

Suddenly Susan' actor found dead in motel

LAS VEGAS (AP) — David Strickland, who played the music critic on the NBC sitcom "Suddenly Susan" and had a role in the new movie *Forces of Nature*, was found dead in a motel room, an apparent suicide.

A worker at the Oasis Motel found Strickland's body hanging from a bed sheet strung from a ceiling beam Monday, motel owner Peter Napoli said. A chair was next to the body. Police were investigating the death as a suicide, police spokesperson Steve Meriwether said. Strickland was identified by his publicist, Marisa McGrath. Strickland, 29, played the comically insecure writer on NBC's "Suddenly Susan," which stars Brooke Shields as a magazine writer. He had been on the show for the last three seasons. Strickland also appears in *Forces of Nature*, starring Sandra Bullock and Ben Affleck, playing the ex-boyfriend of Affleck's fiancée. The movie opened last week and was No. 1 at the box office over the weekend.

Strickland appeared cheerful and spoke of his future during an interview just a few weeks before his death.

"I'm just trying to do a bunch of different things," he told AP Network News. "I'd love to direct an episode next year of 'Suddenly Susan.' I think that's the best part about the entertainment business. I'd even like to try to get into a garage band."

"I'd like to be 30, 38, 39 and doing something really great and sort of have this look back and say, 'He's worked consistently,'" he said. "There's something nice about that."

NBC spokesperson Rebecca Marks said the company was "deeply saddened by the news of David Strickland's death and our condolences and support go out to his family and friends."

Strickland was born in Glen Cove, N.Y., and moved to Pacific Palisades near Los Angeles while he was in high school.

He worked on a number of student films and appeared in episodes of the television shows "Roseanne" and "Dave's World." He also had recurring roles on "Sister, Sister" and "Mad About You."

Complaints filed against Methodist ministers participating in lesbian marriage ceremonies

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — The Methodist bishop for Northern California filed a complaint Tuesday against 69 ministers who participated in a lesbian holy union ceremony in mass defiance of a church ban on same-sex marriages.

The complaint is the first step toward a possible church trial for the Rev. Don Fado, who presided at the Jan. 15 celebration, and the other ministers. If convicted, they could be removed from the clergy. Bishop Melvin Talbert, head of the 375-church California-Nevada United Methodist Conference, said he brought the complaint with sorrow and regret.

Talbert said the church's ban on ceremonies recognizing gay relationships is an "act of injustice," but he said church law required him to act on a complaint brought by two pastors.

"I will uphold law, but I will not be silenced. I will continue speaking out against the law and will continue working to change the position of our church to be more keeping with the teachings and compassion of Jesus," he said.

Fado did not return a call for comment Tuesday.

The conflict over same-sex weddings has been simmering for years within the United Methodist Church, which with 8.5 million members is the nation's second-biggest Protestant denomination after the Southern Baptists.

Fado led the wedding-like celebration for Jeanne Barnett, 68, and Ellie Charlton, 63. The women have long been active in Fado's church, St. Marks United Methodist, and have been a couple for more than 15 years.

More than 1,000 members of the clergy, gays and others attended the ceremony, which was held at the Sacramento Community Center and included folk songs, dancing and poetry.

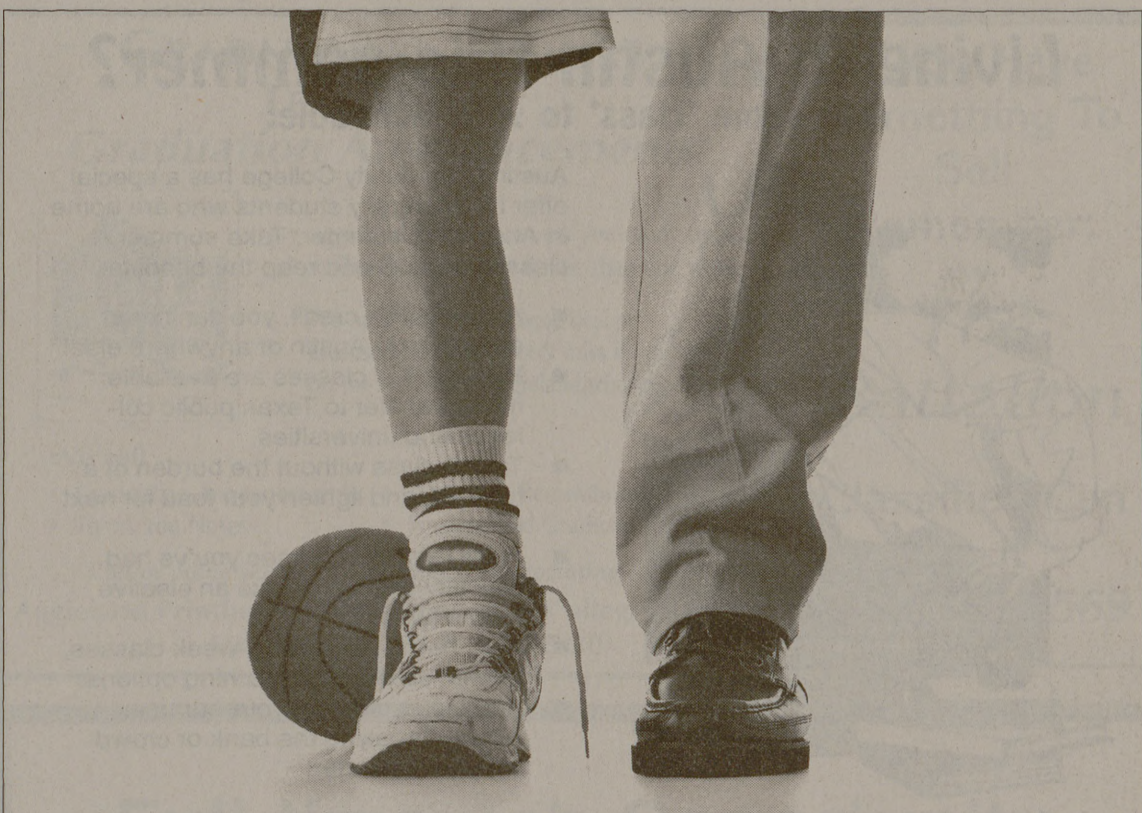
While Fado presided, the other ministers lined up on risers on the stage to chant the blessing that Fado proclaimed could land them all in trouble with church officials: "O God, our maker, we gladly proclaim to the world that Jeanne and Ellie are loving partners together for life."

Oscars place #1 in Nielsen Media ratings

(AP) - Prime-time ratings compiled by Nielsen Media Research for March 15-21 have been released. Top 10 listings include the week's ranking, with the rating for the week and season-to-date rankings in parentheses.

An "X" in parentheses denotes a one-time-only presentation. The rating is the percentage of the nation's estimated 99.4 million TV homes. Each ratings point represents 994,000 households.

1. (X) "Academy Awards," ABC, 28.6, 28.4 million homes.
2. (X) "Oscar Preview Show," ABC, 18.1, 17.9 million homes.
3. (2) "Friends," NBC, 16.6, 16.5 million homes.
4. (3) "Frasier," NBC, 14.4, 14.3 million homes.
5. (X) "Frasier," NBC, 14.0, 13.9 million homes.
6. (6) "Jesse," NBC, 13.9, 13.8 million homes.
7. "Barbara Walters Special," ABC, 12.7, 12.6 million homes.
8. "Everybody Loves Raymond," CBS, 12.4, 12.3 million homes.
9. (1) "ER," NBC, 12.1, 12.0 million homes.
10. "NCAA Basketball Championship: Post Game," CBS, 11.6, 11.5 million homes.



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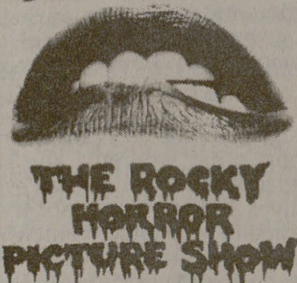
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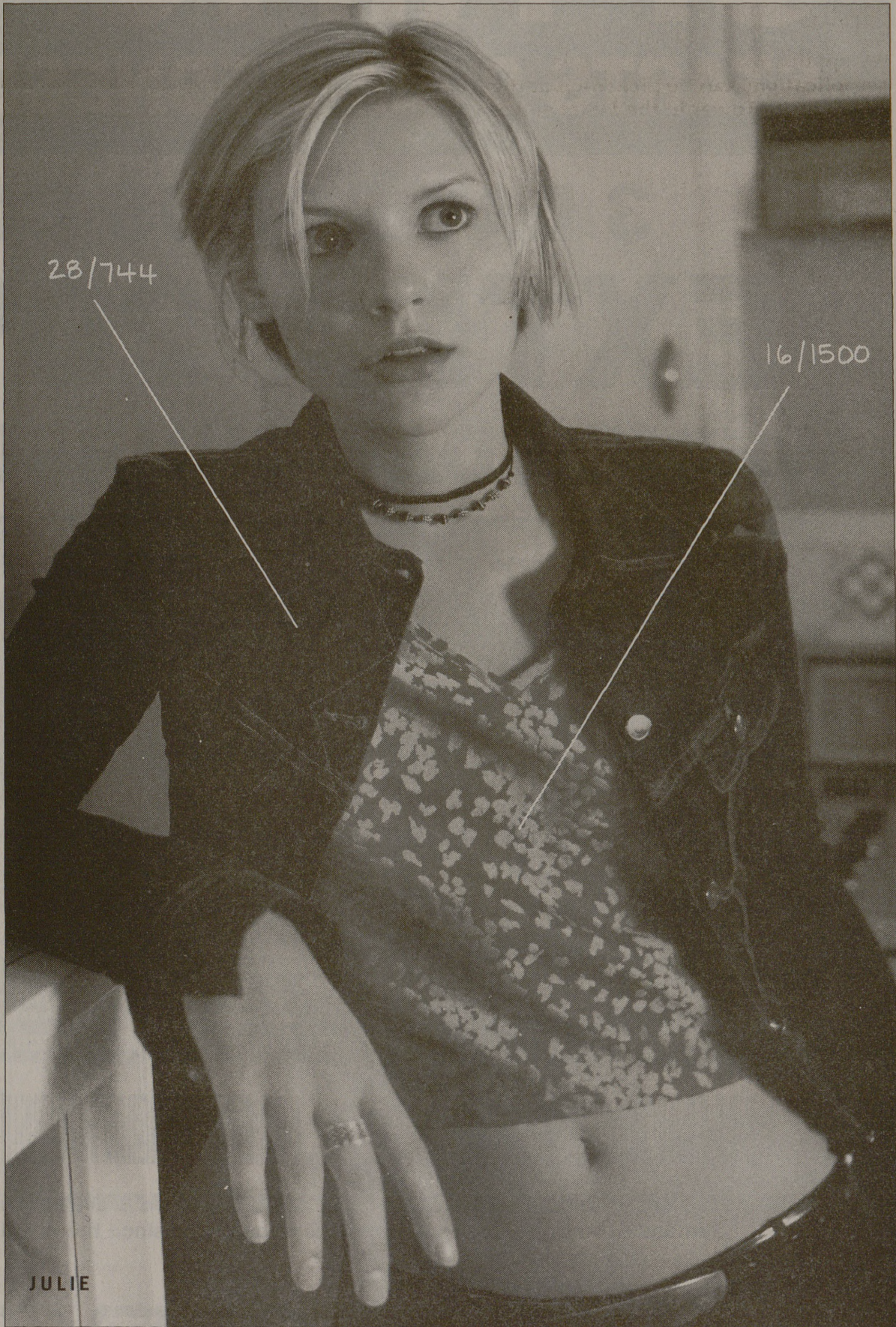
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