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ONLINE Q.POLL WWW.Q-NOTES.COM

Do you personally identify with LGBT characters on shows like 'Queer As Folk' and 'Queer Eye for the Straight Guy' Yes No

Q.POLL RESULTS:

Former gay political leader sentenced

One-time gay activist, philanthropist and Democratic party chairman Andrew Reyes gets 57 month sentence

by David Moore Q-Notes staff

STATESVILLE, N.C. — A political career that started off with a bang in Charlotte in the late 1990s went out with a quiet whimper in Statesville on Dec. 1, as openly gay Andrew Reyes, an accountant and former chairman of Mecklenburg County's Democratic Party, was sentenced to almost five years in federal prison for bank fraud and tax evasion.

At the high point of his career in local politics, Reyes mingled with celebrities like Ellen DeGeneres and even met former President Bill Clinton on a trip to the White House with then Chief of Staff Erskine Bowles in 1998.

Harriet Redic: On the edge of 17

AIDS survivor celebrates another miraculous year

by David Stout Q-Notes staff

Their are countless descriptives that can be used to characterize Harriet Redic — devout Christian, African-American, transgender woman and transplanted Charlottean being just a few — but one is drawing the lion's share of the attention these days: longtime AIDS survivor.

Harriet, 55, just marked her 17th year with the disease. To better appreciate this milestone, consider that Harriet has lived with HIV so long that when she was first diagnosed the virus was just starting to be called that (it was previously known as HTLV-III), no president had ever mentioned AIDS in a public address (Ronald Reagan didn't say the word until the following year), the first AIDS drug AZT was a year away and the red ribbon was still five years away.

Harriet found out she was HIV positive on Dec. 18, 1986. Further tests determined that her T-cell count was below 250 so she already had AIDS according to the medical standards of the time. She says it was like "receiving a death sentence" when the doctor dispassionately broke the news.

"The doctor who gave me the results said she was sorry to tell me that I was HIV positive. She

said she hoped I had good insurance and wouldn't wear out the emergency room. Then she walked out the door."

In the aftermath, with little available counseling or support, Harriet tumbled into a crushing depression that culminated one fateful afternoon six months later.

"I lived about eight to 10 blocks from Independence Blvd., and I got out that day and started walking toward it. It was almost five o'clock rush hour and my intention was to continue right out into traffic and let it kill me."

But just as Harriet was approaching the frenzied thoroughfare, she stopped. "I said to myself, 'You fool, what if you walk out into traffic, get ran over, get all broken up, laying up in the hospital and don't die?' I thought about that and knew I didn't want to suffer, so I turned around and walked back to the house."

She says that soon after this pivotal event she emerged from her period of grieving ready for battle: "I stood and looked AIDS in the face by virtue of a mirror and I pointed my finger and said, 'You may take me out of here, but you will say that you had a fight on your hands because I'm going to give you the fight of my life.'"

The new girl

Fighting adversity was commonplace for Harry S. Truman Burch, the second-youngest of nine siblings raised by a single mother in Ruby, S.C., during the segregated 1950s. It didn't make things any easier that Harry knew he was supposed to be a girl and had the moxie to show it.

"In fifth grade I took one of my fourth-oldest sister's outfits — shoes, dress, everything — to school in a bag and at recess went into the bathroom and put it on. When I came out nobody could believe it. My classmates tried to shame me; the teacher tried to shame me — she even



Being sworn in to run for Mecklenburg County Commissioner.

pass his sentence in relative comfort in the same prison writer Dashiell Hammet did time in, as well as openly gay civil rights figure Bayard Rustin.

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Celebrating the Season

LGBT folk in the Carolinas talk about their plans and share their favorite memories

by David Moore Q-Notes staff

What are you celebrating this year? Throughout much of North and South Carolina,



many people are celebrating Christmas, while others are celebrating Hanukkah, Kwanza and the Winter Solstice.

For members of the Christian religion, December 25, or Christmas, is a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Some historians claim its roots go back as far as the third century in Italy. In contemporary times, however, the holiday has become meaningful to many people

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