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Air crash claims lives of four AIDS workers

by Gene Poteat
Special to Q-Notes

CHARLOTTE—Two social workers and two volunteers serving the Palmetto AIDS Life Support Services (PALSS), an advocacy and service agency based in Columbia, South Carolina, died July 2, 1994 in the crash of US Air Flight 1016 near Charlotte/Douglas International Airport.

Lori Pinette, of New Milford, Connecticut, and Ann Sharkey, of Chestertown, Maryland, both 23 and second year students at the University of South Carolina's College of Social Work, were, according to friend Susan Hopkins, "...ready to serve justice, ready to make a difference in the world...They sparkled with idealism and love and care." Pinette, traveling to visit her boyfriend and her brother, who was being ordained as a priest, had just completed a one-year internship in Case Management at PALSS. "Lori—she was the most non-judgemental person you would ever meet," according to a friend of both women, Laurie Simpson, "She was the most caring person." Sharkey, engaged to John Mellody of Syracuse, New York, had just begun her internship, and was on her way to Boston to visit Mellody and a former roommate. She and Mellody were planning to wed next summer. Just last month she had purchased her wedding dress.

Pinette and Sharkey were among four USC students killed in the crash. Hopkins' words were spoken at the University's Rutledge Chapel at a July 11 memorial service honoring those students. Another service, honoring all of the 37 passengers who died, was held on July 12 in Columbia's Trinity Episcopal Cathedral. Thirty-four of the dead were South Carolina residents, including 28 from the Columbia area.

"Everyone here had the greatest respect for both Lori and Ann," notes Mark Fitzpatrick, Office Manager at PALSS, adding, "Lori's parents were very supportive of her work with us." As a continuing demonstration of that support, Pinette's parents have asked that, in lieu of flowers, memorials be made to PALSS.

Two other victims, both in their twenties, were volunteers serving in the agency's buddy program, providing support services to those with AIDS on a one-to-one basis. "It is our policy not to reveal the names of our volunteers," states Cynthia Poindexter, Director of Services. "They were giving of their time and talents. One had been in the buddy program for about a year and a half and the other was new, having recently completed training."

"Of course, in our work, we are forced to face and deal in death all the time, but this kind of sudden death is particularly difficult

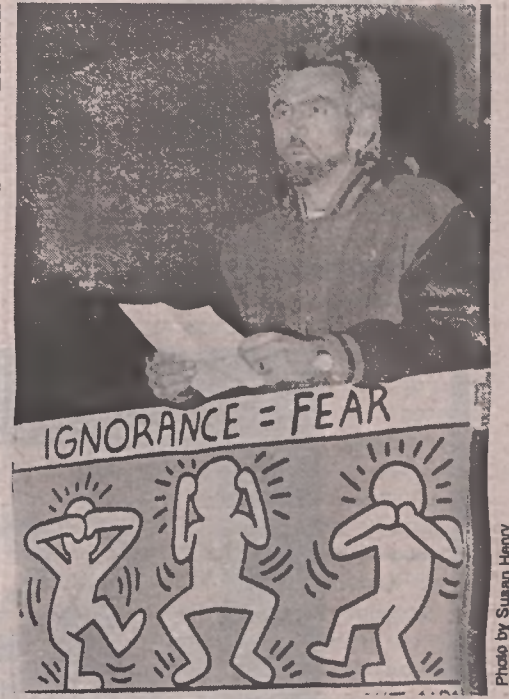
to deal with," says Poindexter. "It is death from a different direction. It is not that it is more significant, just different." She adds, "Within the last 12 months (in addition to the loss of clients), PALSS has suffered the loss of an Executive Director (Bill Edens, who died last November), a social worker, a member of our Advisory Council, a board member and now these interns and volunteers."

Mark Bodenmiller, who recently began his duties as Executive Director, says "It has been a tremendously painful year. This is one of the first things I plan to look at, to pay attention to...to discover how these losses have impacted the organization."

"We have a really close staff. It is always okay to feel what you need to feel here. However," Poindexter strongly emphasizes, "we are committed to our vision. We want everyone to understand that never stops. We are always available." She adds, "We need for our clients to know we are here for them."

Mark Fitzpatrick agrees, saying, "We have to be strong for those that cannot be strong for themselves...that's what Lori, Ann, and our volunteers would have wanted."

Memorials may be made directly to PALSS at Post Office Box 12124, Columbia, SC, 29211. For further information, call (803) 779-7257, outside of South Carolina, or toll free at 1-800-779-7257 within the state.



Glenn Kent

HIV testing decision near

by David Jones
Q-Notes Staff

The North Carolina Commission for Health Services, the independent rule-making body that adopts health regulations, has rejected a request from the state AIDS Advisory Council that anonymous HIV testing not be ended on September 1, 1994 as currently planned. Instead, the Commission has given the Council one more chance to make its case.

As reported first in *Q-Notes* (May 1994) the new state AIDS Advisory Council adopted a resolution at its April 19, 1994 meeting calling on the state to suspend plans to end anonymous HIV testing. The Council asked the Commission for time to develop a proposal to reduce the barriers to confidential HIV testing and suggest a new date for ending anonymous testing once that plan had been implemented.

The proposal was presented to the Commission on April 27, 1994 by Calvin Michales, co-chair of the Council's Prevention Committee and a member of the board of the Guilford County AIDS Partnership. The Commission decided not to suspend the September 1, 1994 termination as the Council requested. Instead, it told the Council that it could come back to the August 3, 1994 meeting of the Commission with the Council's plan to lower barriers to testing.

Speaking against the proposal was Pat Hunter, director of a Rocky Mount minority-based AIDS service organization and member of the NC Minority AIDS Coalition. According to minutes of the meeting, she stated that anonymous testing was supported by "a small segment of our population" and that the safety of the general public would be served through confidential testing (where names are given and reported to the state). A representative of the NC Medical Society also called for the end of anonymous testing, as did Dennis Retzlaff, Warren County Health Director and speaking for the Association of Local Health Directors. No one from the public spoke in favor of the proposal to retain anonymous testing.

Ron Levine, MC, State Health Director, also told the Commission that a petition had been received from ACT UP/Triangle calling

Radical Right fails to qualify in 8 of 10 states

WASHINGTON, DC —Radical Right-wing groups in eight states failed to qualify ballot measures that would have legalized discrimination against gay people, said representatives of four national gay and lesbian groups at a recent briefing in Washington, DC. Initiatives in two states, Oregon and Idaho, qualified for the ballot. While the Oregon measure has been struck from the ballot by a state judge, that ruling is being appealed.

"We are relieved, but not relaxed," said Sue Hyde, Fight the Right Project Coordinator for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "The failure of the Radical Right to qualify in eight states is positive, but it should not send the 'all clear' signal."

Radical Right groups in Arizona, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada and Washington failed to gather the required signatures by deadlines that ranged from January 31 to July 11. The initiative in Florida was ruled invalid by that state's Supreme Court in March 1994. An announced initiative effort in Ohio never materialized, but the group announced plans for a project attacking politicians who have been supportive of equal rights for gay people.

"Our job now is to support local communities as they come together to counter the discriminatory agenda of national Radical Right wing organizations," said Tim McFeeley, Executive Director of the Human Rights Campaign Fund. "We will work in close cooperation with local communities in Oregon, Idaho, and wherever Radical Right groups try to institutionalize discrimination. We must reach people with information about the problem of anti-gay discrimination and pass a federal bill to protect people from losing their jobs to discrimination."

Mandy Carter of the National Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum said, "National radical groups have divided communities by trying to institutionalize discrimination. Their cynical strategy is best challenged by the truth. People of color communities are an important part of the effort to expose the discriminatory agenda of the Radical Right."

Nicole LeFavour, an official with the Idaho Campaign for Human Dignity, the group that will be opposing that state's discriminatory measure, noted that the Idaho initiative barely qualified. "The Idaho anti-gay group fell far short of its goal of 100,000 signatures and

squeaked past with only a few thousand to spare," said LeFavour. "Unfortunately, this gives the national Radical Right wing organizations an opportunity to take their disinformation campaign all over our state. Local communities in Idaho must come together to stop the Radical Right groups from institutionalizing censorship and discrimination in Idaho."

Oregon's ballot measure was struck down as unconstitutional by Marion County (OR) Circuit Court in April 1994. Judge Rodney Miller ruled that an initiative limiting the rights of gay people cannot appear on the November ballot because it violates the state constitution, which requires that an initiative deal with a single issue. The decision is currently on appeal to a higher court.

"The courts continue to tell us that citizens cannot vote lesbians and gay men out of constitutions," said Suzanne Goldberg, a staff attorney for Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. "Still the Radical Right continues to promote these unconstitutional assaults, and we will continue to battle against them in court."

NC Pride 94 allocates \$13,500 from profits

by Don King
Special to Q-Notes

CHARLOTTE—North Carolina's gay/lesbian community will receive \$13,500 from excess revenue generated by the NC Lesbian & Gay Pride Parade & Celebration held June 3-5 in Charlotte.

The committee that organized North Carolina's ninth annual pride event fashioned its allocation at a July 18 meeting.

The largest award, \$6000, will go to the Fund for Southern Communities, a gay-friendly foundation located in Atlanta, with the stipulation that all \$6000 be granted to NC gay/lesbian organizations. Because of a dollar-for-dollar challenge from a New York

foundation, the Fund will receive an additional \$6000 earmarked for gay/lesbian organizations in the Carolinas and Georgia.

Other Pride 94 allocations include:

- \$1100 to the Gay/Lesbian Switchboard of Charlotte.
- \$500 to NC Pride PAC, which assists gay-friendly candidates seeking office on the state level.
- \$500 to Charlotte chapter of Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays for the chapter's scholarship fund for college-bound youth.
- \$400 to the Youth Leadership Council of Time Out Youth. The council, made up of youth, plans activities such as the annual

Alternative Youth Prom. Time Out is the support and advocacy group in Charlotte for lesbian and gay youth 13 through 23.

- \$300 to WOW, a Charlotte lesbian organization.
- \$250 for Gay Awareness Week at UNC-Charlotte.
- \$250 to promote a Sept. 2 public musical concert in Charlotte during the International Leadership Conference of GALA—the Gay & Lesbian Association of Choruses, an international group.
- \$200 for the newly created Charlotte Interfaith Network for Gay and Lesbian Equality.

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