



PHOTO BY LINDA CARTER

## The Christmas tree of memories

For people who celebrate Christmas, many fond memories are connected to their Christmas trees: ornaments with a history, recollections of spectacular trees from the past. Ed Boen has a tree with a lot of memories—of more than 30 friends who have died of AIDS. Each has a little red heart on his tree. "I'm putting the names on one side, and on the other side the year they were born and the year they died," shared Boen.

A former bartender and himself a longtime survivor, Boen has been dealing with the AIDS plague for a long while. "I've been diagnosed for over 10 years. A lot of people don't know what it was like back then. I lost my job in a gay bar because I was sick." As we reminisced, Boen recalled another bar owner who was going to post a list in his bar of people who were known to be sick. That was when the fallen could be counted on one hand. Now Boen's fallen are a rainfall of red hearts on a curious little artificial Christmas tree of teal blue and crystal.

"My friend that's in the hospital right now came on Sunday night and sat down here on the floor and looked at the tree for a little bit—his ex-lover just died last month—and he said, 'I just want to crawl right in there.' Three days later he's in a coma, and I'm going, God! I'll kill you if you crawl into my tree!"

Boen has had to deal with a lot of loss lately: "This is the eighth person since the beginning of November." And like panels in the NAMES Project quilt, the number of hearts on Boen's memorial Christmas tree continue to grow. "It represents a lot of things to me: the pain, the tears, the freedom, the love," he said. "A lot of people are still in denial big-time. A lot of people just block it away." Boen doesn't. He is reminded every time he goes into his bedroom, where the tree stands in mute testimony, and every time he carefully letters another heart.

*Jim Hunger*

## Queer veterans' group urges Clinton to keep promise

Northwest Veterans for Human Rights, a group dedicated to the rights of gay and lesbian veterans and service members, is urging veterans to show their support for President-elect Bill Clinton's pledge to allow openly gay men and lesbians in the U.S. armed forces.

"If Bill Clinton appoints a committee to study this issue," says a press release from the group, "it is important that the committee hear from some of the thousands of lesbians and gay men who have served with distinction in the armed forces, a number of them as openly gay or lesbian. They will learn that when a unit commander was open-

minded and supportive of gay personnel, things worked out just fine."

The group has scheduled a discussion of the issue for 7 pm, Thursday, Jan. 14, at the Northwest Veterans for Peace Coffeehouse at 344 NE 28th Ave.

## Activists pre-empt Nazis

For the last several years, Nazis have rallied on Whidbey Island in Washington on Dec. 5 to memorialize Robert Matthews, a white supremacist killed by federal agents in 1984 after he murdered Jewish talk-show host Alan Berg. This year, they were pre-empted by anti-bias activists.

The United Front Against Fascism reserved South Whidbey State Park for Dec. 5 a year in advance and rallied 450 demonstrators to declare the park a "Nazi-free zone." Their point was to "bury Robert Matthews and everything he stood for," said UFAF founder Guerry Høddersen.

The event was delayed for an hour and a half because of a bomb threat called in to the state ferry system, the only agency providing transportation to the island.

The rally was endorsed by more than 100 different groups, including 25 labor groups as well as several government officials. The UFAF was founded in 1988 to protest Nazi commemorations of Matthews's death.

## Grant High writes the book on diversity

Congressman Ron Wyden came up with a way for students at Portland's Grant High School to make their celebration of diversity tangible. The plan is to write a book titled "50 Ways to Celebrate Diversity" that can be shared with middle-school children.

Wyden and Portland Trailblazer Mario Elie attended a special all-school assembly to launch the idea. Parents will also be contributing ideas to the book.

Although Grant has several diversity awareness groups, their homecoming dance this year was canceled due to several fights between black and white students.

## Patrick's Garden

"Patrick's Garden" has been developed as a living memorial to friends and loved ones who have died from AIDS. All are invited to share in this memorial. A new patio has been built at the HIV Day Center that will feature space for memorial plantings and inscribed plaques.

Memorial plaques will be placed on the garden wall with a simple inscription. In addition to the plaque, azalea plants may also be donated for the garden.

All contributions will go to the Center's activity fund and be used directly for the client programs. To be part of the memorial garden, call 223-3444. Forms may be picked up at the HIV Day Center, Cascade AIDS Project offices and other AIDS organizations.

## Laughing Horse trots across town

Laughing Horse Books, a progressive and radical collective bookstore, has moved from Northwest Portland to Southeast. The collective's new address is 3652 SE Division St. The store hours are also changing. The new hours are 11 am to 7 pm, Mondays through Fridays, and 11 am to 11 pm on Saturdays. The collective is having a grand-opening party on Jan. 15 at 7 pm.

The new location is larger, and the collective's mailing list shows that most of its customers live on the east side.

*Compiled by Irene K. Hislop*

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