

Q-NOTES

Switchboard, Charlotte 704/525-6128
AIDS Hotline, Charlotte 704/333-AIDS
PFLAG Hotline, Charlotte 704/364-1474
AIDS Hotline, Columbia 803/779-PALS
Call Line, Wilmington 919/675-9222

February 1989

■ PRIDE IN PRINT ■

TO ADVERTISE: 339-0679



Scorpio Sold

Tyson Quits After 17 Years

On Jan. 17 at 12 noon, Marion Tyson sold the Scorpio — Charlotte's largest and second-oldest gay bar — to VON Entertainment, Inc., but retained ownership of the land and the building, leasing it to the new owners.

Spokesman for the new corporation is Richard Wilds. The corporate owners, a man and two women, according to Wilds, prefer to stay unnamed.

"The investors in the corporation are strong supporters of the gay/lesbian community," Wilds said. "They'd rather be silent partners than have their names known, mainly because they want to enjoy the bar just like anyone else. If people knew they were owners, they wouldn't be treated the same."

"They will remain totally behind the scenes. They are very nice people who have always given a lot of money anonymously to Metrolina AIDS Project and the gay/lesbian community."

Wilds, former manager of Joy Adult Bookstore and now a real estate agent, is a hero for many gay men and lesbians. He spent six months in North Carolina's prison system because he believed people who like gay erotica should be able to buy it.

Some say he could have avoided the prison sentence by bowing to pressure to rid Joy of gay-oriented magazines and videos. But he persisted and received the sentence after his 1986 arrest and conviction for disseminating obscenity. A part of his sentence was that he could no longer work for or be associated with Joy.

While managing Joy for eight years, Wilds was as activist in the gay/lesbian community as his position allowed. He often held fundraisers such as "gay months" when a percentage of revenue from rentals of gay videos went to gay organizations.

He plans to continue working in real estate, his new career for almost a year, unless demands at the bar require him to give it up.

Last fall, Wilds heard that Marion Tyson was experiencing health problems and might sell for the right offer.

"Before Christmas, I called Marion and we went out for dinner," he said. "That's when we talked seriously for the first time. She told me in general terms what she wanted and said she

didn't want her employees to get fired. And she insisted that we honor her current membership cards, which we wanted to do anyway."

"Over the next two weeks, we talked every two or three nights. And we finally came to terms. In all, we probably talked back and forth for 2½ months. The Tysons really didn't want to part with the Scorpio. But Marion had to because of the effect of stress on her health."

There will be no sudden changes, Wilds said.

"This bar belongs to the gay/lesbian community," he said. "If we say we'll have an AIDS benefit and give the door to a PWA or to MAP, every bit of the door will go for that cause, not half of it. If someone is in no shape to drive home, we'll make him wait and give him a cup of coffee and try to find him a ride. And we'll continue admitting the underage lovers of our customers as long as the person who is of age takes the responsibility to see that the underage person doesn't break the ABC laws."

"There will be no wholesale firings. If an employee knows the job and is good at it, he or she will remain an employee. The thing about working at the Scorpio is that we're there to work together as a team and build an organization that knows it owes a debt to the gay/lesbian community. We'll ana-

lyze everyone who works for us and if they perform their jobs right, they'll stay. But if they've adopted an attitude that it's just a paycheck and that the people don't mean anything to them — well, what can I say?"

"The input of our customers will matter, too. Before long, we'll hand out small forms with questions on it and people will be able to tell us what they want at the Scorpio."

"The Scorpio has a great following. The only thing we want to do is make it better. The people in the corporation go way back in giving money to the community, and we want to keep it that way. We want to do our part in the community as Marion has always done."

Physical changes may be forthcoming, but not for a while.

"We have a person who is a professional in design who wants to look at the way space is utilized. You can't just do something without analyzing the effect it will have. But he's already said we could turn the upstairs into something that would attract people to the bar just to see it. We have some plans, but we aren't ready to say more about them yet."

Wilds said that VON Entertainment will continue to call on Marion as an unpaid consultant and that she would be welcome at the bar at any time.

— By DON KING

BEST BETS

- Feb. 3 *Queen of Hearts Pageant - Oleen's*
- Feb. 5 *Rev. Darst Assumes New Life MCC Pulpit 6:45 pm*
- Feb. 9 *PFLAG*
- Feb. 11 *QCF Dance 9 pm-2 am
MGM 7:30 pm Call 882-1747*
- Feb. 14 *Valentine's Day
Tri-Zappa Valentine's Party -
The Hideaway, Rock Hill*
- Feb. 17 *Closet Busters 10:00 pm
Cable Channel 3*
- Feb. 20 *Bowling - Coliseum Lanes
9 pm*
- Feb. 25 *MCC Charlotte Potluck
Dinner 6:30 pm*
- Feb. 26 *BINGO at Stevens*

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Judge: Victims Gay, Killer Gets Lighter Penalty

DALLAS — A Dallas judge told a local newspaper last week that he sentenced an 18-year-old killer to 30 years in prison, rather than the maximum life term, because the two men he shot to death were gay. District Judge Jack Hampton told *The Dallas Times Herald*, "These two guys who got killed wouldn't have been killed if they hadn't been cruising the streets, picking up teenage boys; I don't much care for queers cruising the streets picking up teenage boys. I've got a teenage boy." Judge Hampton expressed no qualms about expressing his statements. "Just spell my name right," he told the *Times Herald*. "If it makes anybody mad, they'll forget it by 1990," when he's up for re-election. Richard Bednarski was found guilty of the May 15 murders of two local gay men. Hampton said he rejected the request of the prosecution for the maximum sentence because he believed the victims were not completely "blame-

less." The sentence would have been stiffer, he said, had the victims been "a couple of housewives out shopping, not hurting anybody." Bill Waybourn, president of the Dallas Gay Alliance, called Hampton's comments "morally reprehensible," adding that "The judge is saying that queers are not worthy of legal protection and you can go out and shoot them anytime." The Texas Human Rights Foundation has filed a complaint against Hampton with the State Commission on Judicial Conduct. According to court testimony, on the night of May 15, Bednarski and a group of high school boys drove out to the heavily gay Oak Lawn section of Dallas to harass gay men which led to the forced stripping and execution-style shooting of the two gay men. Hampton has expressed surprise over the reaction and claims to have received death threats. Two protests in Dallas have been set for this week.

TWN - Miami, Fla.

First Tuesday Holds Elections

First Tuesday, Charlotte's gay/lesbian activist organization, will hold open elections on Tuesday, Feb. 7, with any dues-paid member eligible to nominate candidates, run for office, and vote.

Dues may be paid the night of the election prior to nominations, according to Don King, interim chair of the group. He said that the annual membership fee for students is \$5 and for all others is \$10.

"We welcome anyone who agrees that gay men and lesbians should be treated equally under the law and fairly in society," King said. "I hope — and I think other people who have been attending meetings do, too —

that everyone interested in activism in Charlotte will come out, pay their dues, and elect board members."

The meeting will be held at 8 p.m. at the Carolina Community Project house, 2300 E. 7th St. at the corner of East 7th and Laurel Avenue.

During the last two months, First Tuesday has begun the process of incorporation, has adopted bylaws, and has decided to remain an advocacy group rather than become a political action committee. That means the group may disseminate information about political candidates and work for legislative and societal changes, but may neither endorse nor support candidates as an organization.

During its first year, First Tuesday organized a picket of the annual banquet of Concerned Charlotteans, a group headed by Joe Chambers, Charlotte's most vociferous antigay person; printed and distributed safe-sex cards; spearheaded an effort for gay/lesbian community leaders to meet with the Mecklenburg County Health Department; arranged for bus transportation to the first statewide gay/lesbian pride march; and distributed information about national and state elections.

The group was formed last winter after Metrolina AIDS Project was threatened with loss of county funding if MAP didn't stop distributing safe-sex cards it had obtained from AID Atlanta. That left no safe-sex information in Charlotte's bars.

After initial criticism from Chambers and from county officials put on the spot by media, the cards have been quietly and extensively praised by persons working for educational and health-care agencies.