

GAY HISTORY - GAY PRIDE

The Charlotte Struggle

By Richard Epton

Special To Q-Notes

It has been 19 years since the Stonewall uprising in New York's Greenwich Village. In that time Charlotte's Gay and Lesbian community has also had a history it can take pride in. That is the consensus of people that have lived here through many events having positive and negative impact on the struggle for recognition and equal rights of all people without regard to sexual orientation or preference.

Stonewall has become a symbol of the struggle for Gay and Lesbian rights and each year at this time we celebrate the accomplishments of our community, and highlight the work yet to be done. We call it "Gay Pride" because it is a time to be proud of who and what we are.

Twenty years ago, according to Ed DePasquale who talks of "coming out" in Charlotte 32 years ago, the only activity was cruising Trade Street, 5th Street, Church Street and the Bus Station. There were no bars, no churches, no other activities or organizations of any kind like we have today. You just went down the block and cruised and "if you were down there more than ten or fifteen minutes you'd better go home 'cause you're ugly!" Of course, there was police harassment and entrapment. There were a few brave people who went to court to fight the police entrapment and won.

Each time that the cases went to court they would win, but the majority of people would take the charge and pay the fine because they did not want to be branded. Those that stood up and questioned the system are today heroes and pioneers that stood on behalf of all of us and because of their sacrifices the consciousness of the larger community has been changed.

According to Ed, the first bar that gays frequented was the Hornet's Nest that was located in the Barringer Hotel. Traveling salesmen would stay at the Barringer and pick up local people. The first bar that was known for

being a gay bar was The Brass Rail, which was, at the time, located on the corner of Tryon and Morehead Streets. It was managed by Oleen. The bar was a "straight" bar until 10:00 p.m. and, according to Ed, at that time "it was as though a switch was thrown and it changed from straight to gay." Later, Oleen opened her own bar. "Oleens," still open today, is the oldest currently operating bar in the city.

Ed tells the story of a time when Oleen asked some lesbians to leave the bar because they were wearing pants; women at the time were not allowed in bars wearing pants. As Ed says, "the times, they are a-changing."

Clearly, the changes that Ed has witnessed over the years have been dramatic for Gays and Lesbians in this city. "The progress has been phenomenal; the fact that we have gone from nothing to what we have now, all the groups trying to help gays and lesbians, is unbelievable." Charlotte now boasts a number of bars, and all types of organizations - including but not limited to PFLAG, First Tuesday, Queen City Friends, MCSP, two Metropolitan Community Churches, MAP, and, of course, Q-Notes.

Don King, another prominent gay activist, has lived in Charlotte since 1972. He attests to many changes in the Charlotte area in terms of gay and lesbian groups and support organizations. The first group he was associated with was the Charlotte Gay Alliance, in their mid 1970's. The group was short-lived but had one session with Contact (now known as Reachline), a telephone counseling service. Members of CGA in-serviced Contact counselors concerning gay and lesbian callers.

In 1975 the first gay church was formed in Charlotte and there was an

article written about it in the local press. It was formed by a non-parochial Catholic priest, Friar Bruce Wood who also worked at Bethlehem Center, which ministered to the Black community. Services were originally started at Oleen's Bar at the request of some people Friar Wood met there. After a month or two there, the services were moved to a home on Hawthorne Lane rented by Don and Friar Wood.

In 1977 (approximately) a chapter of Dignity (a gay Catholic organization) was formed and later evolved in Acceptance. "The energy for many other groups sprang from Acceptance, including the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard." The first political group, which started in 1980, was called the Gay and Lesbian Political Alliance (later known as the Lambda Political Alliance). Its major accomplishment was helping Harvey Gantt get elected as Mayor of Charlotte in 1984.

Don relates that the first Gay Pride celebration in the Charlotte area was held in 1981. It was a week-long celebration that had such events as a softball tournament, an outdoor disco, and guest speakers from Philadelphia and Boston. Part of the activities were held on the campus of UNC Charlotte and the entire celebration was produced at a cost of approximately \$4,000.00. The primary producers were Don and Billie Stickle. Since then, Pride celebrations have included picnics, bar events, and concerts. Many of these events were sponsored by Queen City Coordinators.

Charlotte will celebrate Gay Pride in a big way this year with a variety of activities. A bus load of area activists will travel to Raleigh on June 25th to participate in a Gay Pride March there. A full calendar is listed below.

Gay Pride Week Activities

PICNIC

Steven's restaurant, 318 Rensular St., June 18th

Stevens is sponsoring an 'All You Can Eat Burger Buffet' for \$3.00

Local organizations will sponsor information booths

Volleyball and Horseshoes will be available

Mr. Hotlanta Contest

Charades, June 24th

Charades will sponsor the Mr. Hotlanta Contest as a preliminary for the finals to be held in Atlanta, Ga.

There are \$450.00 in prizes and winner will also receive entry fee money for the Atlanta event along with hotel paid in Atlanta.

The March on Raleigh

June 25th

If you missed the Washington march, NOW'S YOUR CHANCE!!!

Book your seat on the bus now. Call DON KING at 704/332-3834 for more information.

The bus is leaving folks. Don't be left behind. Give Charlotte a large representation.

The Carolinian of the Year Awards

Banquet, Fortuna Restaurant, Monroe Road, June 28th

It's an annual event, wherein members of the gay and lesbian community are recognized for outstanding service to their organizations and their community.

Arrive early and stay late. For more information, call Jim at 704/379-6904.

Schedule of Events

Please check the schedule in *The Front Page* or call the information numbers for more up to date info about events as it becomes available.

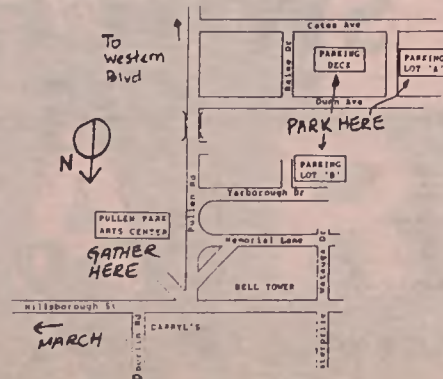
Friday, June 24

8:00 pm (Raleigh) "The Normal Heart"

Man Bites Dog Theatre will present an encore performance of this play which recently completed a nearly sold-out run in the area. Ticket information and location to be announced.

9:00 pm - 1:00 am (Durham) 3rd Annual Lesbian and Gay Health Project Pride Dance

At the Eno River Unitarian Universalist Church on Garrett Road in Durham (about 1/2 mile behind Darryl's and Starvin' Marvin's off US 15-501 (Chapel Hill Blvd.) Proceeds to benefit LGHP and Pride 88.



Saturday, June 25

March and Celebration

see map below

11:00 am Gathering

Assemble at the Hillsborough St. side of Pullen Park, near the NC State University Bell Tower. Please arrive as close to 11am as possible.

12:00 noon March Begins!

We will begin marching down Hillsborough St. at noon sharp!

2:00 pm RALLY State Capitol Grounds

After the March, the celebration begins!

Speakers for the Rally include:

Nan Hunter
American Civil Liberties Union
Michael Mauk
Natl. Gay & Lesbian Task Force
Jill DuVall
Lesbian & Gay Health Project

Confirmed Entertainers (so far):

Suede
Common Woman Chorus
Brandy Alexander
Jay Britt

Drinks will be on sale, and Vendors will be selling a limited amount of food. We do advise that you

bring food along if you want to eat a meal during the afternoon. Childcare will be provided.

8:00 "After the Celebration" Celebration at Glenwood Park

Meet us all back at this night spot for a Pride benefit & party! The bar is opening early for us, and cover charges collected from 8 to 9:30pm will go to Pride!

Address: 1622 Glenwood Ave. (From Hillsborough St., go north on Glenwood. The bar is next to the Rialto Theatre, 3 blocks north of Wade Ave.)

Sunday, June 26

Inter-denominational Ecumenical Service

Time and place To Be Announced

Monday, June 27

10:00 am Demonstration at the Raleigh office of Sen. Jesse Helms

The North Carolina Lesbian and Gay Liberation Front will sponsor a civil disobedience/direct action at Jesse Helms's office. In order to participate in this action, attendance at a training session is required. For more information, contact Jim at (919) 967-1245.

1988 North Carolina Lesbian & Gay Pride March and Celebration!

Diverse & United For Equality: Lesbian & Gay Rights Now

A Guide to Events and Accommodations in the Raleigh area on the Weekend of June 24-27, 1988

The 1988 N.C. Pride March and Celebration is sponsored by the Triangle Lesbian and Gay Alliance, endorsed and supported by the work and generosity of lesbian, gay, and progressive organizations across the state.

For more information, write TLGA at P.O. Box 3295 Durham, NC 27705-1295 or call Jim (919) 942-3858 or Mandy (919) 682-6374