

# Notes

THE 1993 MARCH ON WASHINGTON  
FOR LESBIAN, GAY AND BI  
EQUAL RIGHTS AND LIBERATION®  
APRIL 25  
Schedule  
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## Wilmington supports gay-bashed hero

by David Stout  
Q-Notes Staff

WILMINGTON—Just under one-hundred people braved the cold, drizzling weather Saturday, February 20 to show support for William "Crae" Pridgen, a local gay man who gained national attention after being brutally assaulted in this coastal city.

The actual circumstances surrounding the assault have almost passed into legend.

Slightly past midnight on the morning of January 30, 1993 three marines from Camp Lejeune entered Mickey Ratz nightclub unaware that it was a gay/lesbian establishment. After learning it was, they began to verbally harass the doorman and a few patrons in the foyer. Pridgen, 28, unwittingly walked into this melee attempting to exit the club, was grabbed by the men and forced outside. They knocked him to the ground and beat and kicked him while allegedly yelling "Clinton will pay," which is assumed to refer to the President's stance on allowing gay and lesbian Americans to serve in the armed services. Within minutes, bar patrons were able to chase the marines away and pull Pridgen's unconscious body back inside. As a result of the attack, Pridgen sustained a fractured skull, had a tooth knocked out, had cartilage in his left ear torn and received several facial bruises and lacerations.

Hours later, Colin C. Hunt, 20, Patric G. Gardone, 23, and Walter G. Watkins, 26, were charged with assault and released on \$400.00 bail each. They are confined to the base awaiting trial.

In the ensuing weeks, Pridgen's friends searched for a way to bring attention to the violence perpetrated against him and other gays and lesbians.

This resulted in the formation of an organization called People for the Ethical Treatment of Others (PETO) which in turn organized a march to illustrate their concerns.

Prior to the march, three speakers addressed the crowd gathered behind the City

Hall building. PETO spokesmen Paul Eareackson and Michael Cheek served as the emcees for the rally, alternately calling to the microphone Chris Ingle, co-chair of the North Carolina Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality, Corey Mitchell, an African-American student from UNC-Wilmington, and Pridgen

nated against for too long. We've got to start standing up and fighting - we've got to stop living in fear. We have the right to live our lives the way we want to; not the way society tells us we should. I know there's not a lot of us out here, but we're supporting a lot of people who are still living in fear. Let's not live in fear anymore, let's stand up and fight - and fight hard."

At approximately 12:15 pm the march got underway. Eareackson and Cheek led the contingent around the circular route through the streets of downtown Wilmington, past Mickey Ratz and back to City Hall where the march had begun.

When all of the marchers had filed back onto the grounds, Pridgen, PETO members, and Danny Leonard, owner of Jacksonville's Friends Lounge, gave parting remarks about the event and its significance.

After the closing comments, participants were encouraged to go to Mickey Ratz and socialize.

At the club, Q-Notes was able to spend a few moments with Pridgen before he left for Los Angeles to work with Queer Nation, discussing the notoriety and opportunity that the bashing had thrust upon him.

Oddly, if he had heeded the initial advice of his friends, those opportunities would never have materialized. "After they pulled me back into the bar, I was sitting there saying, 'This isn't right. Someone's got to do something,' but my friends were telling me, 'Crae, you should keep quiet. You just need to forget about this and get better and get on with your life.'"

But because of the shame and humiliation he felt, Pridgen was unable to do that. "Those three men stole my dignity. I knew the only way I could get it back and ever feel good about myself again was to do something."

Ironically, it was a member of the media who convinced him to recount his violation to the general public.

Frances Weller is a friend of Pridgen's and  
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himself.

Pridgen told the jubilant attendees, "It's time for us to stand up for our civil rights as Americans. This is not just about gays in the military; we've been denied and discrimi-

## Bar owner offers safe haven to gay soldiers

By Brent L. Pack  
Special to Q-Notes

Many times in the heat of controversy and protest, we rally behind the cause, but forget the individuals who are fighting to make a difference within that cause. Danny Leonard is a man who has found a way to not only bolster the crusade for homosexual rights, but also to assist those individuals caught in the cross fire of and the fallout from the fight.

Danny Leonard, a native of Lexington, NC, spent many years as Brandy Alexander on the Miss Gay America pageant circuit before finally hanging up his tiara and purchasing Friends Lounge in Jacksonville, North Carolina. Friends Lounge has served the needs of the communities in Jacksonville and surrounding areas for 14 years, 11 of which Leonard has been the owner.

Friends Lounge is a gay bar providing a safe environment for dancing, cruising and performing. Although its purpose is to cater to the homosexual community, Friends Lounge serves the straight community as well with one third of the clientele being

straight. On the high percentage of heterosexuals in Friends Lounge, Leonard comments "The straight couples enjoy coming to my bar because they love the music and the dance floor, but also because a man can leave his wife or girlfriend alone at a table and know that she will be safe from harassment."

Although the club provides a comfortable environment for homosexuals and heterosexuals, military authorities have seen fit to keep all military personnel away from the bar. Since 1981, Friends Lounge has been blacklisted. Blacklisted status means that if any military personnel are caught in the bar, the individual could receive two years in the brig, demotion to a private, and loss of all military benefits. Currently, Friends Lounge is one of only four bars in the country that has been blacklisted by the military.

Despite its status, Friends Lounge remains extremely popular with the Marines of Camp Lejeune. Leonard estimates that 70 percent of his clientele are members of the military. He explains why the Marines frequent Friends Lounge by saying, "I try to provide a home away from home, a place of security and

comfort for the customers. Hopefully, they can just be themselves when they are in my bar and not worry about the rules and regulations of the military."

Nonetheless, this "home-away-from-home" has been threatened by the recent publicity from the controversy surrounding

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## Activists discuss U.S. AIDS policy

by David Jones  
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—About 60 AIDS activists and people with HIV infection from North and South Carolina met in Charlotte on Saturday, February 20, 1993 to help develop proposals to send to the Clinton administration concerning the HIV/AIDS epidemic. It was one of 25 regional meetings held across the country over the past several weeks.

The Charlotte meeting was facilitated by Mike Averbuch of Metrolina AIDS Project in Charlotte, Jacqueline Clymore of the AIDS Service Agency in Raleigh, Cornelius Baker of the National Association of People with AIDS and David Barr of the Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York City.

The regional meetings came about as a result of an initiative by AIDS activists last year. According to David Barr, AIDS organizations saw that AIDS was not being debated by the five candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination. They created a coalition called United for AIDS Action, wrote an AIDS platform outlining what the next president should do, obtained the endorsement of 450 other groups and sent it to all five candidates.

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## New G/L group gets political

by Dan Van Mourik  
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—A subdued gathering of 47 gays, lesbians and bisexuals met on February 10 in Charlotte. Three members of the group known as "Citizens for Human Rights," formed to support passage of an amendment to Charlotte's public accommodations ordinance to include sexual orientation, led the meeting.

Organizer Sue Henry gave a brief history of events leading up to the meeting and announced that Citizens for Human Rights had raised \$10,000 for the Democratic Party and the Clinton campaign as well as coordinating mass mailings on the ordinance issue.

Organizer Bob Barret mentioned the increased visibility of gays in the media and asked how this was affecting the community on a personal level. Attendee David Farraday stated he used the increased coverage to begin discussions on gay issues and to offer a gay viewpoint to heterosexuals.

Organizer Ward Simmons began the presentation on the proposed organization by stating that meeting planners hoped to "avoid traditional structure" and the "smothering" effect of administrative responsibilities.

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## Q-Notes to give away trip to Cancun

You could win the trip of a lifetime just by filling out the survey you'll find enclosed in this issue.

In fact, here's how easy it could be for you and a friend to fly off to Mexico. First, you need to completely answer the survey questions. Next, write your social security number in the space provided, re-fold the form and seal it with cellophane tape where indicated. Then, just drop it in the mailbox - it's postage paid.

The social security numbers from all completed surveys will be placed in a pool from which the winner will be drawn. That lucky reader, and one guest, will be flying to Cancun, Mexico for a 4-day/3-night stay in paradise.

The prize vacation will be September 9-12, 1993 and includes round-trip airfare aboard AeroMexico airlines and accommodations at the luxurious Hotel Melia Turquesa, located on the island's Caribbean side.

Be sure to look for your survey in this issue and send it in!