

Charlotte Chapter BWMT Formed

By Woodie Mitchell
Special to Q-Notes

After many months of discussion and planning, Charlotte has joined the growing list of cities that are home to Black and White Men Together chapters. In the final months of 1989, the decision was made that a chapter headquartered in Charlotte would have much to offer to its surrounding communities and to the other BWMT chapters located along the east coast and throughout the southeastern United States. Drawing upon its close ties to Triangle BWMT, the newly-formed chapter has already begun the process of building a strong foundation on which to grow and move toward its goals. As a developing chapter of the National Association of Black and White Men Together (NABWMT), Charlotte BWMT is likewise devoted to fostering an environment supportive of those who desire to be in interracial relationships or who would simply like to move in a circle that allows for multiracial social contact. In addition, the group seeks to encourage an atmosphere in which racial and cultural barriers can be overcome to the betterment of the gay community and society in general.

The group was formed in Charlotte with a view to serving the gay community in the metropolitan Charlotte area, western North Carolina, and the neighboring areas of South Carolina. One of its main objectives is to establish a regular schedule of social, cultural and educational activities in support of its members and any persons in the community who would like to participate. The chapter also expects to do a considerable amount of outreach work with other gay and lesbian organizations in the area. One outreach project is likely to involve NABWMT's Hot, Horny & Healthy workshop (most people would refer to it as a playshop). The workshops were made possible by a \$378,000 per year grant to the NABWMT from the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. While other gay-oriented organizations had their funding cut, the CDC realized that the NABWMT nationwide network provided an

efficient and effective system for disseminating information and educational material about AIDS and AIDS prevention. Charlotte BWMT expects that its members and interested persons in the area will find these workshops (playshops) both interesting and valuable.

Another goal for the organizers of the chapter is to dispel some of the myths that have grown up around BWMT with the help of people who know little or nothing about the organization or its reason for existing. Many people have the impression that BWMT is solely composed of black men who are searching for white lovers. Or that it is the creation of well-to-do black gay men who want to separate themselves from other black gays. Some people think the group is merely a sex club. The list of inaccuracies goes on and on. In fact, BWMT is none of those things. (If it were, it is highly unlikely that the group would be in its third year of CDC funding. The United States Treasury is not easily opened to gay groups asking for large sums of money.)

BWMT began in January of 1980 as the brainchild of Michael Smith of San Francisco. As a gay white man who was interested in pursuing an interracial relationship, Smith pushed forward with his ideas in hopes of creating an organ of the gay sub-culture which would respond to the needs of gay men involved in or interested in mixed-race relationships. By the summer of the same year, Smith's ideas had already begun to move across the United States and overseas. The first International BWMT Convention was held in 1981 and North Carolina's first chapter was started by one of the attendees when he returned to Fayetteville. The original Fayetteville chapter eventually found itself in Durham and, in 1988, came to be known as Triangle BWMT. Yadkin BWMT was started in the spring of 1989 in an effort to support BWMT goals in the western half of the state. Charlotte BWMT is now the state's third and newest chapter. Charlotte itself joins a list of cities that includes New York, Los Angeles,

Southern Women's Music And Comedy Festival

The Seventh Annual SWMCF is scheduled for the weekend of May 24-28, 1990, in the northeast Georgia Mountains (80 miles from Atlanta).

Held in a private camp, the beautiful, wooded, 200-acre site has cabins, a large lake, tennis courts, and showers. Prices range from \$120 for camping only (your tent!) to \$185 for five days in a cabin, all meals included. The price includes music, comedy acts, crafts, sports, dancing, workshops, food, and fun...including a dance every night!

Among the many performers appearing this year are Holly Near, Kate Clinton, Diane Davidson, Sue Fink, Betty, Two Nice Girls, and The Sensible Pumps. Comics will include Lynn Lavner and Robin Tyler.

Speakers include Urvashi Vaid (Executive Director of National Gay and Lesbian Task Force), Patricia Ireland (Executive Director N.O.W.), Paula Ettlbrick (Director, Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund) and Sandra J. Lowe and Susan McGreivy, attorneys.

The festivals are always accessible to disabled women and interpreted for the hearing impaired.

For further information and an application form, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to SWMCF, 15842 Chase Street, Sepulveda, CA 91343 or call (818) 893-4075 M-F 9 am to 5 pm PST.

San Francisco, Atlanta, Dallas, Chicago, Memphis, Washington DC and numerous others.

The Charlotte chapter — along with Atlanta, Memphis, Yadkin, and the Triangle — is part of the Southeast Region of BWMT. The regional network allows chapters to work together to serve their extended communities as well as their own members. Nonetheless, the individual groups are free to establish their own priorities and set their own pace. This freedom allows the chapter to lend itself to being different things to different people. To this end, Charlotte BWMT is open to people who are in interracial relationships, seeking such relationships, in same-race relationships, or desiring no relationship at all.

Although it is a somewhat specialized organization, the members of the group share in the breadth of common experience that stems from their sexual identities. As individuals and as a collective whole, the chapter's members seek to do their part to tear down the obstacles created by racism, sexism, and homophobia. As an entity composed of no less than 15,000 active members, BWMT is very much aware of the impact

these negatives have on society in general, the gay community in particular, and individual gay men and lesbians everywhere. The gay rights movement that began with Stonewall has often resembled the civil rights movement of the sixties and the continuing fight for women's rights. Countless men and women struggled, suffered and sacrificed in these movements and have left behind them a message that must be clearly understood: homophobia can never be overcome and gays can never be acknowledged, respected members of a free society as long as racism and sexism are allowed to exist. No group in a society can consider itself safe from prejudice and discrimination until every group in that society shares the same luxury. For Black and White Men Together, this is simply a fact of life.

Anyone who wishes to contact Charlotte BWMT can do so by calling (704) 554-9361 or (704) 563-0067. Interested persons can also write to the group at P.O. Box 411734, Charlotte, NC 28241.

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| Friday, 3-2 | Mardi Gras Night with The Tradesmen Night Out |
| Saturday, 3-3 | Kasey King, Gypsy Starr, Tiffany Storm |
| Friday, 3-9 | Linda Locklear and Tina Terrell |
| Saturday, 3-10 | Linda Locklear, Tina Terrell, Sasha Tate |
| Sunday, 3-11 | Benefit for Tony Lenoir with an all-star cast |
| Friday, 3-16 | Bryan Murphy from New York City and Gypsy Starr |
| Saturday, 3-17 | Bryan Murphy, Grand Prix, and Veronica Lee |
| Friday, 3-23 | Veronica Lee and Brittany Gwen |
| Saturday, 3-24 | Boom Boom LaTour, Kasey King and Jim Brady |
| Friday, 3-30 | Ashley Jordan and Kasey King |
| Saturday, 3-31 | Ashley Jordan, Kasey King and Gypsy Starr |

Oleen's

1831 S. Boulevard, Charlotte, N.C. 373-9604