

Q Notes

The Carolinas' Most Comprehensive Gay & Lesbian Newspaper

The Latest Q-POLL Results

In light of President Clinton's recent changes to "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue" and the European High Court's ruling that the British ban on gays in the military is illegal, do you believe the ban on gays in the military in the US will be removed in the near future?

Yes	No	Not Sure
37%	34%	29%

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Gay candidates score in NC, US

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

CARRBORO, NC—On November 2, progressive voters in the state's Triangle region elected Mike Nelson to a third term as Carrboro Mayor — with little drama since he ran unopposed — and tapped an out lesbian to join the Chapel Hill-Carrboro School Board.

The fourth-highest vote getter in a nine-way race, Gloria Faley made history in becoming the first lesbian elected to any civic position in NC. Although this was her first run for the board, the mother of two had been active in the school system for some time — ostensibly the key factor in her victory.

MK Cullen, executive director of Equality NC PAC, a state-wide GLBT advocacy organization, stated, "Gloria ran a real grassroots campaign and her strong showing proves that many people have faith in her abilities to serve all the people of Chapel Hill and Carrboro."

Nelson and Faley are the second and third openly gay elected officials in NC history, following on the heels of retired Chapel Hill Town Councilman Joe Herzenberg.

While no gay candidates were elected in Mecklenburg County, openly gay Democratic Party Chair Andrew Reyes guided his organization to a stunning victory.

Continuing a swing to the political center that began with the County Commission elections last year, voters gave Democrats a seven to four majority on the Charlotte City Council — the same margin the GOP held going in.

The win was so convincing, in fact, every successful Council candidate carried an "endorse" or "recommend" rating from MeckPAC, the county's GLBT advocacy organization.

Unfortunately, things didn't go as well in the Charlotte/Mecklenburg School Board races; all three seats were filled by incumbents and only one of them, Wilhelmenia Rembert, was a "recommend" candidate. The remaining two, Arthur Griffin and John Lassiter, carried "warning" designations from MeckPAC.

In other races around the nation, voters in Plattsburgh, NY made history by electing Dan Stewart as the city's mayor — the first time an



Mike Nelson will serve a third term

openly gay person has been elected mayor of any municipality in New York State.

In San Francisco, Tom Amiano, president of the Board of Supervisors, was successful in his write-in campaign for mayor and will face incumbent Willie Brown in a December 14 run-off.

According to the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, a national organization that works to increase the number of GLBT elected officials, four other openly gay and lesbian candidates prevailed at the ballot box. They include: Seth Chafetz for Birmingham (MI) City Commission; Annise Parker for Houston (TX) City Council; Jon Cooper for Suffolk County (NY) Legislature; and Al Oertwig for St. Paul (MN) Board of Education.

Additionally, two candidates came within one percent of prevailing: Joe Steffan, who ran for a seat on the West Hartford (CT) Town Council, and Scott Robinson, who fell just six votes shy of winning a seat on the Melvindale (MI) City Council.

Voters in Falmouth, ME and Spokane, WA turned back efforts to undo civil rights ordinances based on sexual orientation, while a measure to expand a non-discrimination law to include sexual orientation and other factors failed in Greeley, CO. ▼

Meeting brings hope for healing

by David M. Baker
Special to Q-Notes

LYNCHBURG, VA—The name Jerry Falwell has come to have an odious ring for many gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. In his many years behind the pulpit at the Thomas Road Baptist Church, the 68-year-old Southern Baptist preacher has earned a reputation for having a less than positive view of homosexuality.

On October 22, amidst protests by both gay and anti-gay activists, an interfaith delegation of 200 GLBT people and their supporters arrived in Lynchburg to meet with Rev. Falwell to discuss the words he chooses when speaking his conscience about homosexuality. Leading the delegation, called Soulforce — which gets its name from Mahatma Ghandi's teaching of satyagraha, or "soul force," a form of non-violent social activism — was former Falwell colleague Rev. Mel White.

Raised as an evangelical Christian, White attended Fuller Theological Seminary which, according to its web site, is "an evangelical community dedicated to the preparation of men and women for the manifold ministries of Christ and his Church."

After completing his studies at Fuller, White went on to teach there for more than a decade and would later ghost write books for Falwell as well as fellow evangelicals Jim Bakker, Billy Graham and Pat Robertson.

White wrestled with his homosexuality for many years and employed a wide array of strategies in attempting to overcome it. Over the course of two decades, he tried prayer, exorcism, therapy, and even electric shock treatments to no avail. Finally, in 1993, White came out publicly after being installed as dean of Dallas' Cathedral of Hope — the largest church within the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC), a Christian denomination with a special outreach to gays founded by Rev. Troy Perry in 1968.

White, who found his inspiration in the writings of civil rights leaders Ghandi and Martin Luther King, Jr., started Soulforce with his partner Gary Nixon this year to apply the tenets of non-violent social activism to the quest for gay and lesbian equality. The three-day sojourn to Lynchburg provided the perfect test for White's ambitious plan.

The gathering

On the evening of October 22, under the watchful eye of the Lynchburg Police Department — whose constant presence throughout the weekend was at once comforting and alarming — the Soulforce delegation gradually arrived at First Christian Church on Main Street. Over the next several hours, nearly 200 men and women of all faiths and sexual identities

from as far away as California and as nearby as down the street came together for an evening of preparation for the days to come. Pervading every corner of the red brick church was a commingled spirit of hope and expectation.

Karla Fleshman, a delegate from the suburbs of Philadelphia, PA who will soon be ordained as an MCC minister, said that hope is what brought her to Falwell's hometown. "You do a lot of tilling before you see the fruit," she said. "We're tilling here."

Fleshman's hopefulness was amplified by the welcoming remarks of Mayor Pete Warren who was on hand for the weekend's commencement. "When I met Mel in August, I knew that the event being planned here in Lynchburg would be a very positive one," said Warren. "[I]t would be good for relationships with one of the main forces in the city of Lynchburg, Rev. Jerry Falwell."

White added that Falwell had demonstrated that same spirit of change earlier in the day during an interview with Diane Sawyer on *Good Morning America*. After being pressed about his "definitive stance on homosexuality," a document that claimed gays were more prone to disease, depression and addiction and which appeared on his web site, Falwell apologized and said that he had allowed a small percentage of gays and lesbians, to whom he referred as extremists, to define his perception of the overall community. Falwell changed the "definitive stance" and removed the derogatory comments about gays after the broadcast.

By offering an apology in front of millions of television viewers, said White, Falwell set an example that others could follow.

The evening ended with a candlelight vigil to remember the victims of hate crimes. Large, poster-sized pictures of Matthew Shepard, Billy Jack Gaither, Pfc. Barry Winchell, James Byrd, Jr., gay author Robert Drake and other victims of hate crimes were slowly paraded down the side aisles and up the center aisle of the church and placed next to those seated in the pews — an eerie reminder that everyone was potentially sitting next to a victim of a hate crime. The seemingly endless procession underscored the number of people who have been victimized because of their sexual orientation, their race, their gender and their tradition of faith. In the front of the church, portraits of Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Ghandi, and Jesus of Nazareth were held aloft as the soft glow of 200 candles illuminated the sanctuary.

Go tell it on the mountain

The next day, before going to Thomas Road Baptist Church to meet Falwell and 200 representatives from both the church and the affiliated Liberty University, the Soulforce continued. See MEETING on page 12

Shepard saga comes to a close

by Dan Van Mourik
Q-Notes Staff

LARAMIE, WY—On October 25, the nation began to hear the details surrounding the death of gay University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard. Aaron McKinney, 22, went on trial, accused of first-degree murder, kidnapping and aggravated robbery, and possibly faced the death penalty.

The jury of 10 men and six women, including four alternates, was sequestered during the trial which was expected to take four weeks, but lasted just over one. The jury included three students at the University of Wyoming, where Shepard was a freshman studying human rights.

Co-defendant Russell Henderson's trial in April ended when he pleaded guilty to felony murder and kidnapping and received two life sentences. The plea allowed him to avoid the death penalty.

Defense lawyers Dion Custis and Jason Tangeman tried to persuade the jury to convict their client of the lesser offense of second-degree murder or manslaughter, which do not carry a possible death sentence. They were also challenged to prove that Shepard's death did not result from a kidnapping or robbery because Wyoming subscribes to the felony-murder rule. That law allows a defendant to be con-

victed of murder for a death that results from the commission of a felony, even if the death is unintentional. Which means that even if McKinney avoided conviction on the individual first-degree murder charge, he could still face the death penalty if the jury found Shepard died as a result of a robbery or kidnapping.

Opening statements

After the jury was seated, defense attorney Jason Tangeman said Shepard was pummeled to death by Aaron McKinney in a drunken, drug-induced rage after Shepard made a pass at him, but that he did not intend to kill Shepard when he repeatedly beat him on the head with a .357 Magnum pistol.

"Did Matthew Shepard deserve to die? No, that's ridiculous. No manslaughter victim deserved to die," Tangeman said. "That's what Aaron McKinney is guilty of, manslaughter."

McKinney's judgment that night was affected by alcohol, methamphetamines and "some sexually traumatic and confusing events in his life," Tangeman told jurors.

Tangeman said McKinney was confused by three homosexual encounters that occurred when he was seven, 15 and 20. In one case, McKinney was forced into an oral sex act with

See SHEPARD on page 18



Revs. Falwell (l) and White committed to lowering the rhetoric on each side