

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume CXII, Number 108, 14 April 1988 — AIDS quilt on Hamilton lawn honors New Yorkers who died of the disease [ARTICLE+ILLUSTRATION]

AIDS quilt on Hamilton lawn honors New Yorkers who died of the disease

By Rebecca Ackerman

A small section of the New York Memorial Quilt for victims of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was displayed for the first time on the lawn in front of Hamilton Hall yesterday.

The day long commemorative event was sponsored by the Columbia Gay Health Advocacy Group (GHAP).

The presentation was inspired by the display of the national Names Project AIDS quilt at the National March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights in Washington, D.C., last fall. After participating in this event, GHAP decided to arrange for a similar presentation at Columbia, according to Kevin Hall, CC '86, a GHAP advocate.

"It's really hard to describe the impact it had in Washington," Hall said.

"We really wanted to bring it to a campus we thought was socially aware," said Deborah Alexander, BC '83, also of GHAP.

The New York Memorial Quilt project is part of the national Names Project AIDS quilt. The display yesterday was a special preview to the larger presentation of the completed New York Memorial Quilt scheduled for June 25.

The quilt panels are usually made by personal friends and relatives of AIDS victims. The creators sew memorabilia from the victim's life into the quilt to symbolize what that person meant to them, Hall explained.

But according to David Winters of GHAP, "There are a lot of people who will make quilts for people they don't even know, just because they want those people to be remembered as well."

In either instance the making of a panel is a form of catharsis for those who mourn a personal loss, or are trying to relate to an epidemic that is often dehumanizing in its sheer enormity, Hall said.

“It’s a healing process of sorts to make one [a panel],” he said.

“The care and love that goes into something like this, maybe that’s a cure in a certain way,” said Jordan Freidman, co-coordinator of the local quilt project.

“The panels say that the people that have died of AIDS are ‘normal’ human beings. They had careers, they were educated, they had families,” Freidman said. He added that the quilt tries to take away some of the prejudice that people have towards AIDS victims.

Robert Lichman, CC ’91, voiced a common sentiment, “In some way each of these panels represents a personality of someone.”

“It made the numbers personal,” added Kim Berman, CC ’91.

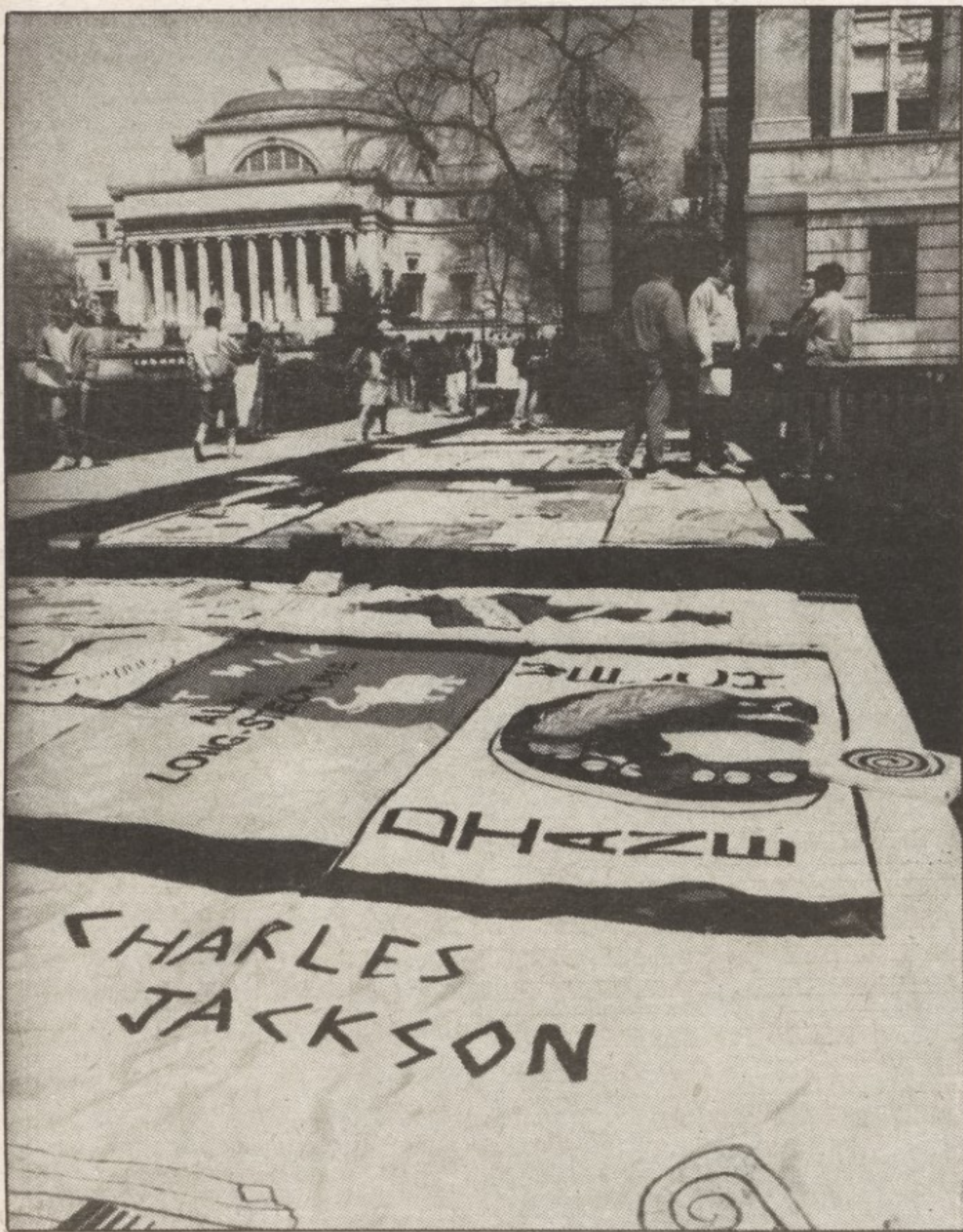
One example of the personal effect was the panel commemorating Stan Freidman. The flannel shirts that made up the panel spoke of the person that once wore them. Others bore the poetry of the bereaved: for Shepard Mitchell, “his life, his charm, his shining talent, lost too young, our memories soar with him upward.”

“In your light we shall see light, Columbia University,” was the message on another panel.

“This panel honors students, faculty, and staff who have died in the AIDS epidemic. Remember them with love,” read an explanation lying nearby.

The display concluded with a memorial service attended by approximately fifty people. Father Bill McNicholas, a longtime worker with AIDS patients, spoke as volunteers passed out candles.

McNicholas said the quilt was made “To remember the souls that have gone, and also to let them go.”



SPECTATOR/LISA PRICE

REQUIEM: Quilt display eloquently illustrates the tragedy of AIDS. See story page 3.