

Failed Carolina gay news merger reveals serious allegations

OnQ's Jamie Seabolt comes under fire for breaches of contract, past mismanagement

by Matt Comer . Q-Notes staff

inDepth

[Ed. Note — Due to the unusual length of this in-depth article, Q-Notes has decided to publish an abridged and shortened version of this piece in this print issue. The full version of this article — containing more details on breached contracts, missed print editions and Jamie Seabolt's past run-ins in Charleston, W.Va. and Pittsburgh — can be read online at www.q-notes.com/3660/. A staff editorial detailing the history of this story and our decision to cover it now appears on page 4.]

A recently attempted and failed merger between three Carolinas LGBT publications has resulted in several accusations, concerns and questions regarding unpublished print editions and pre-paid advertising by several Carolinas businesses and non-profits.

The Asheville, N.C.-based *Stereotypd*, a monthly LGBT news publication, and the Myrtle Beach, S.C.-based *OnQ Carolina Edition*, a bi-weekly glossy gay nightlife guide, announced Aug. 22 they would merge under the leadership and direction of Jamie Seabolt, executive editor and creator of *OnQ*.

Stereotypd business and artistic director Porscha Yount, *OnQ*'s Jamie Seabolt and *Stereotypd* editor Lin Orndorf distributed a press release announcing the merger. In it, Seabolt was identified as the Asheville paper's

new publisher and *Stereotypd* is identified as "part of the OnQ Network." A few days later, the new *OnQ* team announced a merger with the Charleston, S.C.-based *Drag Magazine*.

By Sept. 16, the situation had devolved into a convoluted series of events, with *Stereotypd* and *OnQ* staff each accusing the other of bad business practices and financial mismanagement. In two press releases that day *Stereotypd* and *OnQ* announced the merger between their publications and *Drag Magazine* had been called off; differences in business practices and artistic direction were cited as the main cause of the split.

SC Pride sponsorship soured

More than a month before the announcement of the failed merger, Seabolt signed an advertising contract with Ryan Wilson, president of SC Pride, for the group's upcoming Sept. 12 festival in Columbia.

Wilson said his organization paid \$650 for a series of five full-page ads in five consecutive issues of *OnQ Carolina Edition*. Seabolt confirmed the transaction and Wilson provided a signed contract. According to the document, SC Pride was given a 50 percent discount on *OnQ* ad rates. The ads were to begin running July 24 and end Sept. 11. Only two print editions, published July 25 and July 31, were ever produced and distributed.

Seabolt said he contacted Wilson to tell him he was having problems with printing,

but Seabolt never informed Wilson the print issues would never be produced.

"I told Ryan Wilson we were having trouble printing," Seabolt said. "When I told him that, I could have possibly two days later got enough money from advertisers to make the issue work."

When the money never came in, Seabolt was unable to produce the first *OnQ* August issue. He said he never informed SC Pride of the issue's failure because Wilson said he was too busy to discuss the matter.

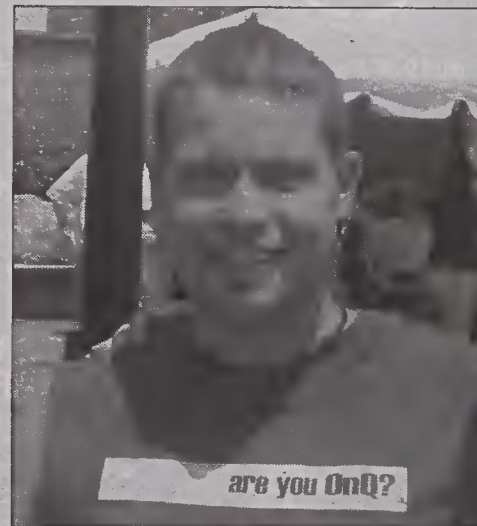
Wilson said he was never contacted by Seabolt regarding printing problems.

"We never had a conversation about ads," Wilson said. "There was never communication on Seabolt's part to me or to Clay [a SC Pride volunteer] about printing issues. I don't believe that conversation ever occurred."

In an email dated Aug. 17 provided by Seabolt, Wilson asked Seabolt to respond to a sponsorship agreement between *OnQ* and SC Pride, which included the five full-page SC Pride ads and the 50 percent advertising discount.

Seabolt responded on Aug. 28 and confirmed the details of the sponsorship agreement.

"I am on the road all week so at present I dont (sic) have a printer to print, sign, and resubmit," Seabolt wrote. "I am good to go with all that I had promised Ryan VIA phone, text, and e-mail. "I wont (sic) be able to submit you a 'signed' contract until Monday."



Jamie Seabolt

Despite the assurance he would fulfill his end of the sponsorship agreement, Seabolt never produced *OnQ*'s two August issues or the first issue in September.

Joint contracts unfulfilled

Starting sometime in August — one joint *OnQ-Stereotypd* advertising contract was signed Aug. 21 — advertising for both publications was sold as package deals. Funds collected from some of the new contracts were deposited into the Out in the Carolinas Publishing bank account, according to both Seabolt and Yount.

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