Full of Spunk

The biggest sex radical of all is gone

June 1, 1998 By Adam Gillitt

Scott “Spunk” O’Hara, the blithe spirit who wrote about his hair falling out after chemo as cheerfully as he gave garden-house enemas in porn films, died quietly at home in San Francisco on February 18. He was 36. Scott had lived with HIV for more than 10 years and non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma for almost five. His health got dramatically worse during an endoscopy the day before his death, and his chemotherapy-weakened body shut down. Confined to San Francisco General that night, Scott called many people to say goodbye, and those who could— close friends, ex-lovers coworkers from his porn and publishing careers—came to sit with him. At one point, more than 10 people were in the room, with Scott holding court. Drifting in and out of consciousness, he was moved by the crowd and said, “Boy, am I going to be embarrassed if this is another false alarm.”

Scott’s body was cremated, and his ashes distributed among all who wanted any. In his self-written obituary, he announced that he had “croaked” and asked that people make a donation to “their local sperm bank in lieu of charity.” His life was celebrated at a party thrown by friends at the city’s Radical Faerie house three weeks later, giving many the chance to meet one another for the first time, remember him and interact in ways he would have approved of.

In his 36 years, Scott accomplished a lifetime’s work, never far from the public eye. The youngest of seven children in a small Oregon town, he discovered sex in his teens with an older man, and immediately found his calling. After a year of college in Dallas and a failed marriage in Chicago, he moved to San Francisco with his first lover in 1981. By 1983 he had made his way to Savages, a club with jack-off shows, jumped onstage and earned a job. Soon he was coaxed into a local cock-size competition and won. “The Biggest Dick in San Francisco” went on to appear in 27 sex videos. Scott always smiled when he performed; he wanted viewers to know how much fun he was having.

When Scott learned he had HIV, he was characteristically open about it (he had “HIV+” tattooed on his left arm) and offers from the porn industry vanished. He up and moved to rural Wisconsin in the early ‘90s, where he published *Steam*, the intellectual review of public sex, and *Wilde*, a culture magazine. In the best tradition of radical gay journalism, *Steam* had a distinct look and a clear message: Sex, Scott informed us, even in this time of AIDS, is still good, and two consenting adults have the right to do whatever they want.

Back in San Francisco, Scott spent his last years in a windowless apartment he called the Cave, surrounded by his record albums, CDs, books and erotic art. He was an avid gardener and also kept fish and a parrotlet named Tico. He was easily spotted walking along Market Street in his black leather jacket, sporting a new hair style or color.

Scott's primary passion was for writing. He contributed to several literary anthologies and numerous magazines, including POZ (see page 7- for "Out on a Lymphoma," which he was revising at his death), DPN and my zine, *Polished Knob*. His two recent books, *Do-It Yourself Piston Polishing (for Non-Mechanics)* and *Autopornography* found readers, and will be followed this year by *Rarely Pure and Never Simple*, a collection of essays. He also starred in the San Francisco world debt of *Making Porn*, a play by Ronnie Larsen culled from conversations with Scott. Scott's own musical play, *Ex-Lovers*, closed on Valentine's Day after a successful run at the Theater Rhinoceros.

Scott couldn't say no to anyone who asked him to write. His humor and humility were equally present in his writing. He never understood what made him so popular as a performer, but accepted it cheerfully. He took his illness lightly as well, dubbing it the Death Spoor.

Many will remember Scott for his prodigious autofellatio-friendly penis and his impish good looks. He will also be remembered for his winning smile, which had the magic quality of looking evil and innocent at the same time. Most of all, I hope people will remember Scott for his intellect and self-expression. He spent his life understanding what makes for good sex and using his sexuality to help people learn about their own. Whether on video or onstage, in print or in the flesh, his legacy is all the knowledge gained from his adventures and discoveries during his rich career as an autopornographer.

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