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Cammermeyer to visit Charlotte

by Robert Marcus James
Special to Q-Notes

CHARLOTTE—Time Out Youth and OutCharlotte '95 have jointly signed Col. Margarethe Cammermeyer to be keynote speaker at events on Friday, October 13, 1995.



Grethe Cammermeyer

During a mandatory security check for top-secret military clearance, Cammermeyer told the Army four words that would forever change her life: "I am a lesbian."

She is the author of *Serving in Silence* which in February was shown as an NBC made-for-TV movie featuring Glenn Close in the lead role. Close and Barbra Streisand co-produced the movie.

Cammermeyer will be the keynote speaker for the fifth annual Time Out Youth Health Conference. The theme of the conference is "Mind, Body & Spirit—The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Experience."

"We are thrilled that Col. Cammermeyer will share herself with us," exclaimed Tonda Taylor, Executive Director of Time Out Youth. "Our annual health conference has played an important part in educating youth counselors, ministers, health professionals, parents and others about the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender members of our community. To have someone of Col. Cammermeyer's stature join us, we expect the best conference we've ever had."

The conference planning team includes Dr. Bryan Robinson, Ph.D., a professor at UNC-Charlotte, and LeDayne McLeese Polaski, M.Div., youth minister at Myers Park Baptist Church.

Following the health conference, Cammermeyer will be available for a book signing, a private sponsor reception and then give a public speech at OutCharlotte '95, the cultural festival celebrating the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) community.

"We think Col. Cammermeyer is an important voice in LGBT culture," stated Dan Kirsch, OutCharlotte Festival Director. "She is a woman who believes that her sexual orientation is irrelevant to her professional abilities, but even though highly decorated by the United States Army, the Army discharged her from the service simply because she was honest about herself."

According to *Out* magazine (February 1995 issue), it has been estimated that some 18,000 men and women have been discharged from the US armed forces in the past 12 years because of their homosexuality. Cammermeyer, a Vietnam War veteran and the highest ranking and most decorated soldier to fight expulsion, was well on her way to becoming the country's chief military nurse, and perhaps a general.

Serving in Silence is the story of a very courageous woman—a woman who believes that there is no shame in being lesbian, a woman who had the courage not to accept being treated differently simply because of who she is, and decided to take a stand for herself and fight back.

For more information about the Time Out Youth Health Conference, call (704) 537-5050. For more information about OutCharlotte '95, call (704) 563-2699.

Sports Authority ads sell intolerance

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—Readers of the March 2 edition of *The Charlotte Observer* were shocked to find an offensive anti-gay remark amidst the text of a Sports Authority advertisement promoting a skiing-accessories sale.

One of the items included in the ad was Rossignol R77 brand ski boots—written in small letters beneath a picture of the item was the marketing description, "You'll ski like a faggot with these!"

The store, located in Independence Shopping Center, and *The Charlotte Observer*, as well as *Q-Notes* and many broadcast media outlets, were flooded with calls about the advertisement. The situation was discussed on talk radio programs and featured on local newscasts throughout the day.

HIV testing back in court

by David Jones
Q-Notes Staff

RALEIGH—ACT UP/Triangle filed a petition in Wake County Superior Court on March 8, asking the court to restore anonymous HIV testing to all North Carolina health departments. The motion asked the judge for a temporary restraining order to block the state from implementing a November 4 decision of the state's Commission for Health Services to end anonymous HIV testing June 15, 1995. ACT UP further asked the court to issue a permanent injunction to keep anonymous testing available indefinitely.

ACT UP's legal argument is based on the North Carolina law that establishes the Commission for Health Services and gives it the power to enact and change so-called public health control measures. Control measures include testing policy for communicable diseases, including HIV. The statute requires that the Commission make its decisions based on substantial evidence and scientific data.

ACT UP argues in its motion that the Commission heard and considered scientific data when it voted on February 9 to keep anonymous HIV testing available in county health departments. At that meeting, the Commission heard from a panel of public health experts from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The UNC professors presented a detailed analysis of the state's own HIV testing data which, according to the experts, showed a significant decline in testing in gay men when anonymous testing was not available. However, when the Commission considered the issue again on November 4, it heard only anecdotal personal statements of opinion by a collection of local health directors who support the state health department's campaign to end anonymous testing.

The state health department has 30 days to file a response to ACT UP's motion, after which the court will set a date for a hearing. Anonymous HIV testing will remain available in all 100 county health departments until June 15 unless the court issues a ruling extending it.

The state health department began working to end anonymous testing in 1990, shortly after being given political instructions publicly by representatives of the governor and lieutenant governor to stop supporting a proposal to keep anonymous testing available.

The next morning, the *Observer* featured another ad from The Sports Authority apologizing for the comment contained in the previous ad. It was directed toward "[The Sports Authority's] loyal customers and the residents of Charlotte," and signed by Richard J. Lynch, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, who explained, "The use of this language was obviously in error." He noted that an individual was responsible for the "inappropriate and offensive" content and that the employee had been terminated. A telephone number for the retail chain's headquarters in Fort Lauderdale, Florida was also provided.

While many were placated by the response, *Q-Notes* was not. The omission of a specific reference to gays and lesbians anywhere in the ad seemed to be an insulting oversight at best or blatant homophobia at worst.

On March 10, a letter was sent to The Sports Authority outlining this newspaper's

position, "[We] have a problem with the fact that gays and lesbians were never specifically addressed in your apologetic comments, when the entire situation stemmed from the use of an anti-gay epithet."

"Regrettably, you chose to direct your remarks toward your 'loyal customers and the residents of Charlotte' rather than those who were truly demeaned. Doesn't The Sports Authority believe that gays and lesbians deserve a direct apology for the needless emotional pain that was caused them by your advertisement? Or, were you more concerned with politics—afraid of offending conservative consumers by publicly standing opposed to the injustice directed toward homosexuals every day? You missed an excellent opportunity to educate people about the skyrocketing anti-gay violence and hatred engulfing this nation."

Q-Notes challenged The Sports Authority to "confirm its commitment to equality" by

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NCCGLE releases annual state hate crimes report

by Darryl R. Williams
Q-Notes Staff

RALEIGH—During 1994, anti-gay violence increased in North Carolina and across the country. Nine national tracking programs documented 2,064 anti-gay/lesbian incidents in 1994, a 1.6% increase over 1993. In North Carolina, 73 acts were documented.

"We are saddened, but not surprised, that anti-gay/lesbian violence is on the rise once again," said Kenda Kirby, executive director of the North Carolina Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCCGLE). "Given the unprecedented levels of anti-gay organizing and hate rhetoric targeting our community over the year, violence had to increase."

Kirby's comments were made at a March 7 press conference in Raleigh, during which NCCGLE released its annual report *Homophobia and Human Rights in North Carolina*. The report summarizes anti-gay offenses such as harassment, physical assault, vandalism, and homicide in North Carolina as well as other regions where offenses are documented.

Key findings of the report were that anti-gay bias crimes are becoming more violent, are being committed by very young people, and are often perpetrated by more than one offender.

In North Carolina, 5 gay-related murders were documented, the most violent of which was a castration/murder of a gay man in Roseboro. Nationally, 70 gay-related homicides were documented.

A new element of the annual report produced by NCCGLE was information regarding the average age of offenders. An estimated 30% of 1994 offenders were younger than 18 years of age and approximately three-quarters were younger than 30. Kirby, citing an offender-to-victim ratio of 1.47 to 1, called anti-gay crimes a "gang activity for young cowards." The ratio for all hate crimes,

as documented by the FBI, is 1.19 to 1.

Speaking on behalf of Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), Sally Zumbach described the impact the violence has on gays and lesbians as well as the community at large.

"Our loved ones are targets of violence and malicious verbal attacks, suffering loss of jobs, homes, and even life itself," Zumbach said. "But even the appearance of homosexuality exposes non-gay, lesbian, or bisexual persons to harassment, violence and discrimination."

Durham County Sheriff Worth Hill emphasized the need to teach children to respect all people by setting a good example.

"If all of us in society would treat each and every individual with the respect and dignity that we expect to receive, then crimes against persons would be dramatically decreased," Hill said. "We cannot expect our children to learn to respect all people unless we set the examples for them."

Zumbach agreed, saying that "the seeds of hate are sown early in life" and called on parents to replace hate with "true family values of love, understanding, compassion, and mutual respect."

Several recommendations were made by NCCGLE in the annual report and included adding sexual orientation to the Hate Crimes Statistics Act; requiring diversity training for state employees, including public school personnel and law enforcement agencies; and enacting legislation in the General Assembly of North Carolina allowing cities to adopt legal protection for citizens, including gays and lesbians.

Kirby said the recommendations were the cornerstone of NCCGLE's work. "A lot of people think we document anti-lesbian/gay offenses for the hell of it, but the reason for the documentation is to educate and legislate."