

Network Leader Jim Klinesteker Dies of AIDS

(October 7, 1957 - September 13, 1992)

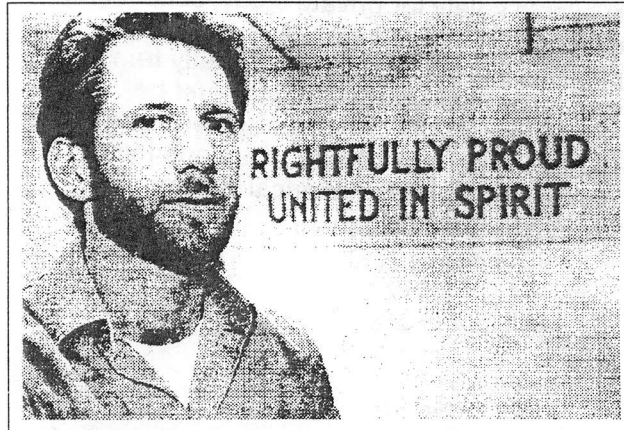
JIM KLINESTEKER, A penguin-loving zookeeper at John Ball Zoo, one of the founders of the Network, a long-time Board member, and former president of the organization, died Sunday morning, September 13 of AIDS complications.

Although he reportedly had been infected for a number of years, and fairly ill in recent months, he bravely continued doing the work he strongly believed in: making this community better for lesbians and gay men.

He was involved in the Network even before it officially existed. He attended the March on Washington in 1987 which inspired the creation of the Network, and as the first secretary of the Board, he signed the just-ratified by-laws of the organization. His dedication and energy helped create and shape the organization during its first five years.

Jim was elected vice president of the Network's Board of Directors in January 1991. When the elected president stepped down the following month, he took on the responsibilities of that office. Recovering quickly from that crisis, he led the Board through an eventful year, in which the Network hired — and then suddenly lost — its first executive director, and acquired a new community center on Cherry Street and opened it to the public.

Despite his declining health, he remained active in the Network after his terms as president and Board



member expired at the end of last year. As “president emeritus”, Jim often attended Board meetings, offering his input and suggesting new projects. He was actively involved in the newly-formed Outreach/ Action committee of the Network until shortly before he died.

The memorial service was held at South

Congregational Church on Sept. 17. Officiating at the “service of thanksgiving for the life of James Richard Klinesteker” was the Rev. Ron Skidmore, Jim’s cousin. His friends Cindy Mader, Mike May, and Jan Lunquist, and his brother Dave Klinesteker spoke.

The Rev. Skidmore spoke of how he had learned to look *up* to his younger cousin, after Jim came out to him and told him about his life with Mike Toten, his life partner, and how they had struggled for acceptance of themselves and their love for each other.

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Jim

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Cindy Mader described Jim as an almost tireless activist, a peacemaker, and someone who accepted people wherever they were. (Cindy's remarks are printed in full elsewhere in this issue.)

Mike May told what a unique and special person Jim was, one of quiet inner strength. He was a private person, but open to sharing if you wanted to know. He presented an example of balance, between his passions and his personal life. On one hand, he was enthusiastically involved in advancing gay and lesbian rights and women's rights, but would sometimes unapologetically turn down invitations to do things socially, explaining that he wanted to spend time with his partner.

Jan Lunquist remembered Jim, picturing him as steel: tenacious, purposeful, strong; and as a pure down comforter: tender, warm, and enfolding. She spoke of his sense of order and reason, recounting how she had showed Jim, an animal lover, a duck's nest she had accidentally uncovered. When she nervously asked him what to do about it, he impishly suggested, "Soup would be good." She read an unpublished children's story by Brian McNaught, which typified Jim. In it, a frog ostracized from his community for not having polliwogs makes peace with the dreaded dog, and uses that friendship to save his community from the dog's reign of terror.

Dave Klinesteker spoke of the difficulty he and the rest of the family had at first in accepting Jim's lifestyle, but how in the end, the family's love had held them together and helped them to understand and appreciate who Jim was and the love he had for Mike.

As a reminder of Jim's cheerful humor — and honoring his request — the service closed with the tune "Happy Trails To You". ▼