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Charlotte's Newest Club ... Is Already Closed

By David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

In the span of just four days (Dec. 28-31), Spike's, the self-proclaimed "Grand Club Without An Attitude," became simply another asterisk in the history of the Charlotte gay nightclub scene as it opened and closed in less than a week.

Certainly a record of some sort, the closing was due to many factors but can best be attributed to four main elements: the rental price for the space was too high; the location was unfavorable; the club's emphasis on being a show bar was not well received, and there simply was not enough advertising preceding the opening of the club to bring in a crowd of the size that was anticipated.

All of these issues in combination were sufficient to cause the owner of the establishment to balk at signing the lease for the property on the fifth day and to simply let the business fold and cut his losses.

Spike's was located at 933 N. Wendover Road which is actually retail space in a strip shopping center, but since another gay bar (Snuffy's) had been at that location in the spring and summer of 1990, it was already set up as a nightclub.

The owner of the shopping center was an acquaintance of a Charlotte businessman who owned several heterosexual clubs so he called to see if the man would be interested in leasing the retail space from him to open another club.

The man indicated that he was interested in leasing the retail space from him but not at the price that the previous owner had paid, \$8,000. They struck a deal, agreeing to lease the property for \$4,000 per month for one year. But even that was too much to pay and it ended up playing a big role in the club owner's decision to not finalize the lease on January 1.

The club's location was also not enviable: the edge of the Grier Heights housing development. Many people were afraid to come to the club for fear that their cars might be vandalized in the parking lot, or, even worse, that they themselves might be at risk of some type of physical assault.

The fact that there had been three highly publicized slayings in the area did not go unnoticed by potential patrons and was commonly named as the main reason why persons said they would not go to the club. With

bar safety already in a shaky position in general with the Charlotte community (especially after the murder that occurred over the summer when a man was killed as he returned to his car from Scorpio) people just weren't willing to "tempt the Fates" and go to a club that stood next to one of the most notorious neighborhoods in the city.

Over the course of various discussions about Spike's failure another common phrase which was bandied about and generally dismissed was the fact that the club wanted to be a showcase for female impersonation and billed itself as a "showbar."

The gay community in Charlotte has been consistent over the years in its financial and emotional support for female impersonators. However, that support has always been tempered by the idea that enough is enough and when that becomes too much, it's time for the impersonators to leave the stage.

Anyone who has spent any time in the clubs in Charlotte will tell you that the pleasure in watching a female impersonator wears thin after 35 minutes and is gone after 40.

For this reason alone (not even mentioning booking fees), it was somewhat naive of the showcast at Spike's to think that they could present a show which ran for an hour and a half during the prime dancing hours of the night on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday without chasing away their patrons.

In effect, by denying the crowd the ability to dance for the majority of the night, Spike's ran away the people they were trying to attract.

Finally, and probably most important, the club failed because few people knew about it. The pre-opening advertising was virtually non-existent, with a single ad the only advance publicity that the bar received.

People looked puzzled when asked about the bar's closing — they hadn't even known it was open. Spike's had decided to depend upon word of mouth to get the club going and paid a heavy price for the lack of mail and newspaper advertising.

On Tuesday, December 31, the owner of Spike's announced to employees, based upon what he had seen over the four days of operation, that he would not sign the lease. He decided that it made more sense for him to lose the \$35,000 he had initially spent on the club than to be stuck for a year and potentially lose more money.

A Little Lesbian Valentine's Tale

By Nancy Campbell
Q-Notes Staff

Lu Childers and Lynn Rabb met 12½ years ago, on Labor Day weekend. Lu's mother introduced them. Lynn was "straight" then . . . but, as she tells it, "As soon as I saw her, I said to myself, 'I'm gonna have this woman!'" and then wondered why she had thought that!

Lu thought Lynn was special, too. She wrote her for three months before she was able to see her again.

After 7½ years together, they bought a house together in Gastonia, a two-bedroom with a fenced yard for their dogs — four Dobermans and a miniature dachshund. The house is grey with black trim, and it is evident that love flows out of that home. Like many couples, they wanted to share that love with someone and started planning a family.

Usually, the hard part would have been finding a doctor who felt warm and fuzzy about helping a pair of lesbians become mothers, but Lynn's gynecologist-obstetrician didn't bat an eyelash.

In fact, he recommended a book for them to read: *Rocking The Cradle: Lesbian Mothers*. They ordered the book from Allyson Books and read the how-to chapters avidly.

Pregnancy didn't happen right away for Lynn. In fact, she and Lu went through several "donors" before they became pregnant with a baby boy, due March 1. Lynn and Lu have already chosen his name, Dylan Luis . . . and a back-up girl's name just in case science has goofed in predicting a boy.

I asked Lynn, "What do you like best about Lu?" and she was quick to say, "She's so good to me!" (here she giggled softly), "especially when I'm pregnant. She leaves me little notes on the refrigerator. I've got

some of them saved in my wallet. I date them and everything! And she puts little notes in my lunchbox. She's so good to me that all the women at work are jealous. They all wish their husbands were as loving to them as Lu is to me!"

Lu's best memory of Lynn is the day they found out that Lynn was pregnant. "We both love children. We've always wanted them. We thought about adopting. And now we can hardly wait." And then Lu added, "She's so understanding, too. I just love that about Lynn."

About this time Lu had to leave the room for a minute. Lynn told about when they realized that they were in love with each other, and she and Lu decided to make love. "I told her, 'I don't know what to do,' and she said, 'Don't worry, honey, I'll show you.' And she did!"

So, Lu, what words of wisdom do you have for couples just starting out, to make it last 12½ years? "If you can make it through the first couple of years, you've got it made," says Lu. And Lynn, what do you want to tell them? "Bite your tongue . . . a lot!" giggles Lynn.



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