Photographers: Kat Haygood and Chad Mantooth
The gang’s all here at Sue Ellen’s

Just a cactus in a sombrero at Sue Ellen’s

Royalty on The Strip

Smiling and styling on The Strip

Handsome men on The Strip

More handsome men on The Strip

Riding in Lime Bike style

Fun at The Round-Up Saloon

Out and about for fun

The gang’s all here at Sue Ellen’s

Bryce at Sue Ellen’s
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Across
1 Comes and goes
5 Like the Alps through
10 Visit Barneys, e.g.
14 Nuts
15 Punch bowl item
16 Drink from the land of
17 Hanna-Barbera bear
18 Like
19 Singer Woody’s son
20 Start of a quote from
23 Advice columnist Savage
24 Take ___ on balls (walk)
25 Part of a rusty nail
27
28 Takes into custody
32
34 Lover with a long
36 Goes too far with rough
37 Baltic Sea tributary
40 More of the quote
42 Scott of
43 Works the shaft
45 Stirring up
47 More of the quote
49 U-shaped instrument

Solution on Page 41
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You Can’t Beat Margaret’s Tale

Solution on Page 41

Across
1 Comes and goes wherever
5 Like the Alps through which the von Trapps escaped
10 Visit Barneys, e.g.
15 Punch bowl item
16 Drink from the land of the samurai
17 Hanna-Barbera bear
18 Like Tales of the City
19 Singer Woody’s son
20 Start of a quote from The Handmaid’s Tale
23 Advice columnist Savage
24 Take ___ on balls (walk)
25 Part of a rusty nail
27 The Advocate, to detractors
28 Takes into custody
32 The Handmaid’s Tale author Margaret
34 Lover with a long appendage
36 Goes too far with rough play
37 Baltic Sea tributary
40 More of the quote
42 Scott of Beautiful Thing
43 Works the shaft
44 One in bondage
45 “I Cain’t Say No” musical
46 Kind of beer
47 “___ much obliged”
48 “___ Em! Uncle Henry!”
49 Anger
50 “Till There ___ You”
51 “If I ___ Had a Brain”
52 “Uh-oh!” to Shelley
53 Symbol of discipline
54 Choose for Paul Revere
55 Out partner
56 Kind of IRA
57 JFK info
58 End of the quote
59 “If I ___ Had a Brain”
60 Last name of Jethrene Bodine’s son
61 Vital team
62 Pride member
63 Data transmission letters
64 “Rose is a rose is a rose,” e.g.
65 St. ___ fire
66 Pride member
67 “All ___ is a room somewhere...”
68 hoof
69 Where to stick your tool
70 To ___ say No” musical
71 Personal-ad stats
72 Start of a rhyme about a tiger
73 Tugboat
74 More of the quote
75 Jethrene Bodine portrayer Max
76 JFK info
77 Data transmission letters
78 End of the quote
79 Arab
80 Sometimes used as a term of endearment
81 End of the quote
82 End of a quote
83 End of a quote
84 End of a quote
85 End of a quote

Down
1 Tavern with “eagle” in the name, often
2 One that reproduces without sex or adoption
3 Collar attachment
4 Some gay humor on SNL, e.g.
5 Arc on Bernstein’s music score
6 Shoot off a flare, e.g.
7 “___ much obliged”
8 People from Navratilova’s country
9 Nero’s tutor
10 Fed. retirement agency
11 Like some gay porn
12 “I Cain’t Say No” musical
13 Worker at the bottom
21 Start of a rhyme about a tiger
22 Kind of IRA
26 Sound from guitarist Townshend
29 Prepare to shoot off
30 Jethrene Bodine portrayer Max
31 One who comes slowly
33 Data transmission letters
34 El Greco’s homeland
35 “If I ___ Had a Brain”
37 Fed. fiscal agency
38 Marlene of Witness for the Prosecution
39 Crown as queen
41 Mister
44 One in bondage
46 Kind of beer
48 Bert, to Ernie
49 “___ much obliged”
50 Romeo’s initial activity with Juliet
51 “___ Em! Uncle Henry!”
52 They’re well-hung beneath jockeys
53 Symbol of discipline
54 Talk like a Tennessee Williams character
56 Williams character
57 “Uh-oh!” to Shelley
58 End of a quote
59 A doctor makes you strip for it
60 Chianti, e.g.
61 Vital team
63 Composer Rorem
64 “Rose is a rose is a rose,” e.g.
65 advocate.com, e.g.
66 Trial
67 “All ___ is a room somewhere...”
68 hoof
69 Where to stick your tool
70 St. ___ fire
71 Personal-ad stats
72 Start of a rhyme about a tiger
73 Tugboat
74 More of the quote
75 Jethrene Bodine portrayer Max
76 JFK info
77 Data transmission letters
78 End of the quote
79 Arab
80 Sometimes used of endearment
81 Corner of a cross
82 End of a quote
83 End of a quote
84 End of a quote
85 End of a quote
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