

'A-B-C...easy as 1-2-3'

Music in 2007
page 25



Rightly reminiscent

My year with the radicals
page 18



Dumbledore is gay

And more 2007 news
page 22



Q Notes

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Special Year-End Issue: retrospective 2007

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Politics as (un)usual in 2007

A year-end review of major political stories

compiled by Q-Notes staff

retrospective 2007

2007 offered some unique instances of political and social history making: Employment discrimination and hate crimes legislation; a gay man targeted by the Internal Revenue Service and another re-enlisted in the U.S. Armed Forces; anti-gay politicians caught in compromising activities and "ex-gays" professing their change. Here's our recap of the year in politics.

IRS targets gay N.C. native

Multi-millionaire Charles Merrill, an openly gay North Carolina native, announced he would not pay taxes like a first-class citizen until he is treated as such under the law. The



Gay millionaire Charles Merrill refuses to pay income taxes until he can marry his partner.

Internal Revenue Service was none-too-pleased with his choice so they came knocking in early 2007. Merrill and his partner refused to pay up, asserting to *Q-Notes* that their position is not negotiable.

"I have no intention of paying federal and state income taxes because I cannot ... receive the same tax benefits as other married couples," Merrill said.

As we reported in January, the IRS is withholding 28 percent of Merrill's income until he files a report. In April, the outspoken atheist received more negative reaction when he was suspended from using the online blogs of the

see politics on 12

Q-Notes Person of the Year: Elke Kennedy

compiled by Q-Notes staff

May 16 was an especially dark night for the LGBT community of the Carolinas and particularly for Greenville, S.C. On that evening, openly gay Sean Kennedy, 20, was killed by a senseless hate crime. His death at the hands of a homophobic teenager underscored the stark reality that South Carolina has no hate crime laws, and the anti-gay climate in the state is toxic for LGBT people.

Sean's mother, Elke Kennedy, instantly rose to address these issues and began campaigning around the state. Demonstrating the depth of her courage and conviction, she transformed herself from a grieving mother to an outspoken, respected leader for the causes of equality and justice in South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia and beyond.

Through her advocacy, Elke has worked with governments at all levels and created

allies with elected and appointed officials across the South. The district attorney prosecuting her son's killer has joined her call for changes to South Carolina's handling of murder and manslaughter cases.

With the help of her family, friends and volunteers, Elke has established Sean's Last Wish, a foundation to push for hate crime legislation and to raise awareness of the need for organ donation. (Sean was an organ donor and his death allowed others to receive critical medical treatments.) Because of her activism, hate crime protections for LGBT South Carolinians was discussed in nearly every major city in the state this year.

Recently, Elke was recognized as Best of the Beat 2007 Local Hero by the *Upstate Beat* newspaper.

Q-Notes is proud to add to her accolades as we name Elke Kennedy our 2007 Person of the Year. ▀

info: R.C. Wilson contributed to this report.



Elke Kennedy transformed herself from a grieving mother to an outspoken, respected leader for the causes of equality and justice.

Gay N.C. elected official targeted by hate mongers

Chapel Hill Town Councilman Mark Kleinschmidt subjected to violent rhetoric

by Matt Comer . Q-Notes staff

CHAPEL-HILL, N.C. — Through the internet, neo-Nazi white supremacists have targeted out LGBT elected officials across the nation, including some direct statements against prominently gay Chapel Hill Town Councilman Mark Kleinschmidt.

The trouble began when a national list of openly gay elected officials appeared on the forums of the Aryan-affiliated Vanguard News Network — a blog-type online publication. Kleinschmidt's name and position were included in the post.

The list was originally published online by a gay man in Eaton, Ohio, who tracked officials' voting records and legislative histories dating to the late 1990s. Following an announcement

that the site would close Jan. 1, 2008, white supremacists re-posted the information to have it "archived and spread by others."

Also named in the list are Orange County (N.C.) Commissioner Mike Nelson and recently appointed State Court of Appeals Judge John S. Arrowood. Oddly absent from the list is N.C. Sen. Julia Boseman, a Wilmington lesbian who is the highest-ranking gay official in the state.



Attorney Mark Kleinschmidt has served on the Chapel Hill Town Council since 2001. He is one of five openly gay North Carolinians elected in state history.

Readers of the hate site were encouraged to take "direct action" against the openly gay officials.

"Because the information is perishable, local activists are best advised to use this information first as a precursor for additional

investigation before taking 'direct action,'" the posting states.

The list has been re-posted throughout the internet and blogosphere, including a website that directly targeted Kleinschmidt with violent rhetoric and veiled threats.

On "Politically Correct Apostate," a blogger presented it with the heading "List of Open and Unapologetic Faggot Politicians."

In response to criticism from Kleinschmidt on his own blog, the "Politically Correct Apostate" blogger wrote, "I would never encourage my readers to take direct action in the form of violence against any faggots, that would be illegal. However, if for some reason the laws were to change in the future, by keeping this information archived here and on various computers across the country, these faggots may rue the day they 'came out of the closet.' If that day ever arrives [when it becomes legal to lynch faggots], I'll be more than happy to provide this information to those that might legally string you degenerates up.

see hate on 20

Federal D.P. bill introduced
page 7

Phoenix rising — S.C. 2007 review
page 14

N.C. news recap from 2007
page 10