

# Q-NOTES

Switchboard, Charlotte (704) 525-6128  
AIDS Hotline, Charlotte (704) 333-AIDS  
PFLAG Hotline, Charlotte (704) 364-1474  
AIDS Hotline, Columbia (803) 779-PALS  
Switchboard, Wilmington (919) 675-9222

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## From Incident To Document: Tracking A Hate Crime

By David Stout  
Q-Notes Staff

The April issue of *Q-Notes* reported the alarming rise in the amount of hate-motivated crimes against Gays and Lesbians. Still, the vast majority of incidents go unreported. They never make it to the proper law enforcement agencies nor even to the statistical gathering sources that are in place to track and document the existence of crimes against homosexuals.

One reason is that people are afraid to report an assault simply because they don't know what the process entails.

*Q-Notes* decided to create a fictitious event involving a hate-motivated crime, report the crime and then follow its path through the appropriate channels.

To set this up, it was first necessary to create the event. Unfortunately, it was easy to create a situation. With the myriad of crimes perpetrated against gays, there was no shortage of examples to use as guides.

So the staff worked up this scenario: A man is leaving a known gay bar late at night when he is attacked by two men who physi-

cally assault him. They repeatedly yell anti-gay remarks throughout the incident, making it clear that the victim is being beaten for being gay. They then jump into a car and speed away.

With the scenario in place, a determination was made to tell each respondent contacted that, while this was a fictitious event, it should be treated in a real-life fashion.

The first call was placed to the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard. In operation seven days a week from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m., it was the first source we contacted since this is one of the situations the Switchboard is in place for.

We contacted the Switchboard on April 15. A man named Steve answered the phone and asked how he could help. I told him I'd been assaulted by two men and didn't know what to do.

"Have you told the police?" was his next question and I said I had not. He suggested that I do so, and then went on to ask me if I would recount the entire incident and allow him to document what transpired.

I asked if I had to give my name for the documentation and was assured that ano-

nymity was not a factor in their ability to report or the validity of their reports. We discussed the assault and answered the various questions contained on the form used to record hate crimes — did the incident involve violence (yes), harassment (yes), was the harassment written (no), was it vocal (yes), was it discrimination (no), until the questionnaire had been completed.

The entire process took less than 10 minutes. In his follow-up remarks, Steve told me that the long-hand record of my attack would be kept in a locked file overseen by First Tuesday Association for Gay and Lesbian Equality, and only the statistical information (recorded on the documenting form) would be available for compilation purposes.

The next day, I called the Charlotte Police Department to report the assault. I dialed the general department number listed in the phone book and spoke to an operator who connected me to an officer. I told him my story and awaited his response.

His first request was for my name so that he could file a report. When I asked him if I had to release my name, he said, "Yes, you can't file a report without a name on it. It wouldn't be valid."

I was then told that after a police report has been filed it becomes a matter of public record and federal law requires its availability to the public and the press. Lastly, I was told that data is collected at the department concerning hate-motivated crimes, but these reports remain at the precinct headquarters and there are no names or identifying numbers used to catalog them.

What this tells us is that someone who has gone through a gay-hate-related incident will have to make a determination when they are considering calling the police department: is what happened to you important or imperative enough to open yourself up like this?

Each individual must answer the question for himself or herself (although it should be noted here that to access this information an interested party would have to be able to give some type of background on the incident to even have the file pulled for them).

And if the only thing the person wishes to accomplish is to note that the event occurred,

### MAP Holds AIDS Candlelight Service

Metrolina AIDS Project will sponsor the local international AIDS Candlelight Memorial Service on Sunday, May 19, 1991, as part of the International AIDS Candlelight Memorials. Participants will meet at 8:00 p.m. on the grounds of Myers Park Baptist Church across from Queens College. Candles will be provided.

In case of rain, the vigil will be moved inside to the church's Great Hall.

A selection of quilt panels made by Charlotteans for persons they have loved and lost to AIDS will be on display during the vigil. These memorial panels will join the Names Project national quilt.

The Candlelight Memorial will be an expression of care and concern about the AIDS pandemic as it affects us locally and a demonstration of our concern with the worldwide crisis. More than 200 locations around the world will be holding similar memorial observances on the same evening.

Metrolina AIDS Project is a local support and advocacy group directly assisting persons who are infected with, or affected by, HIV disease. Other service providers, support groups and churches will be involved in the memorial. Participants are encouraged to bring along friends, life partners, and family members from their churches and synagogues, social or work groups, to join in the service.

To receive more information about this year's Candlelight Memorial, or to make a donation to offset the cost of the vigil, contact MAP at 704/333-1435.

then calling the Switchboard will be sufficient. But if the person feels that a law was broken or that the perpetrators of the incident need to be charged for what they have done, then that person should contact the authorities.

Whether or not a person decides to report their assault to the police is their own decision. However, it is everyone's responsibility to call the Switchboard and document what occurred. Only when there is a preponderance of recorded crimes against Gays and Lesbians will we get anyone to seriously consider giving us legal protection as human beings.

## MCSP Holds Casino Night

MCSP will hold their popular Casino Night again this year on Saturday, June 8th, from 8:30 pm to 12:30 am on the top floor of the Med Center Inn (formerly Ramada Inn), 600 South Kings Drive in Charlotte. Tickets will be \$15.00 in advance or \$17.50 at the door, and can be obtained from MCSP Committee members or by calling the Switchboard at 525-6128. Games will include blackjack, roulette, casino craps and others with a Casino Night Auction held at the end of the evening to spend your winnings. Come enjoy the food, drinks... and dealers. All proceeds go to support the Metrolina Community Service Project.

## WSOC Airs 'A Struggle For Love'

by Dan Kirsch  
Q-Notes Staff

A press release crossed Sheila Knox's desk in January about a new book release — *GAY FATHERS* by Robert L. Barret and UNC-Charlotte professor Byran E. Robinson. Four months later, that book led to a three-night report on WSOC's (Channel 9) Family Focus Series, a series about homosexual men and women entitled "A Struggle For Love."

Though the series will have aired by the time this issue is distributed, *Q-Notes* felt it was important to find out why WSOC chose to do these reports. On Friday, April 19 I was able to talk with Knox, photographer/editor/producer of Family Focus, and Janet England, Family Focus reporter and anchor of Eye-witness News-Midday.

The series included interviews with Nila and Stokely Bailey (founders of the local chapter of PFLAG) and their Lesbian daughter Sandra on the first night; a formerly married man named Wesley on the second night; and concluded with a formerly married man in shadow and his two daughters, one in shadow, one not, on the final night.

Knox told of how the book made a big impact on her — she hadn't realized how many men were in this situation. The book contains many interviews with gay men who are or were married. She shared the book with England, and the concept for the series was born.

"We wanted to take it beyond the homosexuality issue," explained Knox. "We wanted to try to get people to understand these people's feelings." Knox and England both said that other staff members were very interested in the series, and that management was very supportive. Only one staff member brought up the religious aspect, and a couple of others asked incredulously "why are you doing that?"

England went so far as to ask the management for an editorial on the subject. The editorial aired after the first night's report (traditionally it airs at the end of a series), because a subject like this "tends to bring up people's emotions." An advance copy of the editorial, to be delivered by Station Manager Jack Callahan, states in part:

"One American group, however, still suffers from civil rights violations: the homosexual community ... still assaulted, still despised, still harassed and attacked. Members of the homosexual community are often ostracized.... This percentage of the population, generally believed to be a predictable ten percent of any gathered group - school, church, business people - pays a high price for their sexual orientation. No one has to approve of gay behavior, nor endorse it, nor have an in-

depth understanding of what causes it. But we do have a responsibility to reject violent assaults directed against citizens because of their sexual orientation."

It took over a month just to find someone willing to appear on camera, and then England and Knox had to earn the trust of these people, people who were afraid that the report might sensationalize the topic.

"We didn't want to bang people over the head," said England, "we really wanted to change the perception that every homosexual is some weirdo. It was important for us to portray these people as the human, caring people that they are, that homosexuality is only one part of their life. They fall in love for all the same reasons as heterosexuals do."

As the series was being developed, England was surprised that a few friends and colleagues began confiding in her that there was a gay person in their family, or how this issue had touched their lives. Knox even received a call from the Human Rights Campaign Fund in Washington, D.C. They had heard she was doing the series and wanted to offer encouragement.

England fears a bit for the people in the story. The man who could not be shown is very active in the community and not ashamed of his lifestyle, but his landlord has already questioned his sexual orientation, and he is afraid he might be kicked out of his housing. The other man, Wesley, appears on camera because he never had a role model growing up, and he hopes his action will provide hope to people who are closeted.

Knox and England learned a lot by doing the series — that homosexuality is not a choice and about the misconception that men get married as a smokescreen. England sees this as "the civil rights issue of today. I hope (the series) will make people more open-minded, and encourage people to work towards ending discriminatory policies and back non-discrimination legislation. Maybe parents will be able to deal better knowing that there are support groups in place."

When we talked, England planned to close the series by telling the audience that homosexuality is a fact of life, and asking the audience to think about what can be done to help our young people who struggle with this knowledge of themselves. She wanted to communicate that we need to tell young people that it is okay for them to talk to someone about this issue. England realizes as a journalist that she doesn't have all the answers, but felt strongly that the issue needed to be addressed to begin change.

*Q-Notes* will run a follow-up article next month on reaction to the series.

## BEST BETS

### May

- 3 NAMES Project Evening Under the Stars
- 3-5 Tradesmen-Annual Run
- 11 MAP's "Guess Who's Coming To Dinner"
- 11 WOW Spring Dance
- 19 AIDS Candlelight Memorial
- 23-27 Southern Women's Fest.
- 23 G/L Film Festival "Fun Down There"
- 31 First Tuesday Spaghetti Dinner

### June

- 1-2 NAMES Project SE Regional Chapter Conf.
- 2 Witness at MCC Charlotte

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