

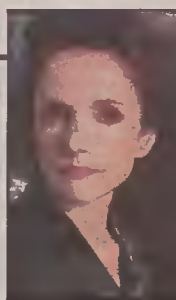
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QNotes

Noted . Notable . Noteworthy . LGBT News & Views

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The journey of a lifetime

At a performance by the Gay Men's Chorus a man's religious parents embrace their son's community

by David Moore . Q-Notes staff

CHARLOTTE — Thirty-three-year-old Jon Mullen is a teacher at Queen's Grant Community School in Mint Hill, N.C. The atmosphere in the school he says is conserva-



Jon Mullen and partner Bryan Mack

tive and Christian — and many of his coworkers and even parents of some of his students are aware that Mullen is a gay man — but his sexual orientation isn't an issue.

It's not without a twist of irony that Mullen would be teaching in such an environment — he's been surrounded by religion all of his life.

Born in Nepal to a Hindu family, Mullen was adopted by Christian missionaries before he reached his first birthday.

"When I was about six months old my biological mother became very ill and my father put me up for adoption," Mullen tells Q-Notes. "He basically abandoned me."

Mullen's birth mother died soon after and he was adopted by two missionaries with the Seventh Day Adventists: Dr. Tom Mullen, a physician, and his wife Beth Mullen, a school teacher.

Mullen was happy with his family — but still curious about his background. In his personal blog, he writes about those early years still living in Nepal and wondering about the family that gave him up.

"I didn't know my real parents for anything more than a wobbly signature and a thumbprint on the acrid-smelling documents detailing my adoption. I used to go into my father's office in the afternoon sometimes

when he was working late at the hospital and go to the file cabinet and pull out the documents and look at them — onionskin yellow in the afternoon sunlight — and wonder things I couldn't explain. Then I would carefully fold and tuck the papers back neatly into the file cabinet drawer. And hurry out before the spell broke..."

"We stayed there till I was five years old," Jon recalls. "Then my family brought me to the United States."

Mullen's first visit to the U.S. lasted only three years. Tom Mullen would move his family yet again to another exotic location to help others and spread his spiritual beliefs. This time the destination was Pakistan.

"We lived there for about seven years," Jon says. "My mom worked as a teacher and my dad offered health care to poor Pakistanis. In between we touted our good news on the piano to anyone who would listen."

By the time Jon was 15 he and his family, which now included two younger sisters — Amy and Melissa — moved back to the U.S. to a commune near Sacramento known as the Weimar Institute.

"That was home for the next 10 years," Mullen offers. It was a very, strict, religious environment. The women wore pants underneath their dresses. We had religious meetings every Friday night. If something went wrong the community would have prayer vigils.

"Although it was strict — it could be very loving — if you lived life the way they wanted you to."

Again, Mullen writes about some of his experiences on his blogsite.

"It was comfortable. Things were provided for. Meals were in a cafeteria. Almond butter, cashew milk, millet loaf and organic soy lasagna with spinach for noodles and pimento jello for cheese. Housing was provided on the point system. My family started at the bottom of the hill, and eventually gleaned enough points to move up to the top. My friends and I marched door-to-door spreading the word of God to an incredulous public. On Christmas, we passed out loaves of raisin bread and organic religion. We would stop in little groups around the half-mile loop under the spreading pine trees, to breathe heartfelt prayers to solve everything from domestic disputes to matters of state. And we always walked away 'blessed.' Some days I think perhaps I'll go back. But deep inside I know I can't. If I did, I wouldn't be happy. I have seen too much. Experienced too much. I would be at war within myself."

Mullen would continue to live

at the Weimar Institute while attending his first three years of college. In the years that followed he moved to Chattanooga, Tenn., where he would remain active with the Seventh Day Adventists.

"I found myself growing uncomfortable with that," he recalls. "After awhile I felt I was lying to myself and everyone else around me. I wanted to go to a place where nobody knew me."

Before Mullen would leave Chattanooga, he took the difficult step of coming out to his parents.

"I came out to my parents in early 2000,"

see finding on 8

Equality riders face vandalism and harassment

West bus faces intimidation in the Heartland, while East bus defaced with anti-gay slurs in Iowa

On the opening day of Soulforce's Equality Ride 2007, 50 young riders faced grim reminders of why they are on two buses, headed for 32 Christian colleges with policies that silence or exclude LGBT students. The eastbound bus made its first stop in Sioux Center, Iowa, where riders were harassed at



Soulforce Equality riders awoke to find their bus covered with anti-gay slurs and graffiti.

their hotel. The following morning they awoke to find their bus defaced by graphic anti-gay graffiti.

The Equality Ride traveled to Sioux Center to visit Dordt College, a school that counts "sexual activity with someone of the same gender" as possible grounds for "an employee's discharge or a student's dismissal." The

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SCC presents 'Queen City Stomp'

Charlotte Lesbian & Gay Community Center to receive 90 percent from annual fundraiser

compiled by Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE — It has been extensively reported that the Lesbian & Gay Community Center of Charlotte has been having severe cash flow issues. Even before that news became widely known, Southern Country Charlotte (SCC) was working on a deal to designate 90 percent of the proceeds from their very successful Queen City Stomp to the Community Center.



Queen City Stomp takes place April 13-15

Photo: William Strope

Over the last four years the Queen City Stomp has gotten bigger and raised more money for its designated charities. In 2006, \$20,000 was split evenly between the Community Center and Time Out Youth. For 2007, 90 percent of the net proceeds will go to the Community Center and the remaining 10 percent will go to Time Out Youth.

"SCC has a long history of supporting both the Community Center and Time Out Youth," says Curtis Tutt, president of Southern Country Charlotte. "The Center really needs our support this year, but Time Out Youth has come to rely on funds from this event as well. That's the reason for the 90/10 split. We're counting on everyone to help us break our own records and help both of these organizations that mean so much to our community."

The Queen City Stomp, commonly known as a hoedown, boasts two evenings of country dancing, as well as silent auctions, dance workshops, dance exhibitions, cocktail parties, after-hours parties and a barbeque lunch. It is one of the premier

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