



R.I. Threads

AIDS Quilt Rhode Island

Volume XXV, Number 1, Spring, 2017

International AIDS Candlelight Memorial 2017

Remembering and honoring Abe Gershman

On Sunday, May 21, at 7 PM, at Temple Emanu-El, Providence, we'll once again join with a coalition of more than 1200 community organizations in 115 countries, commemorating the 35th annual International AIDS Candlelight Memorial.

Following a sad tradition in recent years, we'll be remembering a recently deceased Quilt volunteer—Abe Gershman. Temple Emanu-El was Abe's spiritual home, and Rabbi Wayne Franklin will welcome us, and will recite the Mourner's Kaddish for Abe.

All who knew Abe through The Quilt will remember his love for the hymn, "Amazing Grace." We'll honor that love with performances by two singers, Rodney Davis and Ed Milham, whose voices, though differing in style, were both beloved to Abe. Out of respect for our hosts, we'll use lyrics created by

Candlelight (Continued on page 3)



Abe Gershman, 1924 - 2017

As we honor Abe Gershman's memory on May 21, we'll remember him and his fellow volunteers for The Quilt. Your writer has many memories to share, and we invite our readers to share theirs during the open microphone period of the Candlelight Memorial.

Abe Gershman was a dear friend of the Quilt. We first met when he attended one of the first Seders of Hope, at the Jewish Community Center in Providence. The Quilt moved him to tears, and he immediately asked what he could do to help. "We've got a live one," is always our first thought, and Abe was as good as his word. He helped with Anna's Workshops and assisted at our



Abe (Continued on page 3)

Quilt's 30th birthday

Cleve Jones had already been developing the concept of The Quilt when he lost his dearest friend, Providence native Marvin Feldman in 1986. In 1987, he created the first panel in memory of Marvin, and in just nine years it grew to 45,000 panels.

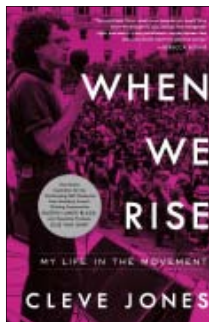
This year, The Quilt is 30 years old, and despite location and administrative changes, it remains the prime visual symbol for HIV/AIDS, the ultimate memorial to all we've lost to

Thirtieth (Continued on page 3)



Cleve Jones created this panel in memory of Marvin Feldman in 1987.

When We Rise: My Life in the Movement



Cleve Jones, Creator of the AIDS Memorial Quilt and founder of The NAMES Project, has published his second book. This very personal memoir takes us from his childhood through coming to terms with his sexual orientation, the agony of the AIDS epidemic and his personal losses, his own diagnosis, and the beginnings of the Quilt. Throughout that time and up to the present, he's been a central figure in political activities affecting the LGBTQ community. Compelling issues include Harvey Milk's election, the California effort to bar gay teachers, Prop 8 and marriage equality.

The book is in both print and audio formats, with Cleve narrating. It was the basis for a four part ABC mini-series in February.


Cleve's first book, *Stitching a Revolution*, published in 2000, was also a memoir, centering on The Quilt and the significance it attained. He stayed in Newport for the RI and Southern Mass. promotional tour, and Jim Seavor reviewed the book for The Providence Journal.

AIDS Quilt Rhode Island

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We are not affiliated with The NAMES Project Foundation

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The Quilt's Mission

Established in June, 1987, in the heart of San Francisco's Castro district, the Quilt began as a response by lesbians and gay men and their friends to the devastation of their community by AIDS.

From this beginning, The NAMES Project sought to reach out to everyone affected by the pandemic.

The mission of The NAMES Project Foundation is to preserve, care for, and use The AIDS Memorial Quilt to promote healing, heighten awareness and inspire action in the struggle against HIV and AIDS.

Although our organization is no longer affiliated with The NAMES Project Foundation, we continue to subscribe to this mission, and to carry on the work of the AIDS Memorial Quilt.

We Remember...

...All our much loved and missed volunteers. We will remember you...

Guy Abelson
Sasha Andreevich
Ann Antoni
Henry Antoni
James Arcaro
Bobby Arling
Mykel Askew
Bill Bagley
Rev. Alcide Barnaby
George Barros
Jerry Barrow
David Bedard
Stanley Blitz
Rodger Boyd
Michael Brown
Chris Burke
* Thomas Campopiano
John Candemo
Brett Capone
John Davis
Emilio DeAngelis
John DeCosta
Brian Del Pape
Lorraine DiPlatzi
Doreen Sharpe-Dowd
Henry Dubois
Steve Dubois
Michael Erban
Sydney Feldman
Carolyn Flanagan
Al Fisher, MD
Abe Gershman
Juan "Johnny" Gonzalez
Debora Greene
Roger Grindstaff
Jeff Hall
* Fitzgerald Himmelsbach
Steve Isherwood
Chris Johnson
Herb Kaplan
Nick Karras

Sr. Ann Keefe
Roland Letourneau
Jimmy Lipscomb
Dick Maraziti
Ernest Martin
Tracey McGuire
Richard Metivier
Pat Milano
Paul Mitchell
Bill Munroe
Jim O'Donnell
Tony P.
Larry Packer
David Palmer
Sue Palmieri
Sara Paneto
Chris Paradis
Steven Pereira
Tony Ramsey
Harry Ray
Ron Reniere
Dixon Richards
Courtland Roach
Mary Sandford
Jim Seavor
Jeff Shaw
Linda Steele
Marjorie Stenberg
Meredith Thayer
Terri Tiernan
Maggie Valentine
Dennis Valerio
Ernie Vallante
Alexandre Villanueva
Donnie White
Jan Wood-Thomas
*Yolanda Pearl
Alex Warch
George Warch
Roger Young
* Imperial Court of RI
Prov. Gay Men's Chorus

We remember our deceased volunteers, regardless of cause of death, in each newsletter. Full names are not required. Contact admin@aidsquilt.org.

Thoughts...

...of happiness for Steering Committee Member Emeritus **Ira Stoddard**, who is semi-retired from nursing and has bought a house in Maine, to be closer to his son and grandchildren.

...of shared sadness for the family and friends of **Abe Gershman**, our late Steering Committee member, who died on February 17, at age 92.

... & Thanks

...to Steering Committee members **Carl Ferreira** and **Sherrill Warch** and volunteer **Rex LeBeau**, for making it possible for our Quilt panels to participate in the AIDS Walk for Life in April. The Milhams were unable to take part because of a schedule conflict, but our loyal volunteers enabled The Quilt to continue a long-standing tradition of support for the Walk.

...to **Christion Battey** for nominating, and to **Family Service of RI** for recognizing, **Russ and Beth Milham** as part of their "125 Acts of Kindness" celebration for the 125th anniversary of their organization. The recognition is at <https://www.familyserviceri.org/celebrating-125>. And thanks to **Veronica Mays** of RINI (see below) for providing the information and photo for the site.

...to our dear friends who have given annual donations to AIDS Quilt RI, even though we haven't made direct appeals for funds. In the past 18 months, these folks include **Marcia Blair** and **Judith Anderson**, **Doreen Blue**, **Philip Kane**, **Anita Milham**, **Russ & Beth Milham**, **Susan Murphy**, and **Steve Rothstein** and **Susan Maze Rothstein**. (If we left anyone out, please remind us, slap us with a wet noodle, then forgive us.)

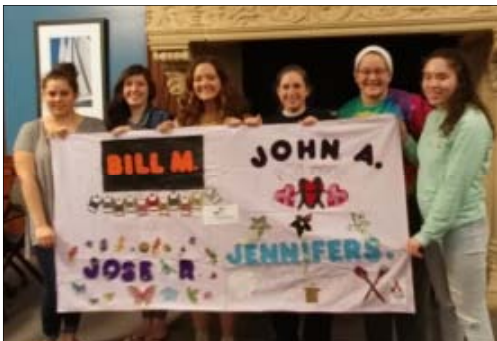


Anna's Workshop worked with two groups this spring to create panels for five clients of the Agape Center, Woonsocket.



Above, the 10th grade English class at the RI Nurses' Institute Middle College (RINI) honored Ron Cabral, under the guidance of teacher and quilter, Veronica Mays. Ron's is the fifth panel RINI students have created in two years.

Below, continuing a 25-year tradition of Quilt displays and workshops,



members of the Salve Regina (LGBTQ) Alliance and the Social Work Club held a workshop in April to remember four early Agape clients.



Ken Davis, co-founder of NAMES Project RI, with Cleve Jones, at tenth anniversary reception at Providence Public Library.

Candlelight (Continued from page 1)

a superb local musician who prefers to main anonymous. These lyrics carry a universal message of acceptance and love, and Abe would have loved them.

While remembering our dear friend, we're mindful of the purpose of Candlelight memorial as one of the world's oldest and largest grassroots mobilizations for HIV awareness since 1983. In RI, The Quilt was involved even before our chapter started in 1992. Our group has been the primary Rhode Island sponsor for many years.

Abe (Continued from page 1)

public events. When he and Ernie Martin became a couple, they both became devoted volunteers, and most of our pictures include the two of them. They attended NAMES Project national conferences and volunteered at the Washington, DC displays. They were faith outreach coordinators for our Steering Committee—Abe to the Jewish community, and Ernie to the Episcopal Diocese. And they were fixtures at Pride, serving our group, the garden club and the RI Prime Timers.



From left, Terry Bontrager, Ernie Martin and Abe Gershman, all Steering Committee members Emeriti of AIDS Quilt RI, at World AIDS Day, 2003, at John Hope Settlement House, Providence.



1997 Providence reenactment of 1985 march in San Francisco at which Cleve Jones first visualized the AIDS Memorial Quilt. (Note: "Ernie" on the placard above is different from Abe Gershman's partner, Ernie Martin.)

Thirtieth (Continued from page 1)

AIDS, and the world's largest community art project.

Cleve joined us for Rhode Island's commemorations of both the tenth and the twentieth birthdays of The Quilt. In 1997, the then NAMES Project RI Chapter hosted an all-day display of The Quilt and exhibits of our memorabilia at the Providence Public Library. An evening reception followed, then a walk to the main post office where we reenacted Cleve's 1985 San Francisco march that inspired The Quilt, by posting placards with the names of local people lost to AIDS.

In 2007, the AIDS Task Force of the Community Relations Council of the Jewish Alliance of RI and AIDS Quilt RI hosted a twentieth anniversary event at Temple Bethel in Providence, with Cleve again the honored guest.

We'll commemorate the thirtieth anniversary at our World AIDS Day event, and we welcome your suggestions for it. Send them to us at admin@aidsquiltri.org.



AQRI Steering Committee member Carl Ferreira (center) presents a plaque that he carved to Cleve Jones at 20th anniversary commemoration at Temple Bethel in 2007. Looking on are (from left) Beth Millham, of AIDS Quilt RI, and R. Bobby DuCharme and Debbie Blitz of the AIDS Task Force.

AIDS QUILT RHODE ISLAND

invites you to

The 2017 commemoration of the



**and
A MEMORIAL TO ABE GERSHMAN**

Sunday, May 21, at 7 PM



**Vocals by
Rodney Davis and
Edwin Milham
Quilt panel Dedication**



**Vestry
Temple Emanu-El
99 Taft Avenue,
Providence**



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