

# A Tribute To Jim Baxter & The Front Page

Special to Q-Notes

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## The Front Page: a look at history

It's the year 1979 and a young gay man named Jim Baxter is working for an advertising agency as a copywriter and media buyer. His boss is Art Sperry, who is one of the co-owners of the CC in Raleigh.

After the folding of a statewide LGBT newspaper published out of Charlotte a few years earlier '70s known as *The Free Press*, Baxter and Sperry start talking about ways to bring about a new vehicle for spreading news and information and to create some kind of statewide cohesion for the fledgling LGBT community. "When *The Free Press* folded, there was nothing, real-

Sperry in getting the project off the ground.

"He really made it all possible," Baxter recalls. "He never wanted to own a gay community newspaper — he likes businesses that make a profit — but he loaned me some money to get started with and, most importantly, gave me access to his typesetting equipment. Back in those days before desktop publishing, that made it possible to produce a professional looking newspaper. I would never have been able to afford such equipment

The story began:

*I'm The Front Page — a newspaper for North Carolina's gay community. Everyone involved in this first issue would like to tell you about what we hope this paper will be, and what it will do.*

*Of course, The Front Page will cover news and happenings of interest to gay people... 'Gay People' is a good enough term — but not necessarily taken in that order. We're people first — people with family and friends (both gay and straight) jobs and responsibilities. We're people who like movies, books, TV, music, sports and*

*dancing. We're people who go to church, the supermarket and the dentist. People, in short, just like everybody else.*

*Our images of ourselves and our readers is of gay people as whole people — people with a measure of dignity, a sense of humor and a great deal of worth as human beings. We hope that this image is one you'll respond to and that you'll enjoy reading The Front Page...*

*Sixteen pages in total, it was filled front to back with ads from clubs and businesses throughout*



ly," says Baxter. "Art 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."

According to Sperry's partner Paul Otto, the name for the publication came about as pure happenstance. "We were sitting in the office one day, talking. Jim was trying to decide what to call the paper. I looked over his shoulder and there was a book on the shelf called 'The Front Page.' I said, 'Hey — what about that?' He had to mull it over for a few days, of course, but he eventually decided on that as the appropriate name."

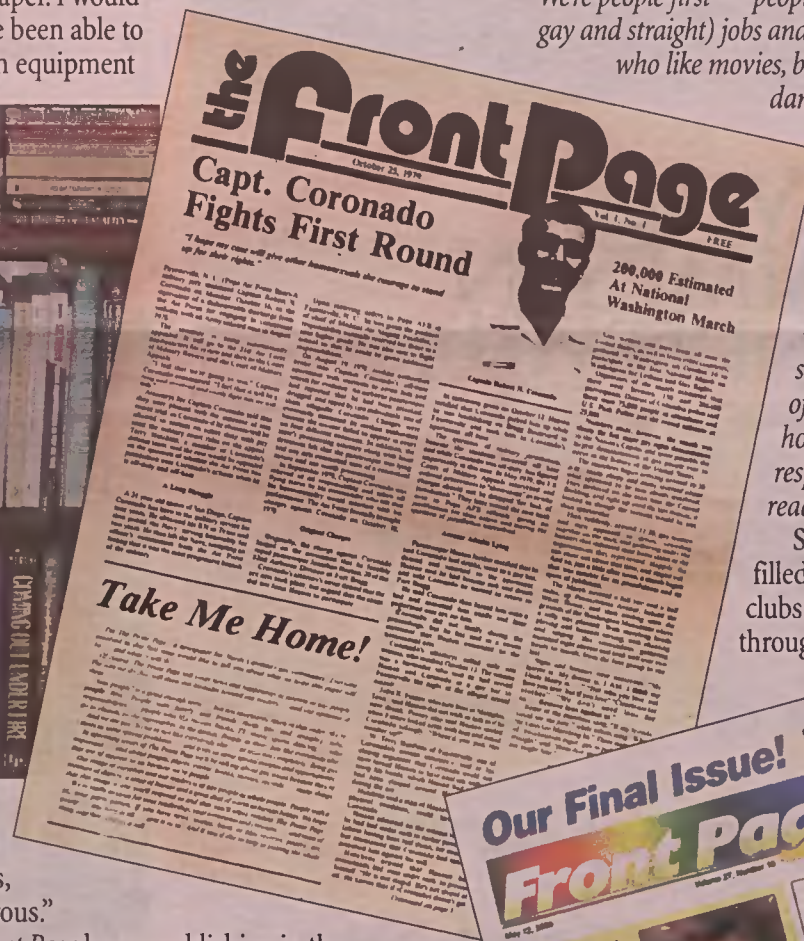
Baxter is emphatic about the help he got from

on my own. He was, and is, very generous."

*The Front Page* began publishing in the Raleigh area on Oct. 25, 1979.

In that very first issue, the lead article tells the story of Robert Coronado, an Air Force captain at Pope Air Force Base in Fayetteville who was fighting a dishonorable discharge for engaging in consensual sex with another man. Another lead feature touted figures for the 1979 March on Washington at 200,000.

Down at the left-hand bottom corner is a small box filled with italicized text and the headline "Take Me Home!"



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Q-Notes & Front Page Merge

the state, news, book reviews, spiritual advice, physical fitness suggestions, a top club play list and more. Considering the technology of the time period and the volunteer staff — it's quite an impressive first issue. Over the next three decades *The Front Page* provides readers see Front on S-7

For over 26 years he kept us informed!