R.I.P. Garry Bowie; the HIV Activist and Nonprofit Leader Died of COVID-19

Bowie oversaw the West Hollywood AIDS group Being Alive. Explore his meaningful life in these social media posts from his husband.

April 16, 2020 By Trent Straube

Garry Bowie, the head of the HIV nonprofit Being Alive, died of complications of COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus.

In a Facebook post, Bowie's husband of 20 years, Jeff Wacha, said Bowie began showing flu-like symptoms March 19. He died April 7.

"He was overall healthy and strong," Wacha told ABC news (you can watch the segment below). "And [the coronavirus] took him, and took him so quickly."

According to his obituary on EverLoved.com, Bowie contracted HIV in 1983, at age 22. In the early days of the epidemic, before there was effective treatment, he and his mother drove to Mexico to buy AZT, an early antiretroviral medication thought to treat HIV, and brought the med back for those who needed it. Watching Magic Johnson disclose his HIV status in 1991 inspired Bowie to become an activist.

Located in West Hollywood, the nonprofit Being Alive focuses on the mental health and wellness of people living with HIV. It offers emotional support, treatment education and empowerment.

Bowie was also a former director of the Long Beach AIDS Foundation, and he was active in the leather community, notably as an archivist for Satyrs Motorcycle Club. He was named Man of the Year by the Long Beach Lambda Democratic Club in 2008, and he received the Fundraiser of the Year award from Southland Honors in 2010.

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