

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume CXV, Number 83, 18 February 1991 — Memorial service held for GS student, AIDS activist
[ARTICLE]

Memorial service held for GS student, AIDS activist

By Elizabeth Berke

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More than 150 people attended a memorial service for Alan Michael Contini, GS '90, at St. Paul's Chapel on Friday afternoon.

Contini died of the AIDS virus last Tuesday morning.

Dean of the School of General Studies Ward Dennis said Contini had a dominating personality, but he was always a good friend.

"He was the kind of guy who would show up on your doorstep in a tuxedo on Valentine's Day with a long-stemmed rose," Dennis said.

Lisa Cohen, GS '90, read a letter Contini had written to a friend, in which Contini said he had done almost everything he ever wanted to do in his life.

"Alan was my best friend, and not a day will go by when I won't miss him," Cohen said.

Director of the General Studies Writing Program Alan Ziegler read three poems by Contini.

Andy Velez, a member of ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), an AIDS activist group for which Contini was media coordinator, said Contini was a unique and strong person with a "street smart sense of humor."

Velez commended Contini for interrupting the governor of New York's State of the State address in Albany last winter. Velez said it was hard for Contini to make the trip because he was already ill, but added that Contini believed strongly in fighting for AIDS issues.

Velez also said he was proud to be on the front page of *The Village Voice* with Contini last summer for an article about Queer Nation, an activist organization for gay and lesbian issues.

"I'm glad he's there with his arm raised as a symbol of anger and defiance. Act up, fight back, fight AIDS," Velez said.

Deputy Vice President of Auxiliary Services Fred Catapano remembered Contini as someone with high personal standards.

"He wanted everyone and everything to be more perfect. He believed the process of perfection was ongoing," Catapano said.

"He believed in the artist's approach to life--the relentless pursuit of possibilities we believe, erroneously, to be beyond our grasp," he said.

Catapano closed by saying Contini might have reacted to the memorial service in two ways.

Catapano said Contini would have said, "Shit man, I just love all this attention," or he would have wondered why everyone wasn't out having a good time.

Mona Hunter, a friend of Contini, remembered him fondly.

"He was full of good cheer. He was a really great guy with a peculiar sense of humor," Hunter said.