

Out in the Mountains

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Friends Remember Quake Victim

(Reprinted from the Santa Cruz Sentinel, Oct 30, 1989)

The life of earthquake victim Robin Lynn Ortiz was celebrated at a Lighthouse Point memorial attended by friends who had held a vigil outside a collapsed shopping mall, waiting in vain for her rescue.

Sea lions barked on a craggy rock below as nearly 100 people shared poetry and stories about the 22-year-old woman under sunny skies Saturday, said Dawn Atkins, a friend of Ortiz.

"It was very private," Atkins said. "No news media, no clergy. No officials."

Ortiz was one of three people killed in Santa Cruz's Pacific Garden Mall when a 7.1-magnitude earthquake struck on Oct. 17.

Dozens of her friends held a vigil near the rubble of the Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Co. where she worked, pleading for researchers to work faster. Several friends were arrested when they crossed a police line.

Searchers found her body two days later. They said she died instantly.

Atkins said Ortiz was "outrageous, a real fighter," a lesbian activist proud of her sexuality and politics.

"She died as flamboyantly as she lived," Atkins said. "She was a real radical."

At the memorial, friends set up a table with photographs of the fair skinned, dark-haired woman who rode a motorcycle and worked tirelessly as a volunteer for the Santa Cruz AIDS Project.

"I love you and I don't want you to die-Robin," read a sign on a basket of condoms placed near the photographs.

"That's what she used to say when she passed out condoms at the mall," Atkins said. "She had a friend who died of AIDS last year and wanted to make sure everyone had safe sex."

The dress was casual and the food was vegetarian at the gathering. The music was a tape of Ortiz's favorite music, including selections from the Grateful Dead and Elvis Costello.

Those who attended shared hugs and tears and a few minutes of prayer or medi-

tation, "depending on what each person believed in," Atkins said.

Ortiz's domestic partner of five years, Ruth Rabinowitz, read a poem Ortiz had written called "Lesbian Rap."

"We're out of the closet and we're here to stay," the poem promised.

"City kid. Dead Head. Amazon Biker. Renaissance gamester. Middle class fantasy hero," was the way friend Blayne Gerringer described Ortiz.

Along with Rabinowitz, she is survived by her mother, Janette Baldwin-Ortiz of Los Angeles; her father, Eladio Ortiz; and her brother, James Ortiz of Los Angeles.

Her body has been cremated and her ashes will be scattered in a redwood grove in the Santa Cruz Mountains, Atkins said.

After the memorial, Ortiz's friends sang "Singing in the Rain," joined hands and danced. When the song ended, each friend carried a single red rose to the cliff, kissed it, and tossed it into the foaming surf.

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Demonstrating in Atlanta

Hundreds of AIDS, lesbian and gay activists from around the country will converge in Atlanta, GA on January 8 and 9 for two days of demonstrations demanding repeal of antisodomy laws and an expanded definition of AIDS.

Demonstrators will demand repeal of sodomy laws in 25 states on January 8, the opening day of the 1990 Georgia legislature in a mass demonstration at the Georgia State Capitol.

"Because these laws effectively define all lesbians and gay men as statutory felons, they promote violence against gay people and frighten everybody away from HIV testing, counseling, health care, and treatment," said Chip Rowan, action facilitator. "These laws are severely worsening the extent and severity of the AIDS epidemic in half the country.

Georgia achieved international notoriety in 1986 when the U.S. Supreme Court announced its decision in Hardwick v. Bowers and upheld the state's power to regulate private, adult, consensual sexual behavior. The Georgia law provides for 20 years' imprisonment for conviction on a sodomy "offense," more than for armed robbery, rape, and other violent acts. The Hardwick case originated in Atlanta in 1982 with the arrest of Michael Hardwick who was having sex with a consenting adult male in the privacy of his bedroom. Recently a white male heterosexual was released from a Georgia jail after serving 18 months of a five-year sentence for having consensual oral sex with his wife. Though his conviction was overturned in September, Georgia's gay and lesbian community was outraged at the court ruling which said

the sodomy laws would not be applied to heterosexual married persons.

Sodomy laws have also been used as justification to prevent AIDS educators from distributing safer sex information and condoms on the grounds that such material condones "illegal" behavior. "The laws condemn to ignorance people whose lives depend on this information, including teenagers, students, prisoners, and other residents of state or federal institutions. If sodomy is the crime, AIDS is the punishment. Sodomy law repeal is a life-saving measure," said Rowan.

On January 9, demonstrators will demand that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) expand the definition of AIDS beyond its current and largely arbitrary categories of "AIDS" and "AIDS Related Complex" (ARC). (Continued on page 3)