Obits

December 1, 1998

KEVIN MAYE, 36, standup comic and costar of *The Gay Comedy Jam*, died of AIDS July 25. The Jam, started in 1994 by Maye and his partner Scott Kennedy, was described by fan James Lehman as “guys you would like to know as friends, even though they’re standing up in front of a roomful of strangers.” By 1996, Maye had incorporated his HIV status into his performances using his signature humor—he named his last two CD4 cells Thelma and Louise.

English-teacher-turned-financial-wiz **MICHAEL PALM** died August 7 of a drug overdose. He was 47 and had had AIDS for many years. With colleague Steven Gluckstern, Palm made a fortune in reinsurance, the practice of sharing financial risk with primary insurance companies. In 1988, Palm and Gluckstern founded Centre Re, a Bermuda-based reinsurance company with assets now topping $9 billion. Palm retired in January, devoting himself to reading and dipping into the deep pockets of his eponymous foundation to donate millions to AIDS and gay groups. (He famously matched David Geffen’s 1995 $2.5 million grant to GMHC.) A music lover with two pianos in his Manhattan penthouse, Palm also gave to the Metropolitan Opera and Carnegie Hall.

San Francisco activist lawyer **THOMAS STEEL** helped bring free speech and civil rights violations to the fore. He died of AIDS July 18 at age 48 after a life defending many political dissidents, most prominently the late Black Panther leader Huey P. Newton. Following the ’60s free speech movement that sparked radicalism on college campuses nationwide, Steel spent 15 years badgering the FBI for surveillance documents, which he ultimately obtained for *The San Francisco Examiner* in 1995. Steel’s most celebrated victory was the $920,000 settlement awarded to S. Brian Willson, who was injured at a California naval weapons station in 1987 while protesting covert US operations in Nicaragua.

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