Obits

April 1, 1998

José Rafael Calva Pratt died of AIDS September 20, 1997. After leaving his native Mexico City in the ’80s, Pratt made a home in Washington, DC. He became an integral part of the Whitman-Walker Clinic, the leading AIDS organization in DC. Pratt helped to revolutionize the clinic’s outreach to minority communities. In the fall 1997 issue of *POZ en Español*, he wrote movingly of the heroic efforts of those working with him to stop the epidemic, but remained characteristically modest about his own great contribution. Pratt was also an accomplished pianist who wrote and performed symphonies for audiences in Mexico.

Brian Riordan was a New Yorker, born and raised. Though his success as a theatrical agent garnered him frequent job offers from Los Angeles, Riordan would not budge. His hometown loyalty was mirrored in his devotion to his clients. According to his lover, Bob Deckert, “A lot of them tell me they’ll remember his integrity in a business that has little.” Despite his skills as an agent, Riordan nursed a lifelong ambition to be a poet. He had published some verse in college and in local New York City publications. As his health worsened almost a decade after his diagnosis with HIV, Riordan’s creative life took center stage. In the month before his death, he wrote steadily, producing 10 remarkable poems. One of them, "Fever," is this month’s *POZ* Verse. Riordan died September 5, 1997, in the city he loved so much. He was 45.

Bob Storm, 53, died of AIDS November 24, 1997, in New York City. Since the late ’80s, Bob was heard regularly on Sunday nights as a host of WBAI-FM’s gay-themed programs, first on *The Gay Show* and later on its successor, *OUT-FM*. Storm’s activism took root in early 1962, after he left Ohio to join the U.S. Army’s intelligence unit. When his friendship with a gay German man was discovered, the military discharged Storm as a “suspected homosexual.” He then moved to New York City, where he became active in the civil rights and gay liberation struggles. He soon became known as “Flash Storm,” and with his lover, Ralph Hall, who died of AIDS in 1988, published *The Gay Post* and *Ain’t It da Truth*, post-Stonewall gay magazines that featured Allen Ginsberg and Harvey Fierstein as contributing writers. In recent years, Storm counseled people on parole and at-risk youth with Offender Aid and Restoration.

Allan Terl, a vice president of the American Civil Liberties Union and hero to PWAs in Broward County, Florida, passed away December 1, 1997, after a battle with AIDS-related lymphoma. He was 51. According to his older sister, Fran Perry, Terl was still making phone calls from his hospital bed on behalf of PWAs. Terl’s activism began when, as a young boy, he saw his mother treated differently because she was a single woman running her own business. “He was appalled when he saw injustice to any human being,” Perry says. This crusade was evident in his involvement in the

landmark ACLU case *Shuttleworth v. Broward County*, the first court decision nationally recognizing AIDS as a disability protected against discrimination. Terl's desire to beat the odds was fired by a love of sweepstakes and contests, leading him to write *Prizes! Prizes! Prizes! Winning Ways in Contests, Sweepstakes and State Lotteries*, the "bible" of the contest-entry world.

Steve Visscher, computer consultant to *POZ* Publishing since its inception, passed away November 21, 1997, at the age of 42. His father, Hank, remembers that when Visscher was a child, he was a walking encyclopedia who could fix anything. As Visscher blossomed into a statuesque beauty, he worked not only in computers, but also as technical director at New York City night spots B. Smith's and the Ballroom. At his memorial service, Visscher's companion of seven years, Mansoor Qureshi, said of the life they shared: "He would say every day, 'Have I told you yet today that I love you very much?' Even when he was so sick in the hospital, every day he said to me, 'I love you.'" *POZ* misses enormously Visscher's kindness and ingenuity.

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