

Home At Last?

High School Parties Launched Charades Deejay

Second in a series about deejays at Charlotte gay bars.

By **DON KING**
Editor

It's only natural that a dance club deejay's background would include spinning records for high school and country club dances. But when Lin Benfield was doing that in Martinsville, Va., for his teen-aged peers, he had no idea it would become a career.

Benfield, 31, has been the deejay at Charades since its brief stint as a non-gay dance club earlier this year. His primary spinning job before that had been at 2001 VIP in Charlotte.

"The first time I ever saw this club was

when I was living in Richmond," he said. "I was visiting in Charlotte and a friend told me he wanted me to see a place called the Odyssey (former name of Charades), that it would blow my mind.

"So we went, and I had never seen a club like it. It overwhelmed me. I would never have believed for a million years that I would ever have been spinning in that booth."

At that time, Benfield was working as a marketing representative at Kings Dominion, a theme park near Richmond where he deejayed occasionally for staff and patron parties in addition to his regular work.

His spinning days had started when he worked as a high schooler at a Martinsville radio station as a staff announcer, and was asked to play records at private parties.

"I was probably the first mobile disco in Martinsville," he said. "I bought just enough equipment to get by. There were no nightclubs in the area and I saw no future in it."

After earning an associate degree in education from Patrick Henry Community College, he went to Virginia Commonwealth in Richmond and gained a bachelors in mass communication, concentrating on broadcast news. It was while he was in Richmond that he saw a large dance club for the first time.

"That was really exciting for me," he said. "It created the same excitement I had felt the first time I visited a radio station. I liked the idea of instant feedback that you get playing in a club — something I hadn't had playing records on a radio station."

After three years at Kings Dominion — his first job after college — the park was sold and Benfield's job was phased out. With friends and family in Charlotte, he decided to move here, and worked for an advertising agency for a year. When the agency, too, was sold, he got a job working as a part-time deejay at 2001 VIP playing beach music during the week in Razzie's, then playing in the big ballroom on Sundays.

When Ronnie Matthews left, Benfield became the lead deejay.

"It was like playing in Charlotte's top dance club, and that was quite an honor. I was devastated when they were sold, too, even though I knew they were having financial problems."

Benfield moved to Myrtle Beach and got a deejay job with a new club called Polos. But the club didn't do well, so it was on to the gay club, Off-Shore Drilling Co.

"That took me through the fall of last year," he said. "But I really get depressed at the beach during the winter, and about that time the club was being sold; so I moved back to Charlotte, not knowing what I would do.

"I worked at the Treehouse for about two months, getting hired on the strength of my experience at 2001. Then Steve Freeman approached me about working at Charades. Steve had talked to me first when Odyssey became the teen-age club Weekends, but I had turned him down because I was at 2001 at the time that it was doing well. But when this second chance came, I jumped at it.

"I'm the happiest I've been. It's a great opportunity.

"Gay people are much easier-going than straights about their music. People who come to gay clubs are more in tune musically and not as



BENFIELD

concerned with whether they've heard something on the radio or know who's singing it. They're just out to have a good time.

"That was one of the most frustrating things about working in a straight club: you had to be so careful about what was played because, if they didn't recognize something, they wouldn't dance and would complain. In a gay club, the crowds are just out to have a good time."

For the future?

"I'd like to have my own entertainment complex. With the background I've been able to gain in clubs, and with my marketing and promotions background, I think I could make a go of it. I've never ended up exactly where I thought I was supposed to, anyway. I'm sure I won't be playing at 80 years old."

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Are Aquarians Stupid? Geminians: Incestuous?

A special little Christmas gift from Q-Notes that you might want to cut out and read to the next cruiser who asks whether you're a sexy Scorpio or a lovable Taurus. Those offended by mildly offensive words should read no further.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18: You have an inventive mind and are inclined to be progressive. You lie a great deal. On the other hand, you are inclined to be careless and impractical, causing you to make the same mistakes over and over again. People think you are stupid.

Pisces Feb. 19-Mar. 20: You have a vivid imagination and often think you are being followed by the CIA or FBI. You have minor influence over your associates and people resent you for your flaunting of your power. You lack confidence and are generally a coward. Pisces people do terrible things to small animals.

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19: You are the pioneer type and hold most people in contempt. You are quick tempered and impatient, and scornful of advice. You are not very nice.

Taurus Apr. 20-May 20: You are practical and persistent. You have a dogged determination and work like hell. Most people think you are stubborn and bull-headed. Taurus people have consistent problems with body odor and a tendency to fart a lot.

Gemini May 21-June 20: You are a quick and intelligent thinker. People like you because you are bisexual. However, you are inclined to expect too much for too little. This means you are cheap. Geminians are known for committing incest.

Cancer June 21-July 22: You are sympathetic and understanding of other people's problems. They think you are a sucker. You are always putting things off. That's why you will never make anything of yourself. Most welfare recipients are Cancer people.

Leo July 23-Aug. 22: You consider yourself a born leader. Others think you are pushy. Most Leo people are bullies. You are vain and dislike honest criticism. Your arrogance is disgusting. Leos are generally thieves.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22: You are the logical type and hate disorder. This nit-picking is sickening to your friends (if you are lucky enough to have any, for you are a bastard). You are cold and unemotional and sometimes fall asleep while making love. The only good things Virgos make are bus drivers.

Libra Sept. 23-Oct. 22: You are the artistic type and have a difficult time accepting reality. If you are a male Libran, you are most likely gay. Chances for employment and monetary gains are excellent. Most Libra women are good prostitutes. All Libras have venereal disease.

Scorpio Oct. 23-Nov. 21: You are shrewd in business and cannot be trusted. You will achieve the pinnacle of success because of your total lack of ethics. You will never have a friend. Most Scorpio people are murdered.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21: You are optimistic and enthusiastic. You have a reckless tendency to rely on luck (since you lack talent). You are most likely an alcoholic or dope addict. Most people laugh at you. Everybody laughs behind your back.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19: You are conservative and afraid of taking risks. You don't accomplish anything and are lazy. There has never been a Capricorn of any importance. You should avoid standing still too long as a dog might think you are a tree and piss on you.