A Beautiful Piece of Journalism

January 24, 2011 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

Sometimes I'm amazed at how beautiful a piece of journalism can be. It's not easy to make a nuts-and-bolts article, such as an obituary, zing with poetic virtue. So kudos to "Against All Odds, a Beautiful Life" by Peter Applebome of *The New York Times*.

Here are the first two paragraphs:

> Some things we know for sure -- a little boy dealt a seemingly impossible hand, the two gay men who decided to give him a home and a life, the unlikely spell cast by the only horse in Montclair.
>
> Beyond that, well, it was what you could never quite know as much as what you could that drew 500 people, friends and strangers, to St. Luke's Episcopal Church on Saturday to ponder the lesson in grace and resilience, the parable of good lives and deeds outside the prescribed lines, in the remarkably long and way-too-short life of Maurice Mannion-Vanover, dead at the age of 20 on Jan. 14.

My synopsis: Maurice was born with AIDS. His twin sister died, his birth parents abandoned him. Two gay men adopted Maurice and eventually adopted a second son. Maurice loved horses, so his

adopted parents got him one, even though they lived in a dense suburb. Maurice almost died in 1998. The horse got free several times. The gay parents ended their relationship but still lived together with Maurice.

Excerpt continues:

> None of that affected Maurice, who became a fixture in his neighborhood and church, a Buddha smile always on his face … And then on a trip to Toronto in January with Mr. Vanover, he got sick. Then he got sicker. There was pneumonia, sepsis, acute renal failure. “It’s time,” he said several times, seemingly in his normal, slightly Delphic voice. No one knew quite what he meant, but it didn’t occur to anyone it meant that this was all the time he had. But it was.

I’ll let you read the article to savor the numerous other details that paint such a vivid picture of the life Maurice lived and the reasons it was remembered.

Perhaps it’s easy to write such an article when the life lived was so unique and filled with love. Nonetheless, it would have been easier to write a straightforward narrative.

I submit this article as not only a case study in fair and accurate coverage of LGBT and HIV/AIDS issues, but in doing so with style.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/beautiful-aids-journalism