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# QNotes

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## A look back at LGBT events in '06

A look back at some of the significant events that shaped the year

by David Moore . Q-Notes staff

As 2006 drew to a close, it became evident that this year celebrated a number of milestone anniversaries and achievements. Aside from the many headlines that captured major media coverage, from closeted Republicans and Evangelical Christians to the vice president's pregnant lesbian daughter and the continuing struggle for same-sex marriage equality, there were a number of important developments. Here's a look back at what 2006 was for the LGBT community in the Carolinas and more.

### Gay soldier tells his story from Iraq

Since October of 2005, every column began with these words:

*These are the thoughts of a gay soldier — a North Carolina native — who has been deployed to Iraq. Because of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, he must remain anonymous.*

For the first issue of 2006, our anonymous gay soldier told us about his experiences with the holidays in Iraq.

"By the time you read this, the holiday season will have come and gone. It's been a time of reflection for me — thinking about New Year's resolutions and starting the year on a good note. My first holiday season spent in Iraq has been unlike anything I've ever experi-



enced before. I had a Christmas tree and many wonderful gifts, but it was a day like any other day in the desert.

"Since I came to Iraq I have seen death very graphically and firsthand. It's worse than any horror film or car accident I have ever

seen. War is ugly. On the 22nd of December, I witnessed the aftermath of a very deadly explosion at the south entrance to our camp. The entrance to our camp is off the infamous Main Support Route (MSR) called MSR Tampa. It is the life-

line for many cities and forward operating bases (FOBS) into Baghdad and one of the busiest highways in all of Iraq. A Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device, otherwise known as a

VBIED, exploded and killed 12 Iraqi Army military police officers and injured six more Iraqi national

workers coming into the camp around 10 a.m. that morning. First aid was not an option for most of the soldiers involved — they were blown apart. I mean that literally — charred bodies, limbs and other pieces of flesh scattered through the air like pollen in the spring."

By October of 2006, our columnist had survived Iraq and returned to the U.S., to resume a military career here at home. He continues to adhere to the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, but he admitted in a final interview with *Q-Notes* that his politics had drastically changed. "As much as I love this country," he told us, "I think there's a lot of corruption. It makes me cringe to say this, but I was a staunch Republican before I left. Now I'm much more moderate — even liberal."

### St. John's MCC celebrates 30 years

St. John's Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) in Raleigh has the distinction of being one of the oldest churches

in the denomination. On Feb. 17, the church offered a weekend-long series of events designed to celebrate 30 years in the business of teaching inclusive Christianity, which makes room for all in the LGBT community and more. "I can't be any more proud of this community than I am," said Rev. Belva Boone. In addition to appearances by all the previous ministers of St. John's MCC, the Rev. Troy Perry, founder of MCC, was also on hand for the event, held at Raleigh's Crabtree Marriott.

### Charlotte Pride becomes PRIDE Charlotte

At a press conference held May 5 at The Lesbian and Gay Community Center of Charlotte, organizers officially announced that the Center had taken charge of the annual Pride celebration in the Queen City.

"With a new name, new location and a new vision, we're extremely excited to announce that this year's PRIDE Charlotte Festival will be held August 26 at Gateway Center," said Laura Witkowski, director of the Center and PRIDE Charlotte co-chair.

Earlier in the year previous organizers of Charlotte Pride had dropped the ball in preparing for the event, which led an obscure local anti-gay evangelical organization to try and claim responsibility for the festival's demise.

When *Q-Notes* and the Community Center came together with a number of key volunteer coordi-



nators the event was re-tooled, slated for Gateway and would later go off like gangbusters, attracting the largest crowd for Pride to date in the city: an estimated 6,000.

Despite earlier claims by anti-gay operatives that they would rally more than 150 protestors, less than 15 appeared and were quickly shuttled off the property.

### Iraqi death squads slaughtering gays

Following a death-to-gays fatwa issued in October '05 by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, death squads of the Badr Corps began systematically targeting gay Iraqis for persecution and execution. "The Badr Corps is committed to the 'sexual cleansing' of Iraq," says Ali Hili, a 33-year-old gay Iraqi exile in London.

Hili fled to the U.K. with some 30 other gay Iraqis who founded the Abu Nawas Group there to support persecuted

gay Iraqis. The Badr Corps, the military arm of the Iranian-backed Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), become posse-like death squads following the orders of Ali Al Sistani — to murder all gays and lesbians in Iraq. Sistani would later remove his fatwa, but fundamentalist Shia Muslims continue to hunt and kill lesbians and gay men throughout 2006.

"Badr Corps agents have a network of informers who, among other things, target



alleged 'immoral behavior.' They kill gays, unveiled women, prostitutes, people who sell or drink alcohol, and those who listen to western music and wear western fashions. Badr militants are entrapping gay men via

internet chat rooms. They arrange a date and then beat and kill the victim. Males who are unmarried by the age of 30 or 35 are placed under surveillance on suspicion of being gay, as are effeminate men. They will be investigated and warned to get married. If they don't change their behavior, or if they fail to show evidence that they plan to get married, they will be arrested, disappear and eventually be found dead.

### Q-Notes celebrates 20 years and merges with The Front Page

After decades of service to readers in both Carolinas, *Q-Notes* and *The Front Page* became one on May 12. "We're very excited about this accomplishment," said *Q-Notes* publisher Jim Yarbrough. "We've talked about doing it for years and it finally seemed like the time was right."

Coinciding with the merger, *Q-Notes* celebrated a milestone anniversary of 20 years in



print. Along with that achievement came two more — former *Front Page* publisher Jim

Baxter joined *Q-Notes* as a contributing writer and the paper underwent a

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