

✓ AIDS claims Gay Pride parade marshal

By GREG BEEBE
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — The grand marshal of the Gay Pride parade died Monday morning of complications from AIDS, some 12 hours after leading the annual celebration of Santa Cruz lesbian, gay and bisexual solidarity.

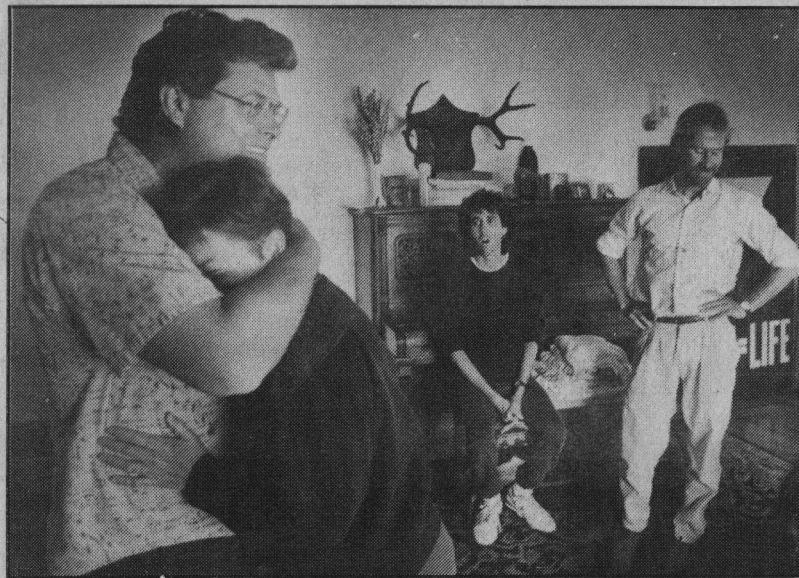
Gary Reynolds, 26, died Monday at 2:42 a.m. Friends say his last hours were spent leading a parade which mirrored his colorful life as a gay activist, UC Santa Cruz student, feminist, and AIDS educator.

"He had a genius for timing," said friend Terry Cavanagh.

Reynolds had grown increasingly ill over the past few months with a variety of serious AIDS-related ailments.

But, said Cavanagh, "he was profoundly self-willed and self-determined. ... He was very determined to be the grand marshal, to live up to the honor."

Reynolds — who was diagnosed with AIDS about 2½ years ago — told friends last summer that he would probably die this spring. He continued to participate in Project First Hand, the Santa Cruz AIDS Project's speakers' bureau, and other causes, as long as his health



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Members of Santa Cruz's gay community comforted each other and paid respects to activist Gary Reynolds.

would allow.

He was the first UCSC student to openly acknowledge his disease, and was among groups of activists arresting for protesting objectification of women at the Miss California Pageant in Santa Cruz and government inactivity on AIDS in Washington, D.C.

He went to jail — in drag — in the nation's capital.

"Almost all of his friends are totally convinced that he lived to live out his last community obligation as grand marshal," said Cavanagh. "He was a powerful figurehead."

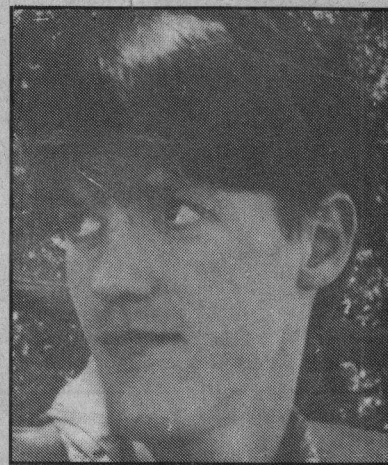
Ruth Mota, director of education and prevention services for the

Santa Cruz AIDS Project, said Reynolds was a valuable contributor to SCAP's Project First Hand.

"He was enormously courageous and outspoken," said Mota. "As a person, he could face any issue. ... He had a wonderful way of breaking through to people."

Mota said Reynolds was especially adept at dealing with young people on issues relating to homophobia and AIDS. He often took some of the project's toughest assignments.

"He was a real inspiration. There were other people who have since joined the project because of Gary," Mota said.



Gary Reynolds

Said he'd probably die in spring

A day of celebration, followed by a day of sorrow for a friend claimed by AIDS, serves to illustrate how "this is the best of times and the worst of times" for gays and lesbians, said John Laird, the executive director of SCAP.

Laird delivered a speech to that effect at Sunday's post-parade rally. "That sort of grief and loss in recent years has been a painful unifying factor for the lesbian and gay community," he said.

More than two dozen friends had recently pooled their time and resources so that Reynolds could receive round the clock care apart from a hospital environment. He died at home in the presence of those friends. Others came by Monday morning to pay their respects.

A memorial service for Reynolds will be June 29.