



Freeman photo by Dan Chidester

Jane VanDeBogart, left, and Janice Williams-Myers put the finishing touches on a cloth panel that will be attached to the national AIDS quilt.

For the love of a brother

Panel will be added to AIDS quilt during Washington rally

By KARL REICHELT
Freeman staff

NEW PALTZ — At her New Paltz home, Janice Williams-Myers has stitched an elaborate cloth panel to be added to the 15-acre national AIDS quilt this weekend in Washington, D.C.

The tapestry memorializes her brother, Joel D. Redmond, who died of AIDS six years ago at age 37.

Since October, with encouragement from friend Jane VanDeBogart of Woodstock, Williams-Myers and her husband, A.J., have sewn the panel in anticipation of Sunday's gay and lesbian rights rally in Washington, which is expected to attract more than 1 million people.

During the rally, the national AIDS quilt is to be unfurled on The Mall, the grassy section extending from the Washington Monument to the Capitol. The quilt is a symbol created by people who have lost family members to AIDS.

Williams-Myers' chocolate-colored panel depicts highlights of her brother's life, she said. Bordered with African designs, it includes a drawing of Redmond, who was a historian from Denver, and a golden sun rising above his name. The sun sets over 1987, the year of Redmond's death, Williams-Myers said.

"This is something I've been trying to do for some time," Williams-Myers said of the quilt panel. "It's an emotional, therapeutic process."

And it might never have been started if not for VanDeBogart's assistance, Williams-Myers said.

VanDeBogart's brother, Carl Wittman, died of AIDS in 1986 at age 42. He was a dance teacher from Durham, N.C., and was instrumental in authoring the "Gay Manifesto," the first declaration of gay rights, VanDeBogart said.

She, too, stitched a panel in memory of her brother and in October sewed it onto the national quilt.

"We were at a meeting in Kingston one day and spoke of our losses," Williams-Myers said. "Jane said, 'Whenever you'd like to make a panel, I'll help you.' I'm finally to that point."

The Williams-Myerses and VanDeBogart are traveling to Washington together to participate in Sunday's event and have volunteered to be "quilt monitors."

"Sadly, the quilt has grown over the years," Williams-Myers said. "We hope for a cure before it gets much bigger."

Anyone interested in traveling to Washington on Sunday for the rally should call 255-7173. Buses are leaving the Hudson Valley before dawn.

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CARL PETER WITTMAN

Feb. 24, 1943
Hackensack, New Jersey

Jan. 22, 1986
Durham, North Carolina

This panel is from Carl's family, with love and understanding.

In retrospect, Carl was a pioneer, a groundbreaker, a maverick. He trod new ground throughout his life and showed us new paths. It wasn't easy for any of us.

Very early on, at 4 or perhaps 5 years, Carl wrote an irreverently funny Christmas card poem, and mailed it. At high school graduation, he was the first person brave enough to publicly refuse the American Legion award, an anti-war act as early as 1960. He later burned his draft card, the first person we knew to do so.

In college, Carl and many of his friends were not only involved in the civil rights movement, they were leaders and on the front lines, in jail and always in danger. Carl could easily have met the fate of Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman.

He was part of the founding leadership of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), working on the Port Huron Statement, followed by community organizing in the black ghettos of Newark with Tom Hayden and about 20 others.

The late 60's saw Carl deeply involved in the anti-war movement.

From then on, most of Carl's life revolved on his conviction to be an out-of-the-closet gay man and to develop greater consciousness on all oppressions--gays, women, Third World minorities. It was a difficult struggle to be one of the first openly gay men of this era; he came out right after Stonewall, I believe, and again was the first openly gay person I ever knew. To those who had neither experience nor the language, he taught us about gayness. He opened the paths for two other family members to come out. He wrote "A Gay Manifesto" and worked on RFD magazine.

Carl developed his interest in English and Scottish country dance, teaching extensively. Here, too, Carl pioneered in restructuring and revising ancient dances so that any two people could dance together comfortably rather than the traditional man-woman pattern. He carried it on stage at the Oregon Shakespearean Festival.

CARL PETER WITTMAN

The type of community family that Carl worked to create, a loving and supportive one, meant so much to him and his partner Allan, as well as to his family, in the last few years, years of organizing against a neighborhood chemical dump, and seeing other friends through the nightmare of AIDS, teaching and reaching the medical community, learning how to respond without hysteria.

Carl's primarily gay-lesbian community, under siege from the under-educated outside world, pulled together in a highly impressive support network as he was dying and in the months afterward. The closest analogy, and it's weak, is the community support one felt in the great northeast blackout when total strangers would spontaneously and generously help each other.

Carl lived the way he chose, and died the way he chose, before he got caught up in the so-called heroic medical procedures. He died at home, with his dearest friends and relatives by his side, with a great deal of dignity and pride. In that one month from diagnosis to death, he taught us more trail-blazing--how to deal honestly and forthrightly with the inevitable. His gracefulness continues to amaze me.

He always saw through what my grandfather called "bunk", and dealt with it, firmly but gently.

Jane VanDeBogart
Carl Wittman's sister

September 12, 1987



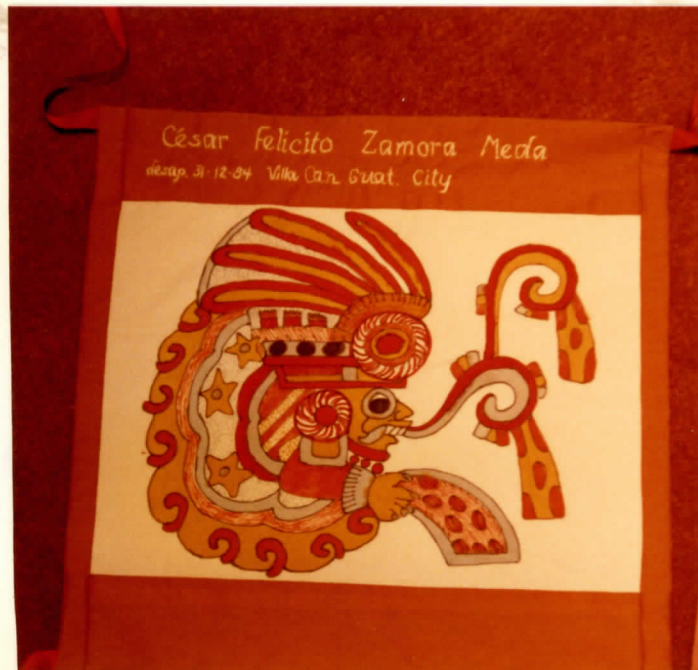
Antique batik fabric used in Carl Wittman's
 panel (6' x 3') for the Names Project.
 Signed by family members (as available) or for them.
 Panels to be displayed in Washington D.C. Oct. 11,
 1987 - ~~Signed~~

Sept. 5⁻¹² 1987 By Ruth Johnston + Jane VanDeBorck

Cesar Felicito Zamora Meda

(6" x 16" with ribbons (cross between Peace
Ribbon + AIDS quilt))

Made for Women's Convoy to Central America
Spring 1989. Commemorates ^{one} of the 70,000
"disappeared" in Guatemala, + connects with US citizens
who made each square. Design from Ernesto
Cardenal's book "Quetzlcoatl"
Embroidery, fabric magic markers.



Catskill Alliance for Peace - submission for The Peace Ribbon

Spring 1985 18" x 36"

Joint project with members, sharing the fabrics, ideas + sewing. It went on The Peace Ribbon demonstration in Aug '85 in Wash. DC. My contribution was the conception of the Overlook Mt. with the symbol of the Woodstock Festival over it. I love the embroidered details.



Later used the photo on ^{greeting} cards as a fundraiser
for CAP.

Peace Ribbon - Night Sky

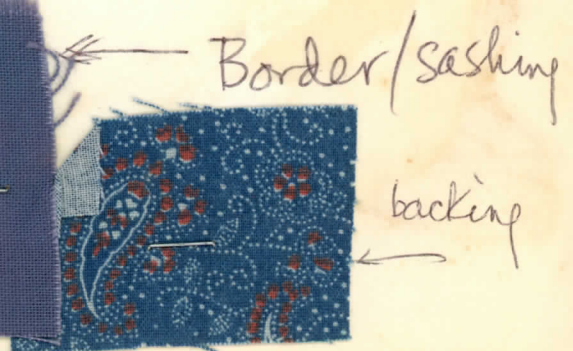
Apr.-May
1985

18" x 36" Displayed in Woodstock, Albany (Memorial Day),
Washington (Aug.), & now ? maybe Chicago Peace Museum



Mom + Dad's 50th Anniversary Quilt

Joint project of family + friends, coordinated
and originated by JV. Quilted by Ruth Johnston + me
Presented Feb. 1983. Assembled at Jo Komow's.
1st major quilt. Queen size



Border/sashing

backing

Top mural panel designed + made by



Allen, Carl + Elizabeth



Ruth Johnston + Jane

11/1/95 Sad footnote - Mom + Dad's quilt came back to me; both died in 1994. I am not ready to have it returned to me so quickly. I'm not ready to lose both of them together.