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QNotes

noted . notable . noteworthy GLBT issues

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Q-Living Section:
The Scissor Sisters



Interview:
Susan Sarandon 34



National Breast Cancer Awareness Month 16

Gay black Republican rebuffed at Texas bar 29

Log Cabin sues to overturn 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' 24

Pride Smoking Survey 21

North Carolina: Crape Myrtle Festival returns to Raleigh 12

South Carolina: DeMint opposes gay teachers in S.C. schools 14

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Have you ever been the victim of domestic violence in a same-sex relationship?
yes . no

Charlotte gay man charged with partner's murder

Philip Horton's body discovered in rollout trash bin, partner Robert Smothers charged with murder

by David Moore
Q-Notes staff

Tragedy struck in Charlotte's gay community with the grisly discovery of the body of Philip Tillman Horton in the city's Crater Park neighborhood on the afternoon of Sunday, Oct. 3.

Horton reportedly had shared the home with his partner of two years, Robert Glen Smothers, III, and Smothers' mother, Sherry Smothers.

Horton's body was not immediately identified, although police discovered his identity the following day, according to authorities. Robert Smothers had been missing since Thursday, Sept. 30, along with Sherry Smothers' 1999 Dodge Durango.

Police had initially been called to the house on Sept. 30 when Sherry Smothers

discovered what she thought was a bomb. Officers on the scene realized that was not the case — but apparently did not discover any clues that would lead them to Horton's body three days later.

According to a representative at the County Coroner's office the autopsy on Horton is incomplete, though they were able to confirm that he died from blunt force trauma to the head.

Members of Charlotte's LGBT community reacted with shock to the news.

"They were both very nice guys," said Greg Brafford, owner of Central Station and The Woodshed, two Charlotte-area gay bars the two men frequented. "This is the last thing anybody would have ever expected."

Brafford confirmed the men had been together as a couple for the past two years. "I think they probably met through the Carolina Bears," said Brafford. "They were both very active in that community."



An image from Robert Smothers' gay.com web page and (inset) at the time of his arrest.

In recent months, however, Horton had decided to move to Columbia, S.C. "I don't think Trey (Smothers' nickname) was very happy about that fact, but he seemed accepting of it," said Brafford.

According to a bartender at The Woodshed, a club they regularly attended, there was no indication that they were anything other than a happy couple. "They always got along just fine when they were in

see **DEATH** on 6

HRC dinner to be held Feb. 26 in Charlotte

Local organizers looking forward to showing visitors what Charlotte has to offer



'Tenacious: Celebrating Ten Years of Bravery' will be held at the Charlotte Convention Center in the center city business district.

Scheduled for Sat., Feb. 26, "Tenacious: Celebrating Ten Years of Bravery" will be held at the Charlotte Convention Center.

"HRC hosts annual dinners throughout the country to raise funds, attract new members and celebrate the organization's role in promoting equality and fairness in the United States," says Joni Madison, one of the co-chairs of the 2005 Carolinas Dinner.

"We are thrilled that Charlotte has a chance to host this educational event and exciting celebration," says Shane Windemeyer, the other co-chair for the

The Human Rights Campaign Dinner is coming to Charlotte for the first time.

see **HRC** on 8

Bush and Kerry debate why people are gay

Kerry comes out on top in third and final debate

by Rex Wockner and Donald Miller

Most gays and lesbians lose interest in the question of "why" they're gay — or what "made" them gay — and just get on with living their lives.

But moderator Bob Schieffer of CBS News thought it was an interesting question and he tried to make George W. Bush and John Kerry answer it during the third and final presidential debate Oct. 13. Bush said he didn't know if we're born gay or something turns us gay. Kerry said we're born that way. Then both went on to defend their positions on gay issues.

Here's how it went down:

Schieffer: Both of you are opposed to gay marriage. But to understand how you have come to that conclusion, I want to ask you a more basic question: Do you believe homosexuality is a choice?

Bush: You know, Bob, I don't know. I just don't know. I do know that we have a choice to make in America and that is to treat people with tolerance and respect and dignity. It's important that



John Kerry and President Bush at the final presidential debate Oct. 13 in Tempe, Ariz.

see **CANDIDATES** on 4