

The beginning of a new era in the Carolinas!

QNotes

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Special anniversary issue

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Q-Notes turns 20 — merges with *The Front Page*

Two Carolina LGBT papers come together with more than 46 years of combined service

by David Moore . Q-Notes staff

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — After decades of service to readers in both Carolinas, Q-Notes and *The Front Page* have become one. Announced publicly May 12, the merger has been years in the making and will offer readers across the two-state area access to more editorial material tailored to their specific regions.

"We're very excited about this accomplishment," says Q-Notes publisher Jim Yarbrough. "We've talked about doing it for years and it finally seemed like the time was right. This is great for readers across the Carolinas because of the new content we'll be carrying and for the advertisers because of an expanded distribution base and our subscription service."

Following the demise of a statewide LGBT newspaper published out of Charlotte in the 1970s called *The Free Press*, *The Front Page* began publishing in the Raleigh area in 1979.

"When that folded, there was nothing, really," says Baxter. "Art [Sperry] and I talked a lot for several years about how change might happen for the gay community in North Carolina. We agreed that a statewide effort would be needed. In order for that to happen some dependable means of statewide communication would be needed. That's how *The Front Page* got started."

Over the next three decades *The Front Page* provided readers in North Carolina stories about local and national news and arts and entertainment.

Q-Notes, which started out in 1983 as a newsletter published by the LGBT umbrella/fundraising organization Queen City Quordinators, jumped up to official newspaper status with its first edition published in June of 1986.

Baxter — who will come on board at Q-Notes as a contributing writer for each issue — admits he's looking forward to putting on the wordsmith cap and tossing the business duties wayside.

"I was never particularly good at the business end of things, as anyone who knows me or *The Front Page* will tell you," Baxter says wryly. "When I started the paper, I thought of it as a community service that would, hopefully, pay its own way and not take away scarce charitable dollars that were needed elsewhere. That was certainly the only possible model for publishing a newspaper here back when I started."

"But I would much rather write than anything else about the business. I look forward to



not having to try to sell advertising, invoice, collect, pay vendors, upgrade equipment and all the rest. I've had a full-time job elsewhere for most of the years I published *The Front Page*, so it was always hard to find the time and energy to get everything that needed doing done."

Yarbrough is enthusiastic about Baxter's contribution to the merger and having another seasoned writer onboard covering LGBT issues in the region.

"I've followed Jim's work for many years," Yarbrough says. "Jim is a very talented writer and we're lucky to get him. I'm looking forward to a long and successful, mutually beneficial relationship."

For some readers in the area, the merger might be regarded as bittersweet — like saying goodbye to an old friend.

Baxter insists he's not going away and his words will now be read more widely than ever — thanks to the expanded resources from the merger.

"It's odd," says Baxter. "I thought I would feel sad, but I don't really. I'm ready to move on. There were times in the past when I thought of quitting, but I didn't because I still thought that something like *The Front Page* was specifically needed in the Carolinas."

"I think that *The Front Page's* era really ended before this, in the late 1980s or early 1990s. Certainly those were the peak years for the paper in terms of size and quality of content. But the internet has changed all that and so much information sharing and community building happens there now. Having two newspapers in a market this size is just redundant and unnecessary."

Lon time readers of *The Front Page* take heart — it's not the end of an era — it's the beginning of a new one. ▀

Q-Notes celebrates milestone anniversary

by Mark Smith

The paper you're holding in your hands marks Q-Notes' 20th anniversary. For this special edition, we've not only beefed up the editorial content, we've acquired a new look, merged with another LGBT publication (see opposite story) and brought on board a number of new advertisers. You'll now be able to find us in more locations than ever.

"It's been a good 20 years," says Q-Notes Publisher Jim Yarbrough.

"We've gone through a lot of changes over the years and I'm pleased with how we continue to grow. With our new look and expanded resources from the merger — we hope to continue to reach an ever expanding audience with quality material and act as a resource for an even larger readership."

A look back

Q-Notes actually started out life as a monthly newsletter published by the LGBT fundraising organization Queen City Quordinators. The four-page leaflet debuted in September of 1983 — with stories on the recently formed Lambda Political Caucus, Charlotte-area female impersonators vying for a title in the Miss Gay America pageant and tips for men's make-up. The fledgling newsletter was distributed through area bars.

For just over two years, Q-Notes was issued in this format, eventually growing to encompass 12 pages. Despite its success, it ceased publication due to lack of volunteer manpower.

Two more years would pass before Q-Notes was re-launched to coincide with Pride month in June of 1986.

In contrast to its first incarnation, the publication was reborn as a monthly tabloid newspaper with Charlotte gay activist Don King hired as editor. On the front page: a story about the Mr. Drummer '86 contest.

"That was a memorable time," says Yarbrough. "The paper truly was in its infancy, but we had a dedicated core of volunteers who really wanted to see it happen."

By the fall of '87 changes in staff nearly shut the paper down, but a quartet of QCQ members, Jim Yarbrough, Dean Gaskey, Joel Smith and Robert Sheets kept

Q-Notes up and running despite the challenges.

"It was also during that time that we published what I think has always been one of our most important issues for that time. It was November of '87 and on the cover was a shot of this massive crowd of gays and lesbians on the mall in D.C."

The image, taken at the 1987 March on Washington, showed a crowd of 650,000 who had converged on the nation's capital to demonstrate for LGBT civil rights.

"I think it really surprised some of our readers to see what kind of strength we, as a national community, could actually muster."

Although QCQ folded not long after, the paper expanded its distribution during this period from just Charlotte to all of the Carolinas.

In December 1989, Yarbrough purchased all rights to Q-Notes. He published the newspaper as a side business until 1991. As the decade progressed even more changes were on the horizon.

By June '96, Q-Notes moved to an every-other-week publishing schedule and added access to the publication via internet in late 1998. The year 2002 saw a complete redesign of Q-Notes: full color printing became part of a standard new look.

As the new century has moved forward, so has Q-Notes with a stylish and much more user-friendly redesigned website in late 2004.

For Yarbrough, the experience publishing Q-Notes and watching it grow over the past 20 years has been like no other.

"I have to say I'm proud of where we are and proud of where we came from. I'm looking to the future and thinking about how exciting it's going



Jim Yarbrough (left) and Jim Baxter seal the deal to merge Q-Notes and *The Front Page* on May 4.

to be to celebrate another 20 years and I'm continually examining how we can grow and be even better." ▀

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