Milestones

December 1, 1999

Careers

San Francisco's **Godfather Service Fund** sleeps with the fishes after 15 years of providing buddy volunteers for PWAs. "The need for our organization is not there any more," director Tom Vindeed told the *Bay Area Reporter* upon the group's August closing. The "Godfathers," as the helpers were nicknamed, brought everything from alphabet soup to Zerit chasers—and the group's trademark teddy bear—to those in the hospital.

Two of New York City's pioneering ASOs consolidated services in July. The cash-strapped advocacy group **People With AIDS Coalition of New York** (PWAC) and support center **Body Positive** touted their merger as a best-of-both-worlds streamlining measure. The first casualty was PWAC's feisty news-letter, *The PWA Newsline*, which folded in favor of the respected but comparatively sedate *Body Positive*. PWAC's Spanish-language publication, *Sida-Ahora*, will continue to be printed.

Bernadine Healy became the first physician to run the American Red Cross when she took over as president and CEO in Sept-ember. As a Bush-appointed head of the NIH from 1991 to 1993, Healy launched a $625 million Women's Health Initiative. She succeeds Republican presidential candidate Elizabeth Dole, who was widely criticized for censoring Red Cross HIV prevention materials.

Donald Abrams, MD, cofounder of the Community Consortium—which organized AIDS research out of docs' offices—was picked in August to serve as the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association's new president. Abrams is also the head researcher on the nation's only federally funded medical-marijuana study.

In September the **International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care** awarded two doctors with HIV its "Heroes in Medicine Award." **Jerry Cade**, MD, is a co-founder of the University of Nevada's HIV clinics. **John Stansell**, MD is the medical director of San Francisco General Hospital's Positive Health Program.

Deaths

Singapore's only openly HIV positive activist, **Paddy Chew**, 39, died of AIDS August 21. Chew came out last year at his country's first AIDS conference; critics said the actor-singer made the

announcement to promote his career. “Who wants to be famous for having AIDS?” Chew said in an interview with web-zine *Sintercom*. After painful experiences with protease inhibitors, Chew urged fellow HIVers to be skeptical of ’scrip-happy Singaporean doctors: “You’re the one paying for the medication—and for the suffering—not the doctors. You must be daring and question things that are not right.”

Lesley Wasserman, 47, a PWA who bravely shared her story of protease--produced lipodystrophy with *POZ* (see “Body Snatchers,” June 1998), died in May of a drug overdose. An ACT UP/NY vet, she later took her activism to LA’s Women Alive and AIDS Project Central Coast in Santa Barbara. “She was living on social security,” says friend Luciana McCabe, “but she knew there were poorer people who needed her help.” She is survived by a daughter and a granddaughter.

Tribute
Bill Thorne
1963-1999

We lost our dear friend, colleague and fellow ACT UP/Golden Gate member Bill Thorne on August 4. He was 35. A long time resident of San Francisco, Bill grew up in Massachusetts, where in1983—at age 19—he and his friend John Birmingham wrote and distributed pioneering AIDS and hepatitis awareness pamphlets advising safer sex for gay men. Thus began a long and distinguished career of activism that included key roles in winning early access to numerous anti-HIV drugs.

Bill loved Madonna, good food, raucous AIDS protests and his friends.He wore handcuffs to FDA meetings. He stood on coffins during demonstrations and with great conviction yelled our dopiest slogans in his Boston accent. He kept his sense of humor whether he was talking about the awfulness of AIDS or the awfulness of ACT UP.

In 1993, Bill’s late lover, Ron Nemeth, was diagnosed with AIDS-related wasting. Against then--prevailing thinking, Bill saw wasting as a condition requiring treatment, rather than an inevitable consequence of AIDS. Thousands of HIV positive people who suffered from wasting are alive today due in part to Bill’s countless hours of research and endless meetings with the FDA, state insurance programs and pharmaceutical companies.

Working behind the scenes and receiving little credit, Bill helped many people get access and insurance coverage for treatments that had a chance to extend their lives. He also helped to spearhead the campaign that dramatically improved the AIDS care provided by California’s largest HMO, Kaiser Permanente.

Bill was a generous friend who bought his friends lunch when they couldn’t afford it and took his mom on cruises. When members of ACTUP/Golden Gate became overwhelmed with grief and bitterness after 10years of work in the epidemic, he invited us to his apartment, with its twilight view of San Francisco, and made us eat spaghetti and watch *Melrose Place* together. Many

activists had dinner with him every Sunday night for a long time after that. He allowed us to become the closest of friends. We love him and miss him. We always will.

In March 1997, Bill helped lead ACT UP's 10th Anniversary "AIDS Treatment for All" march on Wall Street in New York City. After joining colleagues in a traffic-blocking civil disobedience, Bill was tackled by several police officers, one of whom repeatedly beat his head into the pavement, causing serious injuries. He never fully recovered, and his doctor suspects that the beating left him more vulnerable to the disease progression that followed. (His civil suit against the New York Police Department is continuing.)

Bill is survived by his mother, Evelyn, his lover, Armin Lindegger, his sister Alice, 20 other siblings and foster siblings, and many friends.

During his last weeks, sick with liver cancer that came after living with hepatitis B for 17 years, Bill took great interest in watching CNN coverage of activists from ACT UP and elsewhere as we demonstrated to get AIDS drugs into Africa. Please join this effort by calling ACTUP/Philadelphia at 215.731.1844.

--Kate Krauss and Stephen LeBlanc

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