

## Bankrolling the Movement

By Bob Roehr  
Contributing Writer

Rodger McFarlane has never been the shy retiring type. At 6'6", a shaved head, and jug-ears, he'd stick out in any crowd. Then there is his speech; the manic pacing, aggressive "candor" of a New Yorker, overlaying the honeyed drawl and metaphors of his native Alabama. And the company he has kept—buddies with Larry Kramer, a founder of the Gay Men's Health Crisis and ACT UP, and executive director of Broadway Cares—he's held his own among some colossal egos.

So it was a bit of a surprise two years ago when he decamped for what any dedicated Manhattanite would consider the sticks, in this case Denver, to become executive director of the Gill Foundation, the largest single funder of gay and lesbian activities in the country.

The Foundation is the creation of Tim Gill, a Colorado native who made a fortune in computer software. The battle over Colorado's 1992 antigay Amendment Two, ultimately struck down by the US Supreme Court in the landmark gay rights case *Romer v. Evans*, was the catalyst that turned Gill into a social activist. Since then he has written an estimated \$100 million in checks supporting LGBT causes through the Foundation and direct political contributions.

"What drew me here was Tim Gill's bankroll. Simple, simple, simple," McFarlane says in an exclusive interview in his spartan office at the Foundation. "I had always know, from day one, that you make very different decisions when you are talking about what can I afford to do as opposed to what needs to be done and how much does that cost. I was going to come out here and show them what to do with that money."

He says the Foundation always has been supporting worthy activities, but it often was reactive and spread so thin that it had little lasting



Ted Trimpa: Colorado gay activist, Democratic lobbyist and political advisor to Tim Gill and the Gill Foundation

impact. "Tim was not entirely satisfied with the return on investment."

McFarlane spent a lot of time that first year leading the Foundation, friends, and allies through a process to identify the problems and define what success would look like.

"Our snapshot of the movement was this. We don't have a common vision and coherent plan between organizations and funders, they're all over the place. Grassroots participation, the ability to swing an election, or campaign contributions, until recently, was not there. We don't have the capacity to do legislative work in the states, those organizations are fragile as shit and convulsive, they run from cycle to cycle. We expect too much from one national organization. And we don't know how to talk to the swing vote."

He says the Gill Foundation "defined what equality looked like epidemiologically, what it looked like economically, those sorts of things. Endpoints. And then we backed in, like a classic business plan and what do you need to achieve each of those things."

McFarlane took a lesson from the

far right and the sea tide of change they had wrought in the country over the last several decades, which has come about in large measure because of the organizations that they have funded. He says the right gives general operating grants, on a large scale, and over a sustained period of time. The organizations that they support are not bogged down with detailed program guidelines for relatively small sums of money.

The result has been a significant reorganization of the Foundation's priorities, as well as the creation last August of the companion political action committee, the Gill Action Fund [see the second of this two part series of articles].

The focus is on gaining recognition and protection for LGBT relationships and ultimately marriage, first at the state level and then the national level; along with employment protection.

"The Foundation simply does not have enough money to do all," declares McFarlane. "So a big piece of our work is influencing other

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## Right Wing Homophobe Arrested for Theft

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The Germans have a word for it, *Schadenfreude*—taking pleasure in the misfortunes of others—and that is what many in the gay community surely are feeling over the news that a major architect of antigay policies has been arrested on charges of theft from local stores.

Claude Allen, 45, served as press secretary to Sen. Jesse Helms; was the number two person at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for the first



Allen

four years of the Bush administration; and until recently was the chief domestic policy advisor in the White House.

According to a statement released on March 10 by the Department of Police for Montgomery County, Maryland, the affluent suburb of Washington in which Allen lives: "On January 2, 2006, a Target store Loss Prevention Manger observed an unknown man [later identified as Allen] enter the store...with an empty Target bag in a shopping cart. The man was then seen selecting merchandise throughout the store and placing items in the Target bag. He put additional items in his cart. The man then went to guest services where he produced a receipt and received a refund for the items he had just selected from the store shelves. After receiving the refund he left the store without paying for the additional merchandise in the shopping cart. He was apprehended by the store employee."

Investigation by Target and the police "learned that Allen had been receiving

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