

The Front Page

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FREE

Capt. Coronado Fights First Round

"I hope my case will give other homosexuals the courage to stand up for their rights."

Fayetteville, N. C. (Pope Air Force Base)-A military jury sentenced Captain Robert N. Coronado on Monday, October 16, to the equivalent of a dishonorable discharge from the Air Force for engaging in consensual sodomy with an Army enlisted man in August 1978.

The sentence is being automatically appealed. It will go to the 21st Air Force headquarters for review and then to the Court of Military Review and the Court of Military Appeals.

"I feel that we're going to win," Captain Coronado commented. "I feel that it will be a long and involved and costly fight but we will win."

Attorneys for Captain Coronado said that they were pleased with the outcome of this recent trial, as Coronado-if he chooses-will be allowed to remain on active duty with pay until the military court rules on the appeal. Terry Hutchins, a member of Coronado's defense team, said the case would be appealed on the question of whether the Air Force has jurisdiction over Coronado's actions when he is off-duty and off-base.

A Long Struggle

A 31 year old native of San Diego, Captain Coronado has been in the military service for nine years. He obtained his RN in Texas and then joined the Navy, serving honorably for two years. He then left the Navy, accepting an officer's commission from the Air Force feeling that it was the most progressive branch of the military.

Upon receiving orders to Pope AFB in Fayetteville, N. C., he was given the position of chief of Medical Air Staging Facilities, a responsibility normally reserved for those in a next higher grade. He was also sent to flight school so that he could be given additional responsibilities.

On August 19, 1978, civilian authorities broke into Captain Coronado's off-base apartment with warrants to arrest him and search for evidence. An airborne paratrooper had reported that he had been attacked, drugged, and raped by two individuals, one of them allegedly Coronado. Charges were eventually dismissed by civilian authorities because the accuser failed to appear in court on four different occasions. In addition, the state's prosecuting attorney along with local detectives felt that the paratrooper was lying and any acts committed were of a consensual nature and not worth prosecuting.

In September 1978, Captain Coronado was relieved of all responsibility and taken off flying status by his commander who felt that his homosexuality would interfere with his performance. The Air Force formally brought charges against Coronado on October 30, 1978.

Original Charges

Originally, the charge against Coronado hinged on the accusation that he forcibly raped paratrooper Jonathan Heaton, 20 of the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg.

Coronado's attorney's never denied that the sex acts took place, but argued that the client did not force Heaton to participate.



Captain Robert N. Coronado

In testimony given on October 12, Heaton testified that Coronado picked him up while he was hitchhiking on Bragg Boulevard in Fayetteville and took him to Coronado's apartment, off base.

The question of military jurisdiction, because the incidents occurred off base and while Coronado was off-duty, has figured importantly in this case. In May 1979, the US Court of Military Appeals intervened and ordered prosecutors to "show cause" as to why charges should not be dropped for lack of jurisdiction. They later turned the case back over to Pope AFB officials, giving no justification for their action and leaving the question of jurisdiction unresolved.

Accuser Admits Lying

Paratrooper Heaton further testified that he and Coronado had drinks, went to a gay bar, danced and returned to the apartment. Heaton said he had become sick and drunk and told Coronado he wanted to return to Fort Bragg.

He said Coronado then forced him onto a bed and assaulted him anally and later performed oral sex on him.

Coronado did not testify during the proceedings, but he has said in a sworn statement that Heaton consented to the homosexual acts.

Coronado's attorneys called only one witness, who testified October 13. The witness was a bartender who said he had served Heaton and Coronado in a gay bar in Fayetteville the night of the alleged sexual assault.

John R. Finney, who now lives in Memphis, Tenn., said Heaton did not walk or talk as if he were drunk. Finney also said Heaton smiled when Finney linked arms with him and asked Coronado jokingly, "Where'd you pick this number up?"

W. Terry Hutchins of Fayetteville, one of Coronado's civilian attorney's, said in his closing argument that Coronado could not have forced Heaton to have anal sex without using his hands, which Heaton had testified had been clasped around Heaton's body during the act.

Hutchins said a man of Heaton's size, in his physical condition, could have resisted Coronado.

Heaton admitted on the witness stand that he had lied under oath in earlier proceedings (about having been tied down, for example), but maintained that Coronado had sexually assaulted him against his will.

Hutchins argued that Heaton had consistently lied, even under oath, to protect himself. "He is not stupid. He's not stupid at all. He knows that if (Coronado) doesn't get

Continued on page 5.

200,000 Estimated At National Washington March

Gay women and men from all over the United States, as well as from other countries, gathered in Washington on October 14 to participate in the first National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

Organizers of the march estimated that there were between 150 and 200,000 participants. District of Columbia police said there were 75,000 people in attendance and U.S. Park Police put the crowd estimate at 25,000.

Numbers aside, however, the march was clearly the first major gay rights demonstration in the Nation's Capital and quite possibly the largest demonstration of gay people ever to occur in the history of the United States.

The marchers began arriving around 10:30 a.m., many sleepy and many worried about what appeared to be rain clouds overhead. They gathered on the mall near the Capital Building, and right up until the last minute, it looked as though the turnout would be less than spectacular.

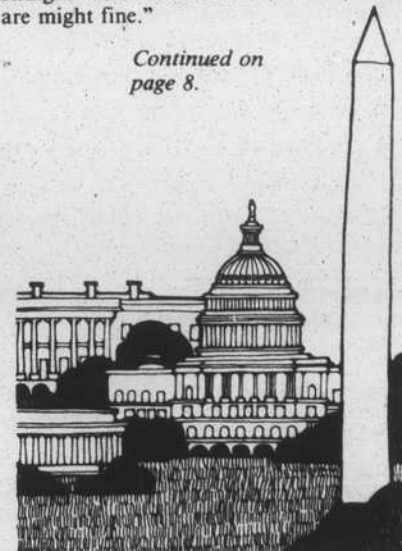
Then suddenly, around 11:30, gay women and men appeared in drives, crowding together on the mall, and gathering under the banners that indicated their home states or the organizations they represented. Happily, the sun came out about that time, and stayed out. And so, just a little after noon, a march began that was notable for its peacefulness and its spirit of jubilation.

The March covered a full two and a half miles, up Pennsylvania Avenue, behind the White House, and then circling onto the grounds of the Washington Monument where a rally was planned. With marching bands playing and banners waving, with chanting and singing, this tremendous gathering marched eight abreast and took well over two hours to march, from the first group to the last.

Signs and banners were numerous: "My lawyer is. My doctor is. I AM. I think my Uncle Harry is. . ." "Not who you love, not how you love, but if you love" "Closets are for clothes" "We don't need laws for us. . . Remove laws against us."

Some of the marchers sang, "If my friends could see me now," while others sang "When the Gays Go Marching In." There were chants of "two-four-six-eight, gay is just as good as straight" and "three-five-seven-nine, lesbians are might fine."

Continued on page 8.



Take Me Home!

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. The way we do this, will show our attitudes toward our readers. . . and our opinions of them.

"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, responsibilities. . . people who like movies, books, TV, music, sports, dancing. . . who go to church, to the supermarket, to the dentist. People, in short, just like everybody else.

And we are gay. So we're not like everybody else. . . at least not completely. Being gay causes us some special problems. . . and gives us some special insights and opportunities.

In upcoming issues of The Front Page we'll be talking about gay issues because they're important. . . and about people, places, events, books, movies, records. . . many things that are of interest to us because we're people.

Our image 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.

We're really anxious for your readership, your comments and criticism. . . and most of all, your participation. If you have news, stories, book or film reviews, poetry, art, gossip. . . anything at all. . . send it to us! And if you'd like to help in putting the whole thing together, give us a call.