Milestones

April 1, 2001 By Denny Lee

Deaths

Gary Bonasorte, 45, a playwright and founder of the Community Research Initiative on AIDS, died November 9 of AIDS-related lymphoma. Bonasorte helped launch CRIA in 1991, worked there until 1999 and served on its board until his death. In addition to penning *Big Hearts*, *The Aunts* and other plays, he founded the Rattlestick Theater Company, an off-Broadway house for emerging playwrights. He is survived by his partner, playwright Terrence McNally.

Peter Pappas, 45, a gay sports enthusiast and New York City Hall insider, died of AIDS-related lymphoma December 29. Pappas helped found Gotham Volleyball, a queer but "straight-friendly" league, in 1990 and was a regular participant in the Gay Games for more than a decade. A polished politico, Pappas served as chief of staff to several mayoral advisers and was an HIV administrator with the health department. "Peter was not a front-line activist," said friend William Berger. "He was politically behind the scenes, but socially very up-front."

Michael Stremel, 34, a well-known member of New York City's independent-film community, died of AIDS January 1. Stremel developed many acclaimed projects for Fox Searchlight, including *Slums of Beverly Hills* and the Academy Award-winning *Boys Don't Cry.* He also headed production for PBS's *American Playhouse*, where he oversaw the adaptation of *I Shot Andy Warhol.* A memorial service was held during the Sundance Film Festival in February. Donations in his memory may be made to Friends in Deed, a AIDS support group in New York City.

Paul Freud Wotman, 49, a prominent San Francisco gay-rights attorney, died December 25 of AIDS-related lymphoma. Wotman won a $5.3 million bias judgment in 1991 -- the largest ever in a gay employment case -- representing a Shell Oil executive who was fired for producing a safer-sex party invitation on company equipment. An articulate advocate who took on more than 2,000 clients in discrimination cases, Wotman was a frequent guest on *Oprah*, *The Sally Jessy Raphael Show* and *Larry King Live.*

Transitions

In the administration's first major PR gaffe, White House Chief of Staff Andy Card told *USA Today* in February that President George W. Bush planned to close the Office of National AIDS Policy. Within hours, Bushies were claiming Card had been "mistaken" and that the Clinton-created department would soldier on, though minus the leadership of an AIDS czar. "We're concerned about AIDS inside our White House," Bush assured reporters. "Make no mistake about it."

Trials

Following the mysterious deaths of 17 inmates at the Central California Women's Facility last year -- including two HIVers with hep C -- California Prison Focus' HIV in Prison Committee called for a full investigation by the state into the "gross medical neglect" of female prisoners. Judy Greenspan, chair of the advocacy group, called officials' explanation of the deaths as overdoses "self-serving lies" to camouflage inadequate care.

In December, a federal jury in New York City fined a landlord $300,000 for seeking to evict an HIVer. Tenant Phyllis Marks, 58, had sublet her apartment when she went to Florida for the winter. The landlord tried to oust Marks in her absence, despite a building policy protecting disabled tenants.

Awards

Terry Muhammad Tahir, an HIV positive Army vet, was lauded by the Veterans Affairs Medical Center for raising AIDS awareness among Muslims. "I had enjoyed all the privileges of a white guy," said Tahir, 60, who converted at age 15. "It wasn't until I had AIDS that I felt the power of discrimination."

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