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Yes No

# Suspect in Atlanta Olympics and gay club bombing captured in NC

Eric Rudolph suspected of planting bomb at gay bar in '97 that injures five

by David Moore

MURPHY, NC — Eric Robert Rudolph, the North Carolina fugitive charged with the fatal bombing attack at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics and three subsequent attacks that included an Atlanta lesbian bar and two abortion clinics, was arrested Saturday, May 31 in the remote mountain town of Murphy, NC.

Rudolph eluded authorities for over five years, but in the end, his seemingly uneventful arrest came about after he was spotted loitering behind a Save-A-Lot Grocery store.

Beverly McMahon, former owner of the now defunct Atlanta gay club, the Otherside Lounge, spoke with Q-Notes the day of Rudolph's arrest.

"My first thought when they caught him was that maybe now my family and I could have some kind of closure," she offered. "We never really got over this thing, we just didn't talk about it anymore to anybody. And we just kinda' disappeared into our own family."

Authorities from the FBI notified McMahon Saturday morning upon Rudolph's capture. Monday morning he was moved from Murphy to Asheville, NC, for a hearing before he is transferred to Atlanta or Birmingham to stand trial for bomb-

ings that took place in those cities.

"I want to see him," McMahon says. "I want to talk to him. I want to know why. I want to understand."

The July 27, 1996, bombing in Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park, took place during the Olympic Games and sent shards of metal spraying into a crowd of hundreds. One woman was killed and at least 111 people were injured.

Rudolph is also charged with two other attacks in the Atlanta area. On January 16, 1997, two bombs detonated outside the Northside Family Planning Service. A month later, on February 21, a bomb detonated at the Otherside Lounge, injuring five people. At the same location a second bomb, presumably intended for rescue workers, exploded while being handled by a police robot.

About 150 people were in the club at the time and injuries ranged from nail wounds to pain in the ears.

One victim, a woman who had lost a significant amount of blood, had a large 4-inch nail imbedded in her right arm.

Despite his capture, McMahon is bittersweet about the development.

"The toll this took on our lives and our business



Atlanta's Otherside Lounge shortly after the 1997 bomb explosion.



Eric Robert Rudolph at the Cherokee County NC jail on Saturday, May 31.

was overwhelming," she recalls. "The insurance company settlement totally left us in debt and eventually we lost our business. I operated in the red for a year and a half after this and I never was able to turn the business around again." The Otherside subsequently closed in 2000.

According to McMahon, civil litigation is planned in the event Rudolph is convicted.

# Celebrating Father's Day – when you've got two Dads

by David Moore

Reid and Wayne Griffin-Russell have been together for five years. They had their commit-



Reid, Wayne, Jett and Gabriel Russell-Griffin

ment ceremony June 24, 2000. Together the two make quite the happy pair. When you throw in Reid's daughter Nora and their newly adopted sons Jett and Gabriel — the picture's complete.

The Griffin-Russell family isn't that much different from many other American family units: two parents, three children and a comfortable, stable home environment

There's one distinct difference: Jett and Gabriel have two fathers.

"This has been a wonderful experience for everybody involved all the way around," says Wayne.

Nora is Reid's daughter from a previous marriage. That doesn't make Wayne any less of a father figure for the 21-year-old woman.

"She was 15 when Reid and I met," Wayne recalls. "We've always been very close. She's a very important part of my life."

"Wayne's reaction to my daughter was one of the things that clued me in to the idea that he would be a good dad," says Reid. "She's always part of the package and with any men I've ever dated the rule was you accept me you accept my daughter."

Jett and Gabriel were initially placed in the Griffin-Russell home as foster children.

"They were abused and neglected," Wayne recalls. "Gabriel had a broken leg. As time went on they terminated parental rights and we were given first rights to adopt."

These days Gabriel, who's four years old, and Jett, who's two, are healthy and well-adjusted kids happy to have a home with two loving fathers.

Says Reid on his partner Wayne: "He really wants to be a dad. He loves children. If only you could watch him play with children — he enjoys interacting with them so much."

Wayne is equally effusive about Reid: "He's the one that roughhouses on the floor and reads to them and gets them ready for bed. He's completely in love with fatherhood."

Gary Kirkegaard and Tony Britt are longtime partners. In fact, they've been together for 13 years.

"We've always wanted to be fathers," says Britt. "We knew that when we met years ago. The only drawback we ever saw to being gay was that it wasn't quite so easy to become a father when you're involved in a same-sex relationship."

Despite the odds, Kirkegaard and Britt adopted twins Austin and Brittney two years ago. Kirkegaard is a doctor and Britt was an interior decorator. He resigned from his position once the two children came into their lives.

"Now I'm a full time dad," he beams.

Like other same sex couples in North Carolina, the two went through the Department of Social Services and a program known as Adoption Options. They also went through a foster parenting program with the Mecklenburg DSS.

Both organizations eventually offered sets of twins, but Brittney and Austin were the first children the couple actually saw.

"The rewards are too many to mention," Britt boasts. "Watching them grow and seeing the joy in their eyes has been such a blessing."

Britt's happiest moment as a father of twins doesn't sound too different from any experience a same-sex couple might share: "It was the day I saw Austin pull his little sister Brittney in a wagon. He had the biggest grin on his face."

Like many children placed in the care of same-sex couples, Brittney and Austin were, initially, special needs children. "They were born three months early and they had health issues,"

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