

# COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume CXIX, Number 61, 24 April 1995 — Service held for new Quilt panels [ARTICLE]

## *Service held for new Quilt panels*

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*Contributing Writer*

As part of the display of the AIDS Memorial Quilt at Columbia, about 70 people attended the dedication and induction of 15 new panels to the Quilt at a ceremony in St. Paul's Chapel on Friday evening.

In her opening remarks, co-Chair of the Quilt Committee Molly Eagan, a second-year student in the School of Public Health, said the ceremony was "something special ... a quiet time amidst the hustle of setting [the Quilt] up."

Associate Dean of Students for Columbia College Kathleen McDermott, acting as an adviser to the host committee, welcomed the audience and praised the student volunteers' hard work.

Professor of Spanish and Portuguese Augustus Puleo read the words of a

hymn he had heard at other memorial services for those who died of AIDS.

He said the NAMES Project, which sponsors the Quilt, is important because of its "refusal to put any one life over another."

"I am still in denial," he said, describing how AIDS has "fragmented" his life and left him angry and abandoned.

Mark Schoofs, a reporter on AIDS-related issues for *The Village Voice*, read a statement on behalf of the *Voice* about the panel the paper is dedicating in honor of its staff and readers who have died of AIDS.

Unlike the rest of the panels on the Quilt, the *Voice's* contribution features no names, only the logo of the paper.

Schoofs explained that the *Voice's* contribution to the Quilt was meant to respect the wishes and privacy of former employees who "were compelled to hide this terrible illness."

"Society still blames them, denies them housing, employment, and health care," he said.

Schoofs said his feelings for the Quilt

have changed in the years since he first saw the display in Washington, D.C. in 1987.

He said he once felt the Quilt was “kitsch ... one big heart on liberal America’s sleeve.”

Schoofs added that he now believes that “the Quilt is about a overwhelming and unending ocean of grief,” after making a panel for his former lover.

“When people call the Quilt ‘kitsch,’ they are really saying something about themselves, that they don’t want to face the messy, inadequate, painful grief that it brings,” Schoofs said.

Eagan read the dedications for the new panels as volunteers held up the colorful quilts with photos, clothing, sparkles, and drawings.

Acting Director of Earl Hall Scott Matheney called for a moment of silence for those who have died at the end of the ceremony.

A volunteer on the host committee, Chris Heller, CC '96, said the featured speeches were moving.

“It was a good mix, incorporating personal experiences with the political significance of the Quilt,” Heller said.