

The Allure of the Closet

BY ERNIE MCLEOD

I confess: I bought the Star. Normally, when those titillating headlines scream out for my attention, I sneak a quick peek in the check-out. That's how I learned about Don Johnson buying gay porn and dildoes. (Joke gifts, Don insisted - uh-huh.) But this particular headline was irresistible: "Kevin Spacey Romps with Male Model! Oh, Boy! Amazing photos of Oscar winner's secret double life." Ditch intellectual pride, my enquiring mind had to know!

As usual with this brand of, uh, journalism, the actual article and accompanying photos were disappointingly ambiguous compared to the titillating title. Besides, why should I care about Mr. Spacey's private life? Though I am male, I'm not a model, and with us living on different coasts and all, the odds of the Oscar winner romping with me are, alas, remote. In other words, I have no personal stake in with whom Kevin romps.

Likewise, Ricky Martin. When I heard that Ricky was going to be on the Barbara Walters pre-Oscar special and that she was going to pop The

Big Question, you can bet I wasn't in the library reading Sartre when the appointed hour rolled around.

When Baba asked, did Wicky tell? Not exactly: "Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to express, the rumors. But, Barbara, for some reason, I just don't feel like it. You know, it's, it's something so mine. I give it all when I'm on stage. I give it all in interviews, but you've got to keep something for yourself sometimes, and that's for me."

Having spent the first two decades of my life entirely in the closet, and a third with the door barely ajar, I have no desire - as a fourth crawls toward its conclusion - to go back in time. The door is wide open now, baby, rip it off the hinges! Which ties in neatly with June being Pride Month. Out! Loud! Proud! Wave those rainbow flags and let freedom ring.

Important as I believe it is to be out in one's personal life, when it comes to the arts, I've recently discovered I'm a closet advocate. Or rather, an advocate for the closet.

What does this mean exactly? It means that when Ricky didn't come out (as either het or homo), I unexpectedly found myself think-

ing: good for you. Keep it for yourself and for the one you love. Why should I know? The odds of us shaking our bon-bons together are about as favorable as those of a romp with Kevin.

Some will argue "but he could be a role model! Remember when you were young those many decades ago and there were no openly gay people in magazines, on the radio, on TV, in the movies?" I do, and I remember how any hints of gayness filled me with terror and excitement. (Not that I was quick to catch on - "YMCA" and "In the Navy" never struck me as gay songs, for example.) But those days are gone. More and more, gay people exist in our real lives. We shouldn't need gay celebrity role models. We should need gay celebrities who do interesting work.

Last fall, when Ellen and Anne were invited to UVM as part of Coming Out Week, Kevin (not Spacey) and I were there. Stars in our midst, how could we not go?! I'm sure they had only good intentions in coming, but, honestly, I found the evening - to put it indelicately -

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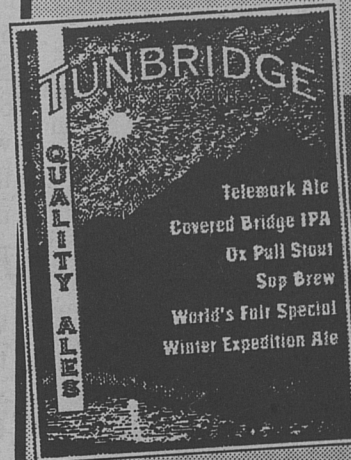
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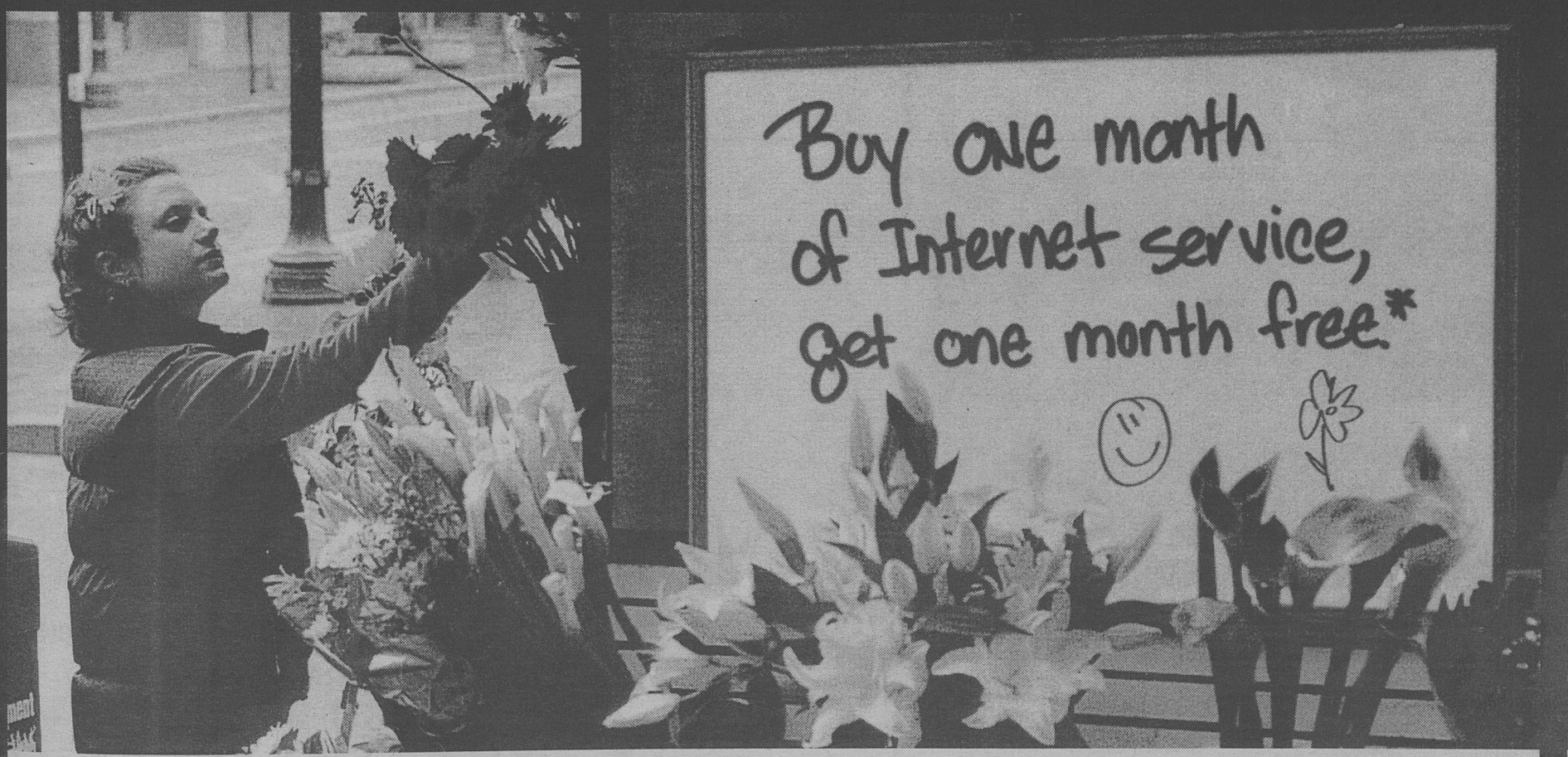


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