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Editor's note

Aliens invade Marshall Park

The annual Charlotte Pride festival was held in the city's Marshall Park, Saturday, May 1.

The crowd numbered in the thousands. Most of them were gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender and their supportive heterosexual friends.

Not everyone at Marshall Park, however, fell into any of those categories. *Some were there for ulterior motives.*

Remember an old television series from



the '60s called "The Invaders?" I stumbled across it in late night re-runs back when I was a kid in the late '70s.

The story line focused on a race of beings from a dying planet who had come to earth in an attempt to colonize it for their own use. Trouble was, they could assume human form and it was difficult to tell them apart from the real humans, save for the fact they had a weird mutated fourth finger and a lack of emotion.

Sounds a little scary, huh? *Okay, maybe in a camp kinda' way.*

Anyway — take the "Invaders" scenario and move it to Marshall Park, a place that would soon be crawling with individuals pretending to be someone other than they really were.

We set our tent up early — around 10:30 a.m. — just before the crowds started to file into the park. I had heard there would be protestors, though I hadn't seen any yet. One of the Pride committee members informed me that there was a Christian organization with a booth in the vendor area that was giving out Bibles and words of wisdom to those that would listen to their "love the sinner, hate the sin" rhetoric.

I was outraged for a moment. How did they get a booth in our festival?

Pride co-director Alex Forrester told me later, "We couldn't keep them out. We're a non-profit organization, so we legally can't exclude anyone if they're not trying to harass or hurt anyone."

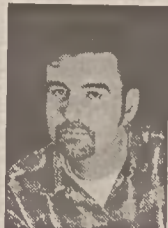
I decided to check the situation out for myself.

A tall woman with big eyes seemed to be the adult in charge at the indicated tent. To her left was a chubby, round-faced teen girl. On the right was an earthy, skateboarder dude type. The big-eyed woman spoke to me with a slight tremble in her voice when I questioned the reason behind their presence. "Why are you here?" I asked. "Are you part of Operation Save America?"

"No, no, we're not," she insisted nervously. "We're just here to hand out litera-

ture and to talk with people."

An hour or so later the park



began to fill up with a myriad of different types from the queer community: average joes, butch dykes, lipstick lesbians, gay bears, leather men, twink, queer punked out youth, drag queens and a handful of transsexuals.

Then I noticed this unusual element — they seemed somewhat out of place. They were earthy, teenage boys with long scruffy hair, almost hippie like. The girls were casual, most with long, unstyled hair and slightly plump. I'm not one to stereotype — but they simply didn't fit the queer youth mold. *It was clear that they had been exposed to some MTV, but the flashier edges most young queers love so much hadn't rubbed off on this group.*

A few minutes later one of the earthy boys showed up at our booth. He clutched a bag he was carrying close to him, as though it was some kind of shield.

I pointed to the publications on the table in front of me and gave him the standard spiel. "This is our most recent issue, and this is the previous one. We're a gay and lesbian news and entertainment publication for the two Carolinas. Take a couple if you'd like."

He shrugged uncomfortably. Then with an almost imperceptible sneer, he said, "No. That's okay. I don't think so."

I looked away for a moment and spotted two other earthy-looking types covertly watching the young man talking to me.

"Then what can I do for you?"

"Oh nothing. I just wanted to talk."

"About what?"

"Why are you gay?" he asked softly.

"When do you make that decision?"

I decided to get straight to the point: "Are you with Operation Save America?"

"Who's that?" He asked innocently.

"Or are you with the group around the corner giving out anti-gay literature?"

"I just wanted to talk with you about God's love," he stammered.

"No. I'm not having that conversation with you. You can leave now."

"Leave. Now."

I repeated the line as I stood up from the chair and pointed towards his cohorts.

He slumped away to his other *stealth invader operatives* as he shrugged his shoulders.

"He won't talk to me," I heard him tell

you. *see UNEXPECTED on 26*



Anti-gay Christian stealth youth confer in Marshall Park.

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