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in the next
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. Yes . No

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Wilmington police sting arrests local men for sexual activity

Centuries-old 'Crime Against Nature' law used to single out 'Wilmington 6'

by David Moore

Five men from Wilmington, N.C. and the surrounding area have been arrested and charged with North Carolina's antiquated Crime Against Nature (CAN) law.

All of the men were arrested and charged at some time during the past five months, though the Brunswick County police department chose to release their names and images simultaneously to the local press on May 30.

According to the press release, the sheriff's department had received complaints from residents of the Belville Community of Brunswick County about possible sexual activity in the men's restroom at John D. Long Park, which is located across the street from Bellville Elementary school.

After conducting surveillance, the department arrested the five men — some reportedly from bathroom stalls and two in the front seat of a truck.

Repeated phone calls to Brunswick County Sheriff Ronald Hewitt went unreturned, but Wilmington area activist Michael Moore told Q-Notes a sixth individual was reportedly issued a warning and released but later sought for arrest. According to the press release, an arrest warrant has been issued for a sixth man, although he has yet to be apprehended and is considered to be a fugitive.

Detailed information about the men — names, addresses and more — was shown on

television and is posted on two Wilmington web-sites. Q-Notes has chosen not to print that information here, in order to spare the men further embarrassment.

Used to arrest the men and derived from a statute passed during the reign of British King Henry VIII is North Carolina General Statute 14-177. The law reads as follows: "If any person shall commit the crime against nature, with mankind or beast, he shall be punished as a Class I felon."

North Carolina courts have described the statute as "sexual intercourse contrary to the order of nature," which includes all "acts of bestial character whereby degraded and perverted sexual desires are sought to be gratified."

According to a website maintained by North Carolina Gay and Lesbian Attorneys (NCGALA), direct enforcement of the law penalizes gay men more severely than heterosexuals for sexual activity in secluded areas. For example, the site says, a heterosexual couple parking at night in a deserted area or making love far into the woods will probably be ignored by law enforcement officers. At most, they will be charged with indecent exposure, a misdemeanor. Two men in

Wilmington 6: CAN-ed by archaic law



Caught up in a swirl of controversy: six Wilmington men charged with N.C.'s 'Crime Against Nature' law face uncertain futures.

an identical situation will generally be charged with the felony CAN law.

According to Moore, a board member at Saint Jude's MCC in Wilmington who has had direct contact with the six men, the impact of the arrest and charges against them have been overwhelming. "As you can imagine it would be an absolutely devastating thing to happen to have your family to know all about it," says Moore.

"Their responses have been everything from anger to [contemplating] suicide. Some of these men attended mainstream churches — that

see STING on 7

Bike trek raises funds to fight AIDS

Four-day 'Tour de Friends' bike ride raises funds for multiple AIDS organizations

by Leslie MacKenzie

It's quite possible that by the time you read this a number of really tired, but happy bikers will find themselves somewhere on the last leg of a journey between Raleigh, N.C. and Washington D.C.



Roger Striffler and his partner Pete Weber, both from Apex, North Carolina, are excited about riding in the Tour de Friends bike Marathon for a second time.

In an effort to raise funds for three AIDS service organizations — Raleigh's Alliance of AIDS Services, Richmond's Fan Free Clinic and D.C.'s Food & Friends, countless individuals are expected to take part in the four-day event, which kicked off June 19 and continues through June 22.

Founded in 2002 by D.C.'s Food and Friends organization, this year marked the beginning of a completely brand-new 330-mile bike ride that crosses through two states and into the nation's capital in the District of Columbia. It's a traveling bicycle-cade of thousands of riders, fully supported by a tireless army of volunteers and support staff. For many, it's likely the test of a lifetime. But then, waking up everyday and living with HIV and AIDS can be a lot like that, too.

Roger Striffler, 39, is keenly aware of the impact his efforts as a riding participant will have on people who are living with AIDS and HIV. "There are a lot of groups working on medical research and new drugs to help fight AIDS, and that's great, but it's very political and its successes will be down the road," Striffler says.

Striffler is riding for the second time with his partner, Pete Weber. Both of the men are from Apex, North Carolina, a small suburb

see TOUR on 16

Gay-bias charge unclear in Eric Rudolph case

Despite hostility toward gays and purported bombing of a lesbian bar, hate crime charges remain uncertain

by David Stout
Q-Notes staff

ATLANTA — Although Eric Rudolph is accused of targeting an Atlanta gay club as part of his serial bombing campaign, it remains to be seen whether a gay-bias hate crime charge will be added to his indictment.

Rudolph, who was captured in Murphy, N.C. on May 31, is charged with placing the nail-packed bomb in the Otherside Lounge that wounded five patrons on Feb. 21, 1997. Additionally, his sister-



Eric Rudolph

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