

NARRATOR: The following program contains language or images of a frank or sensitive nature which may be considered objectionable by some. Listener discretion is advised.

(SINGING) I am what I am.

HOST: Whoa, it must be Saturday night at midnight because you're listening to *After Hours*, a continuing tradition on KPFT Houston 90.1 FM. The crew of *After Hours* is ready to bring you news, interviews, and music here for gay and lesbian people. Just as Gloria Gaynor says in this song, it's time to open up your closets. We at *After Hours* urge everyone to come out of their closets. By our definition, that means standing up for yourself and taking responsibility for your own life.

But if you feel that you can't come out right now because of your age, your job, or whatever reason, that's OK. We're here for you, too. So sit back, relax, and enjoy this week's edition of *After Hours*.

EVELYN: Hello, Houston.

GIGI: Hello.

MICHELLE: Hi.

EVELYN: We have with us tonight, Gigi and Michelle.

GIGI: Hello, this is Gigi from Vinett, Houston.

MICHELLE: Hello, this is Michelle, also from Vinett, Houston.

EVELYN: And I'm Evelyn. Tonight, we're going--

HOST: Evelyn the dyke!

EVELYN: I am not a dyke, give me a break, sometimes. Tonight, we're going to be talking with Josie and Margaux from FIST. Margaux is the very first Miss Texas Leather Pride from 1992. And we're going to be talking about some of FIST's upcoming events.

HOST: What's FIST?

EVELYN: Pardon?

HOST: What's FIST?

EVELYN: FIST is Females in Search of Trouble. It's the local women's leather group, and really excited about some of the stuff that's-- I'm really excited about some of the stuff that's going to be going on with them. We'll talk more later And Gigi and Michelle are going to be talking to us later tonight about--

GIGI: Tonight, we're going to be bringing on some paganism in the queer community.

EVELYN: All right--

HOST: What does that mean?

GIGI: Paganism is an ancient religion or set of religions. Christianity barred from Judaism barred from-- it has everything to do with fairies and mythology, Mother Earth.

EVELYN: Now if I remember my history correctly, most of the world was pagan and then came the Christians.

GIGI: Mm-hmm.

EVELYN: All right, so it's ancient religion. And the winter solstice is coming up, just a couple of days at-- what is it, the 22nd, 21st?

GIGI: 22nd.

EVELYN: The 22nd. The winter solstice is coming up on the 22nd, and we're going to be talking about that a little bit. And at 1:30, we're going to have the Love Connection. And I know that's a real popular piece, so we're looking forward to Scott being here in just a little while. So what else have we got going on?

HOST: Queer Christmas music thrown around.

EVELYN: All right.

HOST: And we've got an almost-queer Christmas carol to start with because it's by Garth Brooks who isn't gay himself, but his sister who plays in the band is certainly an out dyke now that he outed her.

[LAUGHTER]

EVELYN: And boy is she cute. I really love a good-looking dyke.

[LAUGHTER]

MICHELLE: Me, too.

EVELYN: You, too?

[ROARS]

We have a consensus. All the women in the room love dykes. Whoa!

GIGI: Maybe even Gigi loves dykes.

EVELYN: Oh.

HOST: Ah, but--

EVELYN: Well, like I said.

HOST: Probably the least type of music that we play on *After Hours* is country and Western. We have Doug Stevens & the Outband, and we do a couple of those pieces. But we don't really get a whole lot of C and W. And this is really unique. I think this is one of the best versions of-- Western version of gospel music, Garth Brooks doing *Go Tell It On The Mountain*.

EVELYN: Bubba, this one's for you.

(SINGING) Go tell it on the mountain.

We're back, lovely Garth Brooks. I do love that. And I'm so glad he outed his sister, so we could play him on *After Hours*. Well, let's see. We have with us tonight two women from FIST, which is Females in Search of Trouble. It's a local women's leather group. We have Josie who is the current president. And we have Margaux--

MARGAUX: Hello.

EVELYN: --who is the very first Miss Texas Leather Pride 1992. Oh, I'm winded tonight, running around here like a chicken with my head cut off. Tell us first, what's going on tomorrow?

JOSIE: Well, first off, I would like to add in all fairness that Margaux is also our current treasurer.

EVELYN: Oh, she's your current treasurer. I was unaware of that. Two officers, mm.

JOSIE: Hey, it's a tough job, but somebody's got to do it.

EVELYN: Understood.

JOSIE: No, tomorrow night, what's going on is we're having a fundraiser at Pacific Street-- OK, not close enough. Well, I don't have a meter in front of me that shows how it's reading. Tomorrow night, in front of Pacific Street Bar at what's that, the corner of Crocker and Pacific, we're going to be holding a fundraiser. So come on out, meet the ladies, and be sure to tip heavy because we'll be running the bar and selling paddlelets.

EVELYN: Pad-- oh, my God. Ladies, we got to go. Come on, get out there to the Pacific Street. I want to say--

JOSIE: We'll take men's money, too.

EVELYN: Nah, of course.

[LAUGHTER]

I want to say something about Pacific Street. Pacific Street has been a sore spot for me for a while. And I've expressed that on the air because of their policy of not allowing women without a male escort. But I would like for it to be known that they were gracious enough to allow FIST to hang their colors there.

JOSIE: They actually bidden for us to hang our colors there. They were very aggressive about getting us to hang our colors there.

EVELYN: I think that this is a giant step forward, and I applaud you for being able to hang your colors there and for them taking the steps to get you there.

MARGAUX: I would also like to point out in fairness that the escort policy is A, there have been incidents with non-members of the community coming in there and starting things due to the male dancers. And also the policy itself is more of an insurance regulation. The actual enforcement tends to be on the high heel issue.

It's a multilevel bar. And they do have insurance concerns about spike heels. Matter of fact, we had one member who was in relatively low heels who'd ended up tripping and hurting himself-- and hurting herself due to the split-level nature of the bar.

EVELYN: Well I, of course, love Pacific Street. And the stairs that go up to the leather loft are quite steep and dimly lit. And I can appreciate this.

MARGAUX: It's an insurance issue because of it.

EVELYN: Understood. I just wanted to be sure that you knew that the colors are hanging proudly there. And tell me more about this fundraiser. Where does your money go when you raise funds?

JOSIE: Well, we normally raise money for the Houston Area Women's Center. That is our primary charity. This money tomorrow night will be going to FIST. We are-- and I know we're going to be talking about it more later. We are having a contest in January. And so we're trying to raise money so that we can do that in style. Our coffers are sadly low. And in any organization, you can't have that. Otherwise, you're not going to survive.

So this is strictly for us. But we have in the last-- I guess since this summer, we've raised in various charities. One of our members won the mistress auction back in the summer and sent several hundred dollars. I don't remember the exact amount.

MARGAUX: Something like \$600.

JOSIE: Something like \$600 to the Houston Area Women's Center, and then during the fall roundup, I was a member of the-- I was drafted into the Queen of the Run and won the Queen of the Run, thanks to Pacific Street donating \$100. And we ended up sending \$342 to the Houston Area Women's Center.

EVELYN: Wonderful. Well, that's really good charity work, and--

MARGAUX: I'd also like to add that we, in November-- still too far away. In November, we presented the first ever Miss Houston Leather Contest. Unfortunately, our winner can't be here tonight. And at that event, which was a food drive for the Houston Area Women's Shelter, we were able to bring in a good box of food and other non-perishable items for the Houston Area Women's Shelter.

I'd like to add that if anybody would care to donate without directly donate to them, kindly do. It's that time of year, gang. They need our help.

EVELYN: Before I started doing fundraising in our community, I did a lot of work with the Houston Area Women's Shelter. And they really do need the help, and they need volunteers at this time of year, especially. And they have a hotline that always needs to be staffed. And you can find out more information about the Houston Area Women's Shelter and you can get information on how to contact FIST by calling the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard, 529-3211.

I want to hear more about this thing going on in January. And now see, I'm all excited. These girls have got me pumped up, pumped for this thing coming up. Tell us about the Gulf Coast Leather Contest.

JOSIE: Well, first of all, I think what we need to do is explain to the listeners out there what a leather contest is. It's not a Miss America pageant. Although a lot of the contests out there tend to take on that pretty girl, pretty boy look. That's not really what we're going for here. The leather community has a lot of contests that are done. And primarily what we're looking for is we're looking for people to be leaders in the community.

The best thing I heard was a woman who was International Ms. Leather, Ms. Amy Meeks, said at one point that anyone who wins a contest ends up being the bottom to the community for the year of your service because that's what you're doing is you're serving your community. You're out there trying to explain to people who we are and what we are and what we do, and things like explaining the difference between the leather scene and abuse, which is a real important topic.

What the contest itself involves is it involves an interview that is worth about 40 points of the total score. And then there's a speech that comes before the contest itself. And then in the contest that the public sees, there's a short speech. And then there is everybody's personal favorite part of the contest, which is the fantasy, which is about five minutes of women getting up on stage and--

MARGAUX: Scantily clad.

JOSIE: Very scantily clad and showing what their personal fantasies are within, of course, the limits of the law. But they can be--

EVELYN: I smell the leather now.

JOSIE: Oh, yes, and you can hear the whips crack.

MARGAUX: Feel the candle wax drop.

JOSIE: Yes, feel the candle wax drop.

EVELYN: Girls, I've got to be on the air for two more hours.

[LAUGHTER]

MARGAUX: We don't.

[LAUGHTER]

EVELYN: Oh, yes.

MARGAUX: I'm safe. That's all I can say.

JOSIE: But the contest itself is a lot of fun. What we have is we're putting together a contest weekend. What we're going to be doing is starting-- it'll be the weekend before the Martin Luther King Day. I mean, it is the weekend before the Martin Luther King Day on Friday the 13th. What a wonderful day.

EVELYN: January 13th.

JOSIE: January the 13th, we will be having a meet the contestants, meet the judges at Pacific Street starting at 10 o'clock in the evening. And then on Saturday, we're going to be having bar runs and vendors during the day. And then that evening, we're having a wine and cheese with the title holders that will be coming in from out of town as well as those of us in town.

Both myself and Jan Lee, who is very active, is-- yeah, she's interviewed on here before. She is also the second Miss Texas Leather Pride in 1993. And then that evening at 10 o'clock, we'll be having more cocktail parties and such at the Pacific Street plus a shuttle to a play party that people can go to. And then on Sunday, we'll be having a brunch at Cafe Artiste and then a contest at 2 o'clock in the afternoon at Pacific Street.

And then Sunday evening, we'll be having what we call a dungeon dance at Pacific Street, which is kind of an after-the-contest party. Also because about-- what is it, about 40% of the leather community is sober, we're having two clean and sober meetings during the weekend for those people who need that--

MARGAUX: Or want it.

EVELYN: Wonderful.

JOSIE: --or want it. And that's going to be hosted-- that's going to be run by one of our members.

EVELYN: Wonderful, wonderful.

JOSIE: We're really trying to make sure that we're very inclusive. One of the problems that we've had is that we've had a lot of division, and we've had a lot of people who felt excluded for one reason or another. And that's not what we want to do. The contest itself is-- the weekend itself is a \$20 package for the whole weekend.

[INAUDIBLE]

EVELYN: Now I know what a play party is. But all of our listeners may not know what a play party is.

[LAUGHTER]

So would you care to-- would you care to tell us a little bit about a play party?

MARGAUX: Let me let Josie do that.

JOSIE: Well, it goes with that sign you've got up here about the beatings will continue until the morale improves.

[LAUGHTER]

EVELYN: Yes, yes, yes.

JOSIE: Basically, a play party is a place where people can go to do that which turns them on short of actual intercourse because it is, of course, a public event. But I've seen people who've done just the standard whippings and beatings, and canings and wax play, and just about anything else.

MARGAUX: I've seen intercourse at some of these, too.

JOSIE: Yeah, but with what this is, we're not running the play party. I believe--

MARGAUX: We are co-sponsoring the play party with the local heterosexual mixed group.

EVELYN: My understanding is at least through the NLA, National Leather Association, is that most of their play parties are set up where-- let's see, how is it so politely put, where techniques may be shown and shared.

JOSIE: That's a very good way of putting it. That is a very good way of putting it. That's a lot of what goes on at any event like this.

EVELYN: A lot of work goes into each scene.

JOSIE: And that's true in any situation. One of the things-- and I think that it's something that your listeners need to know is that there's a lot of stuff that sounds very intimidating about what we do. You get these visions of people hanging on crosses and whips and chains and all of that. And while there is that, there is a phrase that the National Leather Association uses and that I've heard augmented by several people.

And the three key words are safe, sane, and consensual. And one of the best add-on words I heard was from a friend of mine who added the word compassionate. And that's really what we are.

MARGAUX: It's that, but it's way I like to state it is as it's stated in the FIST bylaws, safe, sane, consensual, and fun. I mean, you're both parties. If both parties aren't enjoying what's going on, why do it?

EVELYN: What a lot of people who are curious about the sadomasochist way of life might not understand is that one of several-- actually, several people I know have the same favorite torture implement and that is a feather. It doesn't always have to be whips and chains. Feathers can be torture as well.

MARGAUX: Well, actually, about six months ago when Jan and I were on doing the interview with, I guess, with Jewel, we were taking callers. And one of the topics that got brushed on as it were tickling scenes, not even feathers, just your fingertips.

EVELYN: Just the fingertips, very good. Well, now be sure everybody to go out to Pacific Street tomorrow, at what time?

MARGAUX: 9:00 PM.

EVELYN: At 9:00 PM Pacific Street for the FIST fundraising event. And that is the sale of--

MARGAUX: Well, weather permitting, we're going to be running one of the outside bar.

EVELYN: Outside booths or at the bar, an outside bar?

MARGAUX: Bar, there's two outside bars. We're going to have one opened up for us as long as it's not raining. And we're also going to be selling paddlelets.

EVELYN: Paddlelets. Well, this sounds like a lot of fun. And you will be hearing more about the Miss Gulf Coast Leather Contest as time rolls by. But that is scheduled to take place January 13th, 14th, and 15th, beginning at 10:00 PM on Friday at Pacific Street, Friday, January 13th.

MARGAUX: And anybody that's interested can contact FIST at 522-4533.

EVELYN: And I will have that number ready for you later. If you'd like to call in and get more information, please do so. And the number is 522--

MARGAUX: 4533.

EVELYN: --4533. Jimmy's got some nice music in store for us. What you got going on, Jim?*Step into Christmas* by my fave, Elton John.

GIGI: Hello, this is Gigi, and we are back. We're ready to move into the paganism. And we have Heather with us tonight.

HEATHER: Hi.

GIGI: Heather, why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself.

HEATHER: I'm a college student, and I'm a member of Stone Circle Grove. And it is a pre-Roman, Celtic, druidic group. We're the only druidic group that I know of in the greater Houston area.

GIGI: Oh, great.

MICHELLE: Could you explain to us a little bit more about what a druidic group is.

HEATHER: A druidic group is-- it's Celtic based. Celtic would be Ireland, Scotland, England, what used to be-- what is now France and Portugal and Spain. It's based on the Celtic gods and goddesses. It is based on the love of nature, worshipping of the trees. It's very much a nature-based.

GIGI: You say the love of nature, can you tell us a little bit more about what paganism is?

HEATHER: Sure. Well, paganism is basically also a nature-based religion. It is a multi-god religion, worshipping of a god and a goddess.

GIGI: You mentioned gods and goddesses. Can you tell us some things that paganism is not because I know there's a lot of confusion.

HEATHER: Well, there is a difference in black and white witchcraft or paganism. Black pagans, generally, they believe in the threefold law. What you put out into the universe comes back to you threefold. If you cause harm to someone, it will come back to you threefold. So pagans are not out to harm. They're not out-- they don't sacrifice babies. They don't sacrifice children.

And it is a complete lie that pagans worship the devil. It is impossible for us to be Satanists or devil worshippers because we do not believe in it. It does not exist to us. To us, it is an entity created by Christianity.

GIGI: It sounds like there's a lot of myths about paganism.

HEATHER: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, and most of it is created by the media and created by television and created by not general Christians but fundamental religious people who do not want to understand other beliefs and do not want to accept other beliefs.

GIGI: One thing I was curious about, can you tell us a little bit more about how paganism relates to the queer community?

HEATHER: Paganism is probably one of the few religions in existence that is completely accepting of any lifestyle, completely open and completely accepting and wanting of any lifestyle. Greek and Roman religions were considered to be pagan. And it was very accepting for the homosexual lifestyle. I do not know of any pagan religion that would condemn any. In fact, most pagans that I know are gay or bisexual. Almost every pagan I know is gay or bisexual.

GIGI: I understand that some of the early pagans-- some of the more famous people in the past were homosexual or bisexual.

HEATHER: Such as-- who do you have in mind?

GIGI: Well, I know a lot of the Greek gods and goddesses and a lot of Greek mythology.

HEATHER: Mm-hmm. There was a lot of-- well, there was more than just homosexuality. There was incest and other things such as that. Though we don't condone-- we don't condone incest, but a lot of the coming out of women loving women. And love is the important thing, not who you love, but how you love and the quality of love. And that is something that I have always been taught and always have learned in paganism.

GIGI: Tell me a little bit about the pagan belief system, the type of things you celebrate, then times of the year that are important to paganism.

HEATHER: Well, generally, we worship and celebrate the goddess. And we worship and we celebrate-- paganism was a religion based on the fact that 200,000 years ago, the sun shine and they didn't know why. The moon would move around in different phases, and they didn't know why. They didn't have the technology we have today to understand. So they had the-- we celebrate the eight sabbaths, which are the eight high holy days.

And we celebrate eight sabbaths which are the full moons, celebrating the full moon, celebrating of the creativity and the full life-giving force of the moon. We have the eight holidays. There's Samhain which is October 31st. It's the beginning of-- for most pagan traditions, it is the beginning of the new year. There is Yule, the birth of the sun god and the longest night of the year, the shortest day.

It is a celebration in the midst of the harshness of winter. They had it as a celebration. For everyone, it was winter. It was cold. And this is generally celebrated in, what I'm talking about is, European and northern religions because I don't know a lot about the Aborigines and the tribal religions.

MICHELLE: Could you tell us how you first got into paganism, how you first became interested in it?

HEATHER: I was 11 years old, and I had to do a book report. And I was looking around and looking around in the library, and I saw these books and I read them. And my grandmother, who was a metaphysics student and a member of the Metaphysics Institute in California, had always told me that religion is just 10,000 paths to the higher spirit of god, goddess, and whatever feels good for you.

And I read all these books. And I'm like-- I felt that was very comfortable for me, the aspect of their being. I'd been told that God was a he, and it was a very uncomfortable thought for me. And the fact that there was--

GIGI: Me, too.

HEATHER: --balance, and in this way, it's like in Taoism, the yin and yang. There has to be a balance. Now there are, of course, very many dynamic groups that celebrate only the goddess.

But in our particular tradition, we believe in the duality of the balance of male and female. Within every man, there is woman. Within every woman, there is man.

GIGI: One thing I've always felt was missing from our patriarchal religions was this idea of a female entity and also an androgynous god or goddess, depending on the predominant gender. And I know that in paganism, there's a lot of freedom, I understand, that there isn't one single paganism, but it's a whole wide range of beliefs that vary from one group to another.

HEATHER: Well, even if you belong to, let's say, a Celtic tradition, in 200 AD, there were thousands of tribes all over Ireland, all over Scotland, all over Gaul. And they all had the same basic belief, but they all had their own separate thing together. And there are literally thousands of religions based on American Indian traditions, Australian Aborigine traditions, African traditions. There's voodoo, different kinds of traditions within the Mexican-American traditions, Norse religions, English traditions, Celtic traditions. They're just thousands, uncountable.

GIGI: Would you say that paganism is mostly a celebration of Mother Earth and the seasons and nature?

HEATHER: It's the celebration of that the Earth is-- why we're here. Without the Earth, we would not be here. We would be nothing, and the Earth should be revered and blessed and worshipped for the great and powerful force that it is. And every season should be celebrated and revered.

MICHELLE: I'm curious, just how it-- because I know you hear so much about Western religions. It's really easy to get involved with them because you just see them everywhere.

HEATHER: Oh, yes.

MICHELLE: But if I wanted to get involved with paganism or I wanted to learn more about it, what would you think I would have to do?

HEATHER: Well, if you have a computer or a modem, you can get on with BBS. That's bulletin boards. And within the bulletin boards, there's a bulletin board called Brewer's Witch. And you get on. And it's very easy to get on. And you type in your name and all that, and you get hold of people. You can also go to metaphysical bookstores. Good examples of that would be Lucia's Garden, Body, Mind, and Soul.

Probably the best example of all would be Gateways. Now that's in the Clear Lake area, but it's worth the drive. And you go in there, and you go, hey, this is what interests me. And if you look, there are sometimes stuff up on the bulletin board. There are sometimes flyers sitting around. If you go to metaphysical bookstores and go and what I would suggest would be to go and read books, read, read, read.

Read and read about everything, anything you can get your hands on to make your decision of what you want and what you're interested in. And then talk to the shopkeeper and talk to him or her and go, I'm interested in this. Do you know what direction I can go?

GIGI: It sounds really good.

MICHELLE: I've seen on-- I've been on the internet and I've seen a lot of-- there's some pagan groups on there. And that's where I learned a little bit about it.

HEATHER: In fact, that's how I got a hold of-- I had a friend that was on the BBS Brewer's Witch. And they have PNOs, pagan nights out. And they'll go to-- they'll go to a restaurant, or they'll go to a camp out, or whatever. And people just get together and interact with each other. And that's how I met this one woman who said, hey, I have friends in this Celtic tradition.

And we went over there, and that's how I met my group because I was solitary up until about a year ago. And it's very hard, very, very hard. And then sometimes you'll go out. And for every wonderful, wonderful group, there are-- you must be aware that there are groups out to suck you up. There's a difference between a grove or a coven and a cult. And you must keep your eyes open and do not be sucked in.

Go into it slowly. Visit these people often. Don't just go to grove meetings. Get to know these people. Let these people become your friends because when you're in a grove, it's like being a family. It's like being in a relationship. And these are people that you're planning on being with for the rest of your life or for the rest of the time that you are living where you are. This is your religion. It's a very large part of your life.