Rousso speaks to gay group

'Country boy' wants to be mayor

by Frank Dalrymple **Q-Notes Staff**

In an opening address liberally peppered with such slogans as "I'm not a politician, I'm a public servant," and "I want to be a mayor for all people," democratic mayoral candidate Al Rousso described himself as "a country boy from Montgomery, Alabama," whose father died when he was twelve and who rose to be a successful jewelry merchant in the Charlotte area from selling magazines at twelve; being a soda jerk at fourteen; and a shoe salesmen at sixteen.

Speaking to a crowd of about sixty-five people in an almost suffocating sanctuary at St. Peter's Episcopal Church on Tuesday, August 6, Al Rousso, a former city councilman, launched his campaign with the gay community, promising to return Charlotte from "a mean city," back to "a clean city."

Rousso reminded those in attendance of

his withdrawal from the mayoral race two years ago, due to pneumonia. Despite his withdrawal, a ground swell of write-in ballots captured Rousso almost 26,000 votes, nearly 40% of the total tally.

Since announcing his candidacy in March, Rousso has spoken to over 120 groups, citing

drugs and crime as the primary issues in his quest for mayor.

He added that, if elected, he would not use his term in office for public relations, by 'going to Taiwan to look at fire cracker factories," and is not as interested in making Charlotte "a world-class city" as he is in making it "a first-class city."

Rousso also said that he was opposed to the new arts center, but supports an NFL

Bringing his speech to a close, he asked to be invited back to First Tuesday again, before the election, and reminded us, once again, that he's "a country boy" who wants to be mayor of Charlotte.

Following his address, First Tuesday chair Dick Woodhouse opened the floor to questions for the candidate. Citing a hearing impairment, Rousso moved about the large room, from questioner to questioner, engaging in eye-to-eye contact with each individual. In many instances, however, Rousso tended to respond before the question had been completed.

When asked about his willingness to support an anti-discrimination ordinance based on sexual orientation, to prevent such incidents as the Cracker Barrel case, Rousso

men and more men and more

danceyourassoff

South Carolina's Largest Entertainment Complex

Labor Day Weekend X-travaganza!

responded "at this point, I'd have to do more [research] to be certain. This is a free society, and as long as laws are not being broken, I can't say anything against that.'

When the questioner clarified that the former Cracker Barrel employee was not soliciting customers and had a strong performance record with the company, Rousso leaped in, "then that was strictly discrimina-

The questioner then returned to his original point of asking Rousso's desire to change such laws, with Rousso responding "I think that's state and federal law. I den't think that's local. I would have to research that, before I could answer that.'

Another questioner promptly followed by asking, "considering that a local ordinance would be legal and appropriate, would you support and address it with the same vigor that you have addressed other issues?" Again Rousso responded "I can't answer that. I would have to check into that."

When asked if he would urge the Charlotte Police Department to gather statistics pertaining to hate crimes against gays, Rousso repeated "I would have to check into that."

Rousso was unwilling to commit to requiring sensitivity training for police officers in regards to dealing with gay and lesbian citizens. "I will study it. I will research it," was his final comment on the subject.

Rousso also frequently reminded the audience how honest he was being with them after responding to such questions.

When challenged with the reality of laws that protect individuals from termination of employment for being of color, or of certain religious persuasion, but no such protection for sexual orientation, he said "that's something I would have to look into.'

When someone began yet another question about employment practices, Rousso stopped her by saying, "I see where you're going. You're looking for fair treatment. I'm Jewish. I've been looking for fair treatment all my life. Unfortunately, it's not there."

Rousso did agree, if elected mayor, to meet with a small group from the gay and lesbian community to discuss their concerns.

He later returned to the issue of his opposing the arts center saying, "the building is wrong, the street is wrong, and its too small." He went onto say that he is opposed the proposed "entertainment" tax and feels that the arts should be privately funded.

A critical moment came when someone asked if Rousso would look into all the issues that Rousso had responded "I would have to check into that," and when invited back, prior to the election "would you be able to give more specific answers?" Rousso responded,

"No. Because I don't think that would be the right time to do that," adding "I'm receptive to discussing your problems with you, when I'm in office.

When asked about his perceptions of gay and lesbian people, and the community, Rousso's response to the gentleman was, "When I look at you, I see a human being, and the life you choose to lead is your life to live," continuing, "As long as human beings stay within the law, and you're peace-loving beings, why should I bother you, why should I despise you for the life you've chosen to

He went on to say that during his long career as a merchant and employer, he has never asked a perspective employee (or working employee) who he or she sleeps with, and feels he does not have the right to do so.

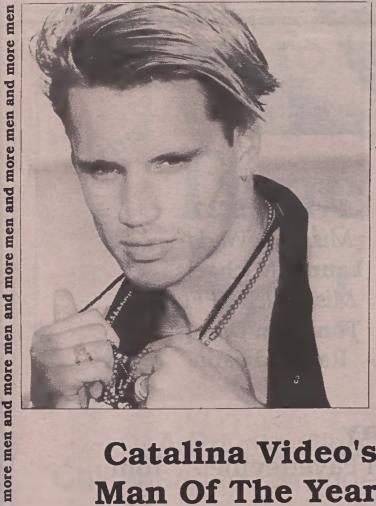
Returning to the issue of whether or not the candidate felt that sexual orientation is a "choice" or something that exists from childhood, he said, "I'm going to have to say it's a choice. It's a life that the individual has chosen. You should be happy with the life you're living, I'm happy with the life I'm

The meeting was concluded with a final question regarding when the public could expect a debate between Republican candidate Richard Vinroot and himself. Rousso informed the audience of previous public debates and said that he has "turned down no invitation" for future debates.

He closed the evening by saying "I did not try to mislead anyone here. I don't speak with forked tongue."

The primary election will be held on Tuesday, September 24. Rousso has no opposition in the primary. The general election will be held Tuesday, November 5.

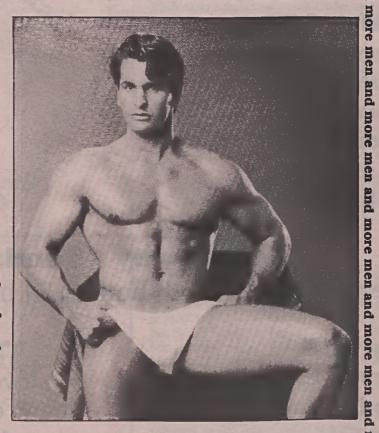
Sire Recording Artist PAUL LEKAKIS Fri. & Saturday August 30 & 31



Catalina Video's Man Of The Year LEX BALDWIN Sunday, Sept. 1

and

men and more men



★ September 8 - Former Miss USA at Large Denise Russell ★

The Arcade Club

3-5 Liberty St. • Charleston, SC • (803) 577-9160

Time Capsule

It was eight years ago this month, September 1983, that Q-Notes began publication. Published by the Queen City Quordinators (QCQ), the newspaper promised to feature news of Charlotte's gay/lesbian organizations and not compete with other gay/lesbian newspapers reporting other news. The editor was Darryl Logsdon, and his assistant was Don King. Both men are still active in the Charlotte community.

The 4-page paper reported on activities at Acceptance, the Gay/Lesbian Switchboard, the Lambda Political Caucus, MCC/Charlotte and QCQ. Articles included information about tryouts for the QCQ Cabaret, and a story about Charlotte female impersonators going to the Miss Gay America Pageant in Oklahoma City. A column on Bar Basics was also included.

assiffeds

Condo For Rent

Near SouthPark, 3601 Colony Crossing Drive. 2 BR, 2 BA, W/D conn., FRPL, Microwave. Private. Avail. Imm. \$625. Call (704) 541-9038 after 5.00.

> Answer: Boy Scouts Picture Gayme

men and more men and more