

# Q Notes

The Carolinas' Most Comprehensive Gay & Lesbian Newspaper

## The Latest Q-POLL Results

Are you more likely to vote for the Bush-Cheney presidential ticket because Dick Cheney's daughter is a lesbian?

Yes	No	Undecided
23%	53%	34%

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## NC representative wins coveted Continental title

by Miss Della  
Q-Notes Staff

The twenty-first annual Miss Continental pageant was held in Chicago over Labor Day weekend.

The competition started with closed group interviews on Saturday evening, and then a long night of preliminary competitions on Sunday in categories of swimsuit, evening gown, and talent.

On Monday evening, the field of 40 was trimmed down to the Top 12 — and what a group it was! Preliminary gown and swimsuit awards went to Danielle Hunter, talent went to Anjila Richards, and interview went to Michelle Zander.

The Top 12 consisted of Sandy Solis, Jasmine Knight, Anjila Richards, Alexis Gabrielle Shearrington, Barbara Herr, Lisha Paris, Danielle Hunter, Candis Cayne, Sasha Valentino, Tina Sparkles, Erika Norell and Amalia Black. To my knowledge, this was the first time for five of these 12 competing at Miss Continental.

The opening number was glorious with the outgoing, Tommie Ross, right in the middle of men in tuxes. She was doing one of the many things she does best — Diana Ross — and looking like a million bucks! Injured in an automobile accident late in her reign, Ross serenaded the crowd while seated on a stool.

After a steady pace of wonderful talents, seductive swimsuits and ever-so-elegant evening gowns, the Top 5 was announced. Each had to answer the always important On-Stage Question. I can honestly say, in my five years of going, I have never heard such responses; one or two even brought a small tear to the eye. It would have been a hard call to make, for sure.

After all was said and done, and that gorgeous Tommie Ross made a down payment on a new home with her farewell number (lines of



Danielle Hunter (top; left) with her NC promoter, Alyson Thomas

well-wishers with tips had to be turned away), the new queen and her court were announced.

Fourth runner-up was New York City's Tina Sparkles, originally from Antigua; 3rd RU, Chicago's Amalia Black; 2nd RU, NYC's Candis Cayne; 1st RU Miami's Erika Norell; and winner, Miss North Carolina Continental, Danielle Hunter of Orlando, FL. ▼

## Lesbian couple obtains marriage license under Texas court ruling

by Clay Ollis  
Q-Notes Staff

SAN ANTONIO, TX—Two lesbians from Houston, Texas traveled to San Antonio September 6 seeking a marriage license from the Bexar County Clerk. And they got one because of a recent court ruling.

Last October, Texas' Fourth Court of Appeals upheld a lower court ruling that Christie Lee Littleton had no legal right to file a wrongful death lawsuit against her late husband's caregivers.

The court ruled that because Whitman was born male, the marriage was not legal despite her sex-change operation. Even though the state court system had amended her birth certificate to indicate she was female, and local officials had issued the marriage license, the court found that legally, she remained a man. In the majority opinion, Fourth Court Chief Justice Phil Hardberger wrote, "Male chromosomes do not change with either hormonal treatment or sex reassignment surgery. Biologically, a post-operative female transsexual is still a male."

That ruling prompted Jessica and Robin Wicks' decision to seek a marriage license in San Antonio. Robin legally changed her last name from Manhart last year. The couple had applied for a license from the Harris County

Clerk in Houston, but were denied because they are both women. In Texas, as in every other state, marriage is illegal between people of the same gender.

But the Fourth Court ruling gives them renewed hope. That's because Jessica Wicks was born male. Originally named Grady Roland Wicks, Jessica says she once felt a part of the transgender community, but now identifies herself as lesbian. Her birth certificate clearly states her gender as male.

"Before *Littleton V. Prange*, this was considered a same-sex marriage," Phyllis Frye, the couples' attorney, told the *Houston Voice*.

"San Antonio's Fourth Court of Appeals last year ruled that if you are born a male, you remain a male throughout your life, no matter if you surgically trade in your outfit for an innie," explained Frye, who also represented Whitman in the wrongful death case that led to the gender ruling. "The court said chromosomes matter, not genitals."

Bexar County Clerk Gerry Rickhoff, responding to the Wicks' announcement, said he was following the law. "The law states that you are what the Creator made you at birth, not what you hold yourself out to be." The wedding ceremony was scheduled for September 16. ▼

## Covert HIV study draws criticism

by Wanda Pico  
Special to Q-Notes

NEW YORK—A nine-year blind HIV prevalence study of gay men at sexually transmitted disease (STD) clinics in New York was condemned as "Tuskegee-like" after it was presented to the recent AIDS conference in Durban, South Africa. The report indicated that patients were not told their blood was being tested for HIV antibodies and that positive HIV test results were withheld from them.

Michael Petrelis, a longtime AIDS activist, compared the HIV survey to the notorious Tuskegee Syphilis Study that followed 400 black sharecroppers infected with syphilis to research the disease's progression when untreated. Started in the 1930s with funds from the US Public Health Service, the study should have been dropped when penicillin became available in the 1940s, experts concur. The Tuskegee experiment ended in 1972.

"The diseases and drugs are different when comparing the Tuskegee Syphilis Study with current DOH HIV prevalence research, but the moral issue is the same," Petrelis noted.

A scientific abstract paper presented at the July conference by Dr. L. Torian of the New York City Office of AIDS Research, "Unlinked HIV prevalence trends in men who have sex with men [MSM] at New York City sexually transmitted disease clinics, 1990-1998," detailed the disturbing study. Torian's abstract reported on the "unlinked HIV-1 serosurvey using remnant serum originally drawn for routine serologic tests for syphilis."

Unlinked is defined by researchers as meaning they have no identifying or demographic data on the person whose blood was drawn to test for one disease, and is then used to test for another disease. Plus, patients are not told their HIV results in unlinked surveys. MSM is a category for all men who have sex with other men, whether they self-identify as gay, straight, or bisexual.

Torian found that only "59 percent of seropositive men with a new STD knew their serostatus by HIV testing at this or a previous visit." The remaining 41 percent of those with

positive HIV-test results were not informed by the DOH of those results, and therefore were not provided with any counseling regarding available HIV treatments and prevention services.

"Disparities in [HIV prevalence] associated with gonorrhea or syphilis vs. other/no STD and increased [HIV prevalence] in older black MSM suggest that some STDs can serve as sentinel risk markers [for HIV infection]," warned Torian.

Petrelis made the following demands of Dr. Lorian and the DOH.

- Inform all men tested over the course of the nine-year DOH study that their blood was tested for HIV without their knowledge.
- Make every effort to reach all men who tested HIV antibody positive and inform them of their positive serostatus.
- Offer counseling about possible treatments, side effects and access to AIDS drugs.
- Organize outreach specific to the older black men who had a higher HIV prevalence rate.

There was one enormous glimmer of hope in Torian's research. The report states that "overall [HIV prevalence] declined from 47 percent in 1990 to 19 percent in 1998. [HIV prevalence] declined from 34 percent-10 percent in white, 47 percent to 13 percent in Hispanic, 56 percent-32 percent in black, and 44 percent-23 percent in bisexual men."

Torian concluded, "[HIV prevalence] in these MSM declined significantly during the study period. However, wide racial disparities were observed."

"Even though the gay black and gay Hispanic HIV prevalence significantly dropped, those rates weren't equal to that for white gays. But the overall 28 percent decline is worth acknowledging and celebrating," continued Petrelis. "I want DOH to end research targeting gay men as human guinea pigs in experiments. It's outrageous the older black gay men surveyed by DOH with a higher rate of HIV are ignorant to the reality they are HIV positive, denied HIV test results and additional information." ▼

## Armistead Maupin's latest book premieres as web radio serial

by Veronica Schwartz  
Special to Q-Notes

SAN FRANCISCO—Bestselling author Armistead Maupin's new novel, *The Night Listener*, is the first book ever broadcast in its entirety as a spoken-word serial on the world wide web prior to its release in print.

Begun Tuesday, September 5, a new installment is released each weeknight in streaming-audio format. The novel is read by the author, and the broadcasts will continue through Friday, September 29.

A downloadable digital audiobook version of *The Night Listener: A Spoken Word Serial* will be available upon the release of the hardcover and audio editions by HarperCollins. The web broadcasts and the download can be found at Salon.com's web site: [www.salon.com/books/maupin](http://www.salon.com/books/maupin).

"I'm ecstatic that Armistead chose to launch *The Night Listener* as an audio serial on Salon," said David Talbot, founder and editor-in-chief at Salon.com. "He's a master of the serial form. I remember how he burst into the public view in the 70s with his *Tales of the City* serial in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. It makes perfect sense that he would use our San Francisco-based company to update the concept for the 21st century."

The narrator of *The Night Listener* is a late-

night radio storyteller whose phone friendship with a young fan entangles him in a mystery that compels him to reexamine his own life.

"*The Night Listener* is about the power of voices, so the intimacy of internet radio combined with the literary origins of Salon struck me as an ideal match for the material," said Maupin's business partner, Terry Anderson of Literary Bent LLC. "Armistead loves the thought of telling bedtime stories to the world."

Maupin has amassed a worldwide following with his six bestselling *Tales of the City* novels. The first two volumes were adapted as a pair of widely acclaimed television miniseries; the third, *Further Tales of the City*, is currently in production. The author's recording of his 1992 novel *Maybe the Moon* was named one of the 10 best audio books of the year by *Publishers Weekly*. He also collaborated as librettist with composer Jake Heggie in 1999 on *Anna Madrigal Remembers* for mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade and Chanticleer, the renowned choral ensemble. He begins a 21-city nationwide speaking tour on October 2.

HarperCollins will publish *The Night Listener* in hardcover on October 1, and HarperAudio will simultaneously release the unabridged audio version on CD and cassette. The audio features an original score by Jon Herbst. ▼