

AMERICA'S AIDS MAGAZINE

the  
Quilt  
Washington  
October  
11-13

# a&u

October 1996 • Issue 26

**Ron Dennis:  
A Chorus Life**

**Hockey Night  
in Canada**

**Still Lives by  
Michael Perelman**

# JOAN RIVERS

**Long Term Survivor**

\$3.95 USA \$4.95 Canada



# Hockey Night in Canada

by Francisco Ibañez-Carrasco

I LOVE WINTERS IN VANCOUVER. Long-drawn afternoons dripping into the night, mossy pipes collecting the interminable tears of the season, a sense of calm. In the winter, I can be sheltered from the elements, hidden from public view, cocooned inside. I wear layers and layers of clothing. I hate the summer. Mesmerized by the litany of drops, one by one, I see the loose figments of my imagination materialize, one by one. In the winter, I'm allowed to dream. I go surfing through the channels, sometimes stopping in the soothing pools of screen-blue. Click, click, noise, click, drop, drop, click; I see hockey players, you know, square heads on the sports section of the six o'clock news, trampling through the locker room, bare chested, sweating buckets. When the camera zooms into a violent close-up, I can almost taste the salty beads. Well, you can cry me a river; I cried a river over you. Players talk about the game without making much sense at all. I'm transfixed by their features, the pouty, succulent mouth that articulates insolently all that nonsense. Inspired by these distant flickering images, I relieve myself.

A hockey star comes into town incognito. He is a red-haired stud with a jaw line strong as a truck bumper and broad shoulders that could cover from British Columbia to the Maritime if he laid down across the country. Ad mare jusque ad mare. An inaccessible beauty of whom only a pale reflection of the original is seen on TV. A glimpse enough to make girls sigh. He plays hard, spits blood, curses tough—fuck you, asshole, you goof—curves his lips, spits again, pumps his hands, and rams ahead like a locomotive. But now he has taken some five days off, unsupervised, and he drives fast to Vancouver. No practice, no retreat, and no interviews—nobody really knows he has come this way. He steps on the gas. By the time the evening has started to unravel, he checks into a cheap downtown hotel—\$39 a night, check-out time is 11 a.m.—under a false name, shakes the rain off his handsome head and grips the key. The old woman at the reception probably thinks he's a pimp (looks well-kept) or a drug pusher: none of her business really. He takes a shower, barely squeezing his

humanity under the drizzle. He lights up a cigarette, coughs, doesn't really smoke, puts it out, turns on the TV, pops a beer can open. In the eleven o'clock news broadcast, he watches his own bravado about an upcoming game back east and some international news, wars, hurricanes, budget cutbacks, who gives a shit. He orders takeout chow mein. The staccato high-pitched voice confirming the order, fifteen bucks minimum, irritates him. Why can't they speak English? He is restless and paces the room up and down in three or four heavy strides, feeling caged. Turns on the paid adult channel and loses interest in the middle of his laborious erection so he gives up, checks the newspaper, looking for an enticing, expensive hooker, exotic, with an accent and a skin color that will contrast nicely with his rosy, pink-white tones and freckles: a transsexual. The idea of the hooker does not linger long. No way. Freaks. He chomps avidly on the chow mein, throws the sticks out the window and uses the plastic fork; fuck them. He washes the MSG down with big sips of beer. Finally, after hours of hesitation, he gives up and goes out into the night. It's twelve-thirty. It's pouring rain.

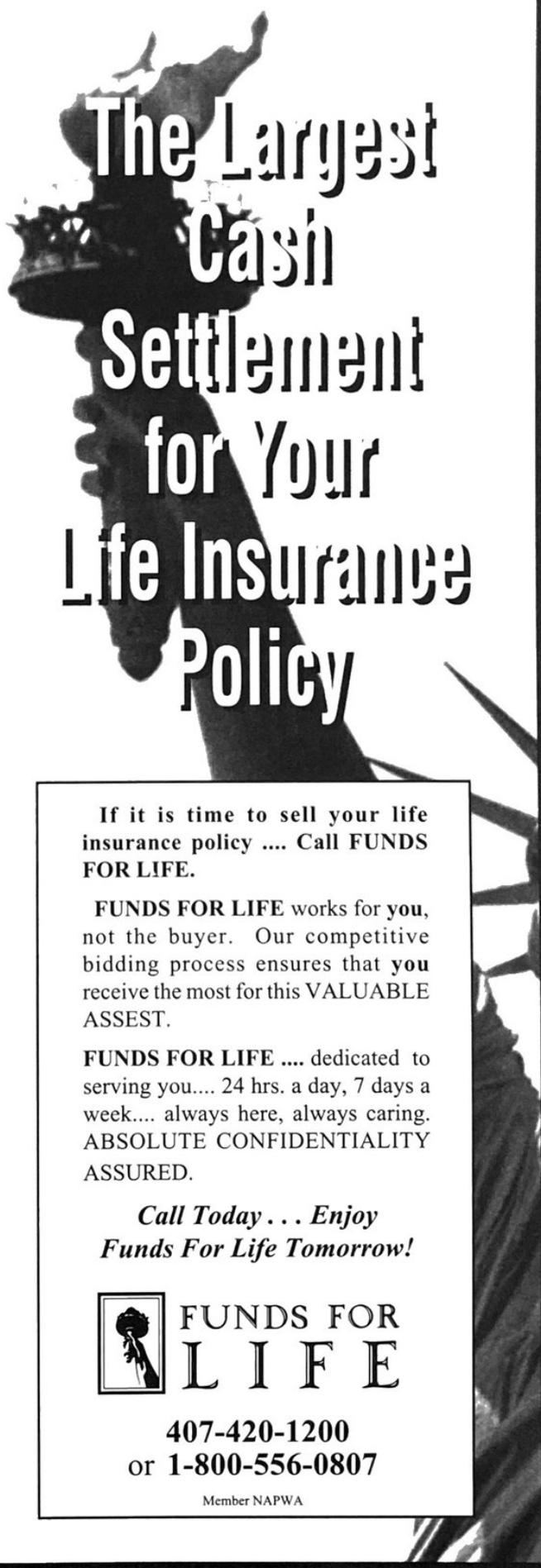
I don't usually go out; my health hasn't been that good lately and I find it boring. Still, after years of living in Canada, I find gay bars in Vancouver are unfriendly and I am too odd to be desirable to white gay men, whatever, sour grapes I guess. I choose a small and dark bar far from the West End. A dive frequented by the welfare set. The posing in trendy places, the smugness of beauty queens, the unfriendly service and "gay tax" drive me nuts. I order a glass of soda—no ice please, no untreated water—I can't drink alcohol, I can't smoke, I can't eat greasy food. This virus is snatching away one by one the things I enjoy in life. It has taken away my taste buds, saturating my mouth with a metallic taste. It has taken away my friends either by killing them or making them tired of my deep funks. The virus is slowly creeping up my legs like poison ivy, plundering my cells and rotting the tissues. Fuck it anyway. I sit in a dark corner to watch ragged hustlers play pool courted by old queens that hand out money, kisses, cigarettes, drinks and compliments with trembling hands

that reach out like worms. I appreciate their damaged beauty, their troubled youth stuffed in tight jeans, sleeveless plaid shirts, a smirk on the face, a growl in the stomach, and a sure shot with the pointer.

A red-haired man—in Spanish we call them *colorines*—momentarily catches my eye. He's sipping a large glass of dark beer, his grip wraps around the entire glass. Like in Sesame Street, I can see that thing doesn't belong with the others. Maybe it does. The *colorin* glances around him, everywhere, constantly, with uncanny emerald eyes. The poor lighting, the thick cloud of smoke suspended midair, and the muffled disco music collude to provide a cheap TV series kind of intimacy to the place. They could play Carpenters and have Charlie's Angels and Rock Hudson show up at the door anytime. I get up from my stool to leave—enough of this shit—as the red-haired man stands on his feet, stumbles, bobbing his head a bit, and heavily falls to his knees. He vomits right there and it splatters my shoes as I walk by. I instinctively go and hold him up. The bartender is a fussy queen who thinks this is the fucking Hyatt and frowns, smacks his lips, brings a mop and fastidiously smears the stuff trying to pick it up. The last call is announced over the loudspeakers. The red-haired one is mumbling incoherencies and the manager comes over to tell me to drag my friend outside before he messes up the joint even further. What? I don't have the chance to explain; he is already dragging him by his left arm while he clings onto me on the right like a heavy anchor. After flapping my arms like a deranged hen for five minutes, I get a cab and push the red-haired burden into the back seat. When the driver asks me for directions, I don't know what to tell him. I try to get away and leave the *colorin* in the taxi to get his ride to nowhere, but the driver mumbles in his broken accent that he is either getting an address from me or kicking his big white butt out of the car. I give the driver my address on the East side and hop next to *colorin*; he is going my way after all. We get there. Only when I offer the edgy driver a tip does he help me tug this huge bag of bones to my apartment's door. The driver drops the guy on me as soon as he gets his tip and as he

turns around he mumbles something nasty about motherfucking queers.

The *colorin* has been dumped on the floor by the door, barely inside; his face is swollen; I curse my fate, dragging him a bit further into the place. I hope that he's not going to die here. What kind of explanations could I give to the paramedics—who cares...one more fag story, they'll say. Well, what now? I finally have a man in my apartment and it means little or nothing. He's a mess and his disgusting drawling has stained his tank top, so I remove his leather jacket and the tank top and in the same effort I pull off his soiled jeans, too. Not bad; he could be handsome if he wasn't this wasted. The classic repressed *gringo* who is unable to get laid when sober and drinks it up until the last call and stumbles down the street to a dark park where he fucks or is fucked by anyone. This one didn't even get that far. He reacts momentarily and I help him get to the toilet bowl to spill out whatever is left of his guts—acidic, pungent smell. I prop him up there and prepare strong coffee, which I make him swallow in big gulps. Two hours later, I'm still nursing this idiot. I'm exhausted. I go out for fun and I end up taking care of some big white guy. The paramedics won't be necessary, I decide; he breathes okay; his chest extends like a mountain. I'm about to go and lie down when the *colorin* comes to his squalid senses and starts a monologue which soon builds into a monotonous stream. Are you Spanish?—no, I'm Latino—Andale, andale, Mexican? Jalapeño? Si señor? He mutters the usual ignorant crap. Why ask? You don't give a damn anyway. Why don't you put jalapeño up your ass? Clearing his rusty throat with coffee, he thoroughly describes the major landmarks of his twenty-three years of life. Why is it always easier to tell a complete and utter stranger everything there's to know about oneself? Anonymity is a great thing and that's why anonymous sex makes sense. Soon I have gathered more information than I really care to have. He says he's this great star and he pompously pronounces his name, dragging an inebriated "s", whatever, a name I've never heard before; he pronounces it sloooowly so I can understand—not my language, you see—pronounces it with the arrogance of those who have the world at their fingertips. Tomorrow, he'll probably regret all these confessions and beat the shit out of me so I don't say anything that can incriminate him—nothing. Maybe I can black-



# The Largest Cash Settlement for Your Life Insurance Policy

If it is time to sell your life insurance policy .... Call FUNDS FOR LIFE.

FUNDS FOR LIFE works for you, not the buyer. Our competitive bidding process ensures that you receive the most for this VALUABLE ASSEST.

FUNDS FOR LIFE .... dedicated to serving you.... 24 hrs. a day, 7 days a week.... always here, always caring. ABSOLUTE CONFIDENTIALITY ASSURED.

*Call Today . . . Enjoy  
Funds For Life Tomorrow!*



FUNDS FOR  
L I F E

407-420-1200  
or 1-800-556-0807

Member NAPWA

mail him and get some dough to pay my credit card bills. Dream on! Well, fuck it, I wish I could do things like that, but they don't interest me or I'm too clumsy.

I asked him one lousy question and he has launched into this epic guilt trip and

him stretch and moan. I turn down the volume a notch. Five minutes later, he comes out stark naked and I can't help but noticing his colossal proportions. Now it's my turn to be uncomfortable. I sneak by and go get the laundry. I bring him coffee

anything, I should keep my composure. The *colorin* wakes up, seems more animated as he eats another slice of cold pizza (the remainder of a large and medium), drinks the rest of my only two-liter bottle of mineral water (no potassium, not carbonated), and takes two more extra-strength pills I hand him over.

At this point, something goes haywire. He's been sitting on the floor all this time and slowly he kneels and leans forward. I swallow twice as I see his lips approach and gently land on my mouth. A soft and humid landing. I don't know how long it lasts: 6.5 on the Richter scale. The epicenter is around here; this has been overdue for twenty years, scientists say. He whispers, "Thank you," and sets my body ablaze, drumrolls my heart, makes me tatter, I mean titter, no, totter. I dive into the emerald pools of his eyes. I'm dazzled in the middle of the bed and could soon be road kill. He climbs into the bed, surprisingly agile for such an enormous man, and locks me in a strong embrace. More kissing. Wait! I jerk away and tell him he doesn't really have to do this. I would have done the same for anyone, I didn't have a choice: the manager, the vomit, the taxi. The bed seems to shrink by the second with his voluminous presence. "Make ample this bed," Emily wrote. Honey, make it big. I know I'm missing a once-in-a-lifetime chance, but thank you, no, thank you. He smiles provocatively with a grin that is a stew of insolence, lust and innocence. He says he feels differently about me. Oh please, give me a break. Get your shit together and leave. I can't believe I have this kind of pride in me! He holds me firmly by the wrists; why did I have to push it? Now comes the gay bashing, I think. Where is the baseball bat? Again, he pulls me closer with a startling tenderness. I'm flushed. I resist his hug and I blurt out that although I find him attractive...very attractive, I can't do this 'cause I'm HIV positive and I have some telling purple KS lesions on my legs. This stops him dead in his tracks. I knew it would—the perfect antidote for this foolishness. I know when to seize an opportunity: better retreated than rejected. A moment goes by and the *colorin* decisively pulls me towards him.

The evening is dark, darker than usual. Everything is messed up, the lamp by the bed has been knocked over, the pillows are drenched, a sharp smell hangs in the air, and time has paused. There are three, count them, three used condoms by the bed. With that skill and modesty one only

## This virus is snatching away one by one the things I enjoy in life.

psychological nightmare of wanting men—you know, wanting them...but living normal. Normal! An hour later, he's fast asleep next to my bed, empty of all revelations and belches. I think of taking advantage of this situation, if you know what I mean, but I'm exhausted. With my luck, I'll probably get crabs or a VD. It would be like playing with gooey dough—lots of it. I cover him and place a pillow under his fiery head and reluctantly go to sleep. As I doze off, I think I should have hidden the knives in the kitchen.

Next morning, I wake up early and with a savage headache and realize I have seen that guy on TV. Big deal. The *colorin* lies there inert until midday. What if his family and the police are looking for him and accuse me of kidnapping him? Now, he snores placidly, the repose of a champion in my 1970s carpet of faded green laurels. I let him sleep. When he finally wakes up, I'm watching the cooking shows of Sunday afternoon. He shakes his head several times and one wild curl of red hair falls down his left eye like a flame. He squints and a gesture of pain takes over his grimace. He looks like an adolescent. I hand him two extra-strength pills for the hangover and a box of tissue paper. He doesn't look me in the eye. He's shy. Isn't it a bit too late for that? He is silent and doesn't want to talk now. I explain to him what happened and why he's lying on my floor. I tell him that nothing has happened to him and that his underwear, his jeans and his tank top were dirty and now they are almost ready in the dryer downstairs. I'll get them in a sec. I assured him that he was so inebriated that he didn't say one intelligible word last night. He asked what intelligible means. He heavily stands up, roughly 5'7", the blanket drops, and he disappears into the bathroom. I hear a potent drizzle. I turn up the TV volume a bit...several burps, a loud fart. I hear

and toast and turn the TV volume down. He has flipped the channel to some live game. I grab the remote control from his hand. He holds it for a couple of seconds but lets it go. The nerve. I quickly surf the channels. Where was *Martha Stewart's Living*? What's this? *Fashion File*? *Fashion File* would do. While he chows down on my twelve-grain toast with "I Can't Believe It's Not Butter," I meekly tell him how to return downtown in a cab. He says thank you and smiles imperceptively. I think he does. I gain courage. I don't know when to shut up, and give him a piece of my mind about gay bars, repressed gringos, closeted assholes and homophobic men. He asks me what I mean. Forget it. We get talking and an hour later we devour pepperoni pizza, which I order; and he pays with a humid fifty buck bill I put through the wash. It was my money I spent to pay the cab fare last night. He takes a nap—more like drowns into a stupor half-seated against the bed. I wonder when he will leave. I've turned up the heat. Expensive. It's raining outside. Is it raining men? Those stupid disco lyrics.

I think about this, the weirdest event. On channel 23, Elsa Klensch is going on about some new collection: black, always black. The truth is, I am impressed the *colorin* is a real hockey star and that he confided in me. However, I prefer soccer; I'm Latino after all; if I'm gonna sit with a man on a Sunday evening I'd rather watch soccer. Last time a straight guy set foot in my place (two of them in fact), it was the paramedics who dragged me out in a stretcher. When I woke up in the ambulance and I saw those visions I thought I had met my maker; my tribulations were over. Wrong. They dumped me at the emergency room. But I have an ounce of pride left, so I refuse to act like a hysterical groupie. I'm ten years older than this guy. If experience amounts to

sees at the movies, I've consistently slipped in between my crumpled white sheets. He, the red-haired beast, placidly lays next to me with a satisfied expression on his face. I run my fingers through his abundant crimson hair to make sure he's really there, not a mirage. I measure the depth and width of his chest many times, resting at the thick nipples, grazing through the rusty jungle of fleece, sniffing the acidic odor of his underarm and crotch. I kiss him until his mouth has run dry (it needs some mouth rinsing urgently). His saliva has turned into a strange syrup. My body aches all over. His invasion has been intense and skillfully sustained. Something in me feels like a rose in bloom, a flower more beautiful than the purple flowers of my KS lesions.

It's late night again when he finally leaves my apartment wearing a red, x-large T-shirt that I usually wear to sleep. His tank top shrank irreparably. His jeans are okay; they were tight before the whole thing began, now they engrave every inch of his skin. A cold scent of full moon takes over the night. I'm exhausted but free. At the door, I say good-bye, wishing this was the perfect housewife's dream come true, but I count my blessings. What I had was good. I stay inside the apartment with all the lights turned off, the TV off, and let quiet tears roll down my face. I hear the sound of the rain trickling down the roof, washing away the streets, and cooling my soul. A week later, I receive a succulent money order in an envelope without a return address. A note says thank you.

This dream ends here, though I've tried many other endings, in which my red-haired hockey player returns to tell me he loves me and wants to start a crazy romance against all odds, and he rides me into the sunset. He comes out to his family and associates, which makes the national headlines for a couple of days, and I'm photographed as the strange Latin fruit of desire that made a good white boy go homo. I die in his strong arms, which wrestle away the loneliness and despair of an AIDS hospice room. Not a bad dream, eh? I made it myself. I never wish dreams to come true because if they do, one is in deep trouble. What would be left to dream about? There's nothing after—the disillusion would be worse than never seeing your dreams crystallize. ■

Francisco Ibañez-Carrasco is a Chilean-Canadian writer whose work has been published in *Fuse* and *Front Magazine*. He is finishing a Ph.D. in AIDS Education at Simon Fraser University.

# BULLETIN

# COMMUNITY

At a time when we've suffered so much loss, our community suffers further from pricing practices of the funeral industry. AIDS is an expensive illness and there has been little that we can do to maintain financial control. That's why two members of our community, Jim St. George and Robert Naylor, started Consumer Casket USA to make it possible for you to cut funeral expenses by as much as 50%.

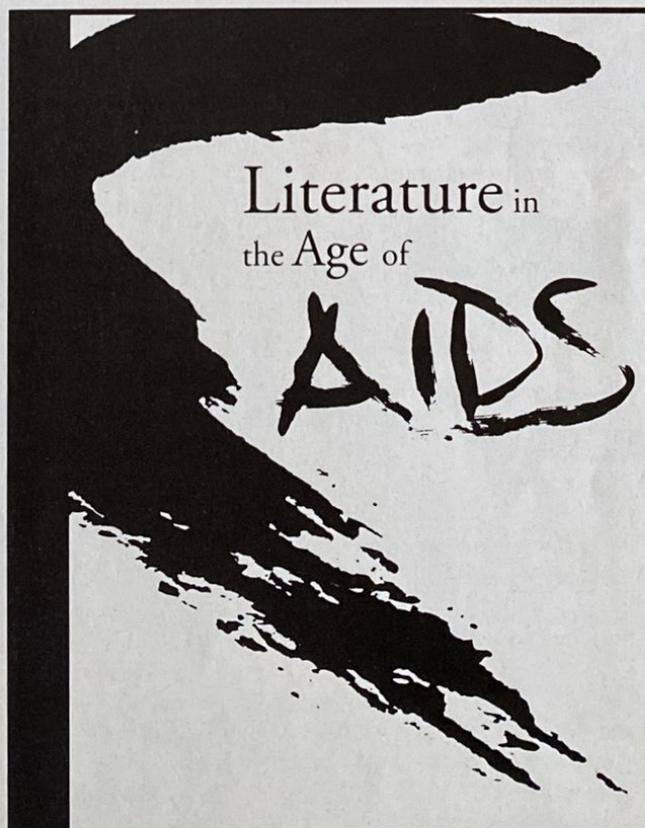
Consumer Casket USA offers all funeral items at huge savings.

For your edification, funeral homes MUST accept burial products purchased elsewhere. And THEY CANNOT RAISE PRICES for other services rendered. It is a Federal Trade Commission ruling and therefore against the law.

For your convenience, Consumer Casket USA will ship any funeral item anywhere in the U.S.A. including next day delivery.

Call TOLL-FREE, 1-888-PRIDE-88 for more information or for a copy of their brochure. Or further details, visit their website at [www.consumercasket.com](http://www.consumercasket.com)

**ConsumerCasket USA™**



The  
Fifteenth  
Annual  
Key West  
Literary  
Seminar

Jan 9-12, 1997

Join 25  
distinguished  
writers & critics  
including  
Ann Beattie  
Larry Kramer  
Tony Kushner  
David Leavitt  
Sarah Schulman  
Edmund White

Writer's Workshops Jan 6-9, 1997 With Rafael Campo,  
Christine Downing, Jewelle Gomez, Benjamin Saenz, Sarah Schulman

For information write or call: Key West Literary Seminar  
419 Petronia St, Key West, FL 33040 • 305/293-9291 • fax 305/293-0482