



# 1991

No three-hankie Xmas letter this year. Nope, all you get is a quick, humorous listing of a lot of non-events, the usual boring drivel which has given the entire genre a well-deserved bad name .



IT WAS A YEAR TO PARTY &  
1991 GOT OFF TO A GREAT START!



ALL THAT DANCING! ALL THAT  
DRINKING & NOT ONE LAMP GOT  
BROKEN!!

Around here, everyone's alive, if not exactly well. During August I really began to feel like I was fitting in. Fatigue, a bacterial lung infection & a blood test taken after a Big Mac, fries & two beef franks indicated I was in the "highest" risk group for that most terminal of illnesses- coronary disease!!

I panicked, frantically converted to vegetarianism, lost a few pounds. Simultaneously, I indulged in the sweet melancholy of anticipating my approaching, premature, run-of-the-mill demise. I felt neglected, even angry. They didn't even have a quilt for folks like us. No angry activist groups zapping butchers. No quarterly reports or specials on public television & HBO. We were certainly the forgotten silent majority!

Then, the EKG came back unblemished. The cholesterol counts all went in the right direction. "Just keep up what you've been doing," Dr. Sonnabend counseled as he handed me the latest blood results showing I was now in the "low risk" group for coronary disease.

It was all just typical of the good news which flooded in all year. A major gay legal advocacy group agreed to challenge the State of New Jersey to make them indirectly recognize David's & my wedding by granting me a "spousal exemption" on the insurance's small death benefit. New Jersey law makes a big issue of their having been a "wedding ceremony" before any relationship is recognized, straight or otherwise. Wow, little did we know we were just getting to the altar in time. (ha) The case will grind on for years, but what a fine final tribute to David.

And those meanies at NYU Medical Center, who left us stranded in that emergency room corridor for six days and six nights, got their comeuppance too. To avoid being brought to trial by the NYC Human Rights Commission, they agreed to donate \$25,000 to various Aids service organizations, make that settlement public, and submit to monitoring for the next two years to verify that they had indeed stopped discriminating. Each of the two complainants designated which group was to receive his share of the funds, which were allotted according to the number of days each had spent in the Emergency Room corridor. The People With Aids Coalition got our share, nearly \$7000.

1991, a growth year for Wicker activism, a shrinking year for the American economy. It was the year that depression spread across the land, creeping from our hearts and minds into our very pocketbooks.

I'd started the year cheerfully enough, laying down in Grand Central Station with several hundred members of Act-Up, disrupting the commuter rush hour to call attention to "one-American-dead-from-Aids every-six-minutes." And, "Where was George?"--hiding out at usual, pre-tending all was well. After all, he didn't even care enough to walk across the street to visit the Aids Quilt the week it was displayed on the Great Mall in front of the White House.

In Grand Central Station, aware that a takeover was imminent, plain-clothes and uniformed cops were everywhere. For camouflage, I bought a bouquet of flowers. Who'd suspect that respectable-looking gray-haired man with a handful of posies would turn out to be one of those trouble-makers? And how would it look on television if some officer hit some old man over the head with a nightstick who was innocently standing there holding flowers?

Later, when we all layed down in a mock "die-in," I was the only corpse complete with bouquet. But it was only five in the afternoon and mine was a sober militancy. Later, when some chose to continue resisting, be arrested & spend the night in a holding tank downtown, I did what any harried, sensible, hard-pressed businessman would do -- I took a cab back to the shop and went back to work.

A couple months later, I decided to switch hats from yellow to green--to march with the Irish Gay Group & Mayor David Dinkins in the St. Patrick's Day Parade. Suzanne Phillips talked me into it at the last moment. I'm so glad she did.

It was a mesmerizing experience, one I'll never forget. Mayor Dinkins won my heart that day. He described it as being "like walking with Martin Luther King to Birmingham." The dominant media image was that of the Mayor walking with sheep through a valley of lions. And, indeed, we were all thankful for the wall of police between us and that mob of onlookers, many of whom were jeering & shouting obscenities.

Nothing like threats, insults & jeering faces to rivet one's attention. The media & most of those marching saw only one solid wall of intolerance & hate. I studied the throngs along the street closely and saw a far more varied & complex reaction.

Only ten per cent were venting overt hostility. Eighty percent simply stood watching with blank expressions, showing neither approval nor disapproval. And somehow overlooked by all, for every noisy detractor, there seemed to be a supporter cheering, smiling, waving emotionally. Some were even crying as they did so. I felt the one-sided sound-bite video coverage shown on the news unfairly accentuated the negative. Later, whenever I would give my version of events, I'd find myself in an unwinnable argument with friends. If only I had had my own video camera! I'd be able to show them!

So, I went out & bought the Sony CV801--the latest & best of the hi-band 8mm camcorders. Next year I'd be able to film those warm, kind smiling Irish faces for all to see. Meanwhile, I'd do other things.

When people wrote in or inquired about an Uplift catalogue, I could offer a videotaped review of all the original chandaliers & sconces we had available. Even a few sales would more than pay for the camcorder.

Now, with my new magic lens, I could give everyone a peek at Baltimore's Gay Pride Day parade. We could all enjoy George's July 4th surprise birthday party at the shop where champagne-laden young Nelson, Uplift's resident male damsel, unexpectedly popped up out of a box fashionably outfitted in G-String, party hat, and wrapped in the American flag.

Later, the party got really raucous. Two uptight Pizza studs from a couple doors away pushed their way into our closed party, threatening to "get their buddies from Bensonhurst" & "really fuck us up later" - after hours, outside. All because Nelson & Suzanne had given them the finger in passing - responding to earlier taunts & homophobic mocking. The Uplift camera kept running--loyally perched on my shoulder--its all-seeing eye bearing witness for the legal proceedings we would initiate later.



GEORGE HAD NEVER HAD A REAL BIRTHDAY PARTY ON JULY 4th. IT WAS ALWAYS ON SOME OTHER DAY.



MUFFY & NELSON POSED FOR PICTURES IN FRONT OF THE SHOP. NOTICE THE PICTURE & NEWS STORY HONORING THE MAYOR WHICH IS STILL IN OUR WINDOW!

The merriment was only momentarily broken. Physical violence was averted but not without some tense moments. The Bensonhurst duo retreated after Muffy, one of our temporary summertime helpers, rushed up to them shouting in their faces: "Go ahead! Fuck me over! Because I've got Aids and I'll get it all over you!!" (You've gotta see it to believe it.)



THEY HAD TO HAVE HAD SOME GOOD SPANISH MUSIC ON TO GET BILL & I GOING LIKE THIS!!



NELSON IS NOT ONLY A GREAT EMPLOYEE, A CONSCIENTIOUS HARD WORKER, BUT HE'S GOT FLAIR AS WELL. HIS OUTFITS ALWAYS STEAL THE SHOW.

Writing, even typewriting, seems passe. One picture is truly worth a thousand words. Certainly an old whoremonger like me shouldn't blanch at what George calls "prostituting" my Xmas letter by turning it into one big sales pitch for a startling two-hour adventure---a video voyage you'll never forget---excerpts from my first six months with a camcorder!

Imagine, yours truly, poor ole me, flushed out from behind this print, no longer able to hide behind my special verbal gift-- tossed out there naked before you in the electronic real world of adventure & hype!

In the mood for a lovely, heavy, moving dose of melancholy, my darlings? Join the Annual Aids Candlelight Memorial Service on Christopher Street, help us carry Mark Ross's & Michael Hulburt's ashes to the river with flags flying and bands playing --Coverage of the entire event, one of the better tapes I've made this year, has gotten a couple rave reviews in some small publications but it's been a hard thing to market. Funerals, especially one you can take home with you & experience over & over again, bomb at the box office.

But, renewing the inner self is what life is all about. So, together, we'll ride the PWA Coalition's float down Fifth Avenue. infusing our souls with the overwhelming outpouring of love from hundreds of thousands of onlookers--see all humanity reach out toward us--imagine you're a Baby Jessica just pulled from the well--see an explosion of the human spirit as everyone wishes you well!



MARK ROSS'S FRIEND, DAMIEN, DECORATED HIS BOX OF ASHES & CARRIED THEM IN THE CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL SERVICE.



MULTI-COLORED GAY FLAGS HANG IN FRONT OF THE STONEWALL ON GAY PRIDE DAY. THE ONLOOKERS GIVE ESPECIALLY WARM RECEPTIONS TO GMHC, PARENTS OF GAYS, &

Later, for laughs, we'll go to the Christopher Street Festival and, at the Hug-a-PWA booth, tout tickets to that evening's sold-out dance on the pier--at greatly inflated prices, of course. We'll work the crowd. And we'll actually see the money flow in. After dark, we'll visit the dance, watch the dazzling fireworks, capture the evening's romance as lovers smooch at riverside.

As summer ends, we'll go to Montauk for a brief three-day vacation. Then, on Halloween, we'll catch a glimpse of the Village's annual parade & wander around Christopher Street until the wee hours. There, we'll chat with that infamous personality, renowned -poet, Taylor Mead & see everyone from the Queen of Diamonds to Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas showing off their things.

Yes, "Video Montage 1991" will be coarse & primitive, a forerunner of more polished productions in later years--after both the camcorder's many special features & the editing machine (yet unpacked) have been mastered.

I regret, dear reader, that economics make it necessary for me to ask those wanting a copy of this exciting document to send a check for \$10 made out to Uplift Inc.--just enough to pay for production & shipping costs. The retail cost of the tape we'll use, the best, would be more than half that. And, we won't cash your checks until the product is produced. Allow 30 to 90 days for delivery.

But, fear not, you lowly antiquated printophiles--this silly writing, this autobiography in installments, will continue. My Xmas letter will press on into the history books of the human race. Even if you have no VCR, you're still human (barely) & we'll not leave you behind! Every year, you'll find this Xmas letter at your cave's door. After all, thanks to George Bush, not everyone has \$100 these days.



MARSHA SAVED HER PENNIES ALL YEAR SO SHE COULD GIVE ME A BAG FULL OF MONEY FOR XMAS!!



AND SHE STILL HAD ENOUGH LEFT OVER TO LOOK FABULOUS FOR THE HOLIDAYS!



DAVID'S ASHES REST IN A RIBBON - DRAPED BOX, RINGED BY VICI'S, ONE THE COUNTER HE BUILT IN THE SHOP HE DESIGNED.



FAMOUS ATHEIST DOES EXPERIMENT TO SEE HOW MANY ANGELS CAN DANCE ON ONE COUNTER TOP!

ONE COUNTER TOP!

But, you lucky video voyagers, as 1991 winds down, you'll howl at the antics during Willie's surprise birthday party at the shop. Catch the gossip. Camp it up with Marsha as she reads Randy. Have a merry old time!

As 1991 ends, it's Willie, creative dynamo, extraordinarily-talented decorator, that special glowing creature anyone would proudly claim as his son, who takes us on a tour of a revamped Uplift--polished & gleaming in its holiday splendor. None of it ever looked better.

George Bush, with his prestige & upscale income, showed America how to be CHEAP this Christmas. His unlucky "friends" only got socks George'd bought at J.C. Penny & Co. Fortunately, those with more class and more generous hearts found their way to Uplift.

Perhaps they were drawn by the two huge angels dominating the windows, or by the little bands of angels surrounding David's box & our wedding pictures. Maybe, they were charmed by those flying angel ornaments carrying a golden goose--or hypnotized by those lighted, moving angels flapping their wings on every pedestal & counter.



EVEN FOOT HIGH ANGELS CUT OUT OF WOOD DOMINATED UPLIFT'S TWO WINDOWS. EACH CARRIED A MESSAGE ABOUT AIDS IN KEEPING WITH THE AIDS THEME IN OUR XMAS WINDOWS.



THIS MASTERPIECE BY GERARD CERINI HAD TO BE DRAPED BEFORE GOING INTO THE WINDOW. A CLEVER & TALENTED PWA ARTIST SUGGESTED THE SLOGAN: "BE AN ANGEL, WEAR A CONDOM" & DID A GREAT JOB EXECUTING IT.

## AIDS Vigil

The video market is flooded with videos dealing with AIDS. Many people have jumped on the bandwagon, with video camera in hand, producing videos for the sake of producing videos. We have seen videos dealing with self healing, home remedies in the form of medicine, and countless interviews that leave the viewer feeling lost. So when an AIDS video appears that has merit it's a rare happening!

*AIDS Vigil*, a video tape created by Randy Wicker, deals with the death, or should I say the remains of two young men stricken down by AIDS. The opening section of the video shows the box of ashes in the middle of a tray and flowers being arranged around it. People float in and out of the tape as the final act is carried out in a rather careful manner.

Sheridan Square Park is the sight of the AIDS Quilt

panels that are on display. The panels are hung on the black metal fence. Rather than showing just a select few panels we are shown all the panels and commentary in provided about each.

A dirge starts playing in the background, people march down Christopher Street, some holding hands, others carrying the quilt panels. The multitude pour into St. Veronica's, while the Lavender Light Choir sang. The Quilt panels were displayed in the church from the balcony and pulpit. Pray-

ers were offered and from a single candle in front of the church other candles were lit. Soon the church was lighted with small flames. A roll call of those that died was given, Mark and Michael's names were on the top of the list. Their ashes had been carried to the church and rested on the altar.

Outside the church lavender colored balloons were set free in front of the church. each balloon carried the name of someone that died from AIDS. The parade of mourners continued to the foot of Christopher Street. Still quiet the crowd watched as the ashes of the two young men were poured into the Hudson River. The orchids fell silently into the water and this signaled the deluge of candles that were to follow into the dark river.

"What finer tribute can we give our friends, most of whom die as paupers, than to carry them to the river with bands, banners, songs, flowers, and lot of grieving friends. Take them to the river like the Pharaohs and Princesses!"

*AIDS Vigil* is available from Randy Wicker, Uplift Incorporated, 506 Hudson Street, New York, New York, 10014, for the price of \$9.95, plus \$5.00 for postage.



GERARD PUT SOME LAST MINUTE HIGH-LIGHTS ON THE MALE ANGEL'S WINGS JUST BEFORE WE SET HIM UPRIGHT & SLIPPED HIM INTO THE 504 WINDOW .



ALL AROUND THE SHOP, LIGHTED & MOVING ANGELS WAVED & FLAPPED THEIR WINGS TO IMPROVE SALES!

But, once inside, they found all those living angels I've been so fortunate to have, by my side, helping me carry on this business called life.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus . Thanks to him, we, at Uplift, had a great Christmas this year . Here's hoping yours was even better!!! And on we go to a HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

Randy Wicker's  
Uplift Inc.  
506 Hudson Street  
New York City, NY 10014

*As always,  
with love,  
Randy 12/23/91*



JOHN HELIKER, UPLIFT'S SENIOR EMPLOYEE FOR OVER 15 YEARS NOT ONLY MAKES GREAT LAMPS, HE'S PROVEN TO BE A SUPER SALESMAN TOO!!



AND WHO SAYS THAT JUST BECAUSE YOU HAVE AN AIDS THEME IN YOUR WINDOW, YOU CAN'T HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR TOO!

P.S.- Time permitting, I'll ad a news item or two that you might find interesting.

# Hosp, service settle AIDS-bias complaints

By DAVID HARDY

Daily News Staff Writer

The city Human Rights Commission yesterday announced settlements in two AIDS discrimination complaints, one involving a driver for a private ambulance service who refused to assist a patient down a flight of stairs to a doctor's office because he had the fatal disease.

The service agreed to pay a \$15,000 penalty.

In an unrelated case, NYU Medical Center agreed to pay \$25,000 to settle charges that

it denied hospital rooms to AIDS patients.

All County Transportation Ambulette Service was penalized after the commission ruled that a driver refused to help Joseph Moloney, an AIDS patient who used a wheelchair, down a flight of stairs to his doctor's office.

Commission Chairman Dennis deLeon said the incident involving Moloney, who died last July, occurred Aug. 8, 1989, when he was transported from his Brooklyn home to a Manhattan physician's office.

After the incident, Moloney refused to use the service and the doctor had to visit Moloney at home.

While noting that All County is appealing the commission ruling to the state courts, deLeon said the commission ruling called for the \$15,000 penalty to be paid to Moloney's estate for the emotional anguish he suffered from the episode. DeLeon said the company was also directed to institute AIDS sensitivity training for its drivers.

Mayor Dinkins characterized the driver's actions as

"unreasonable and reprehensible." He said the commission's finding should send a message to institutions around the city that access to health care "is a basic right for all New Yorkers."

The complaints against NYU Medical Center were made by two now-deceased AIDS patients. David Combs and Ronald James had charged they were kept in the hallways of the hospital's emergency room while other incoming patients got semi-private rooms as they became available.

The charges against the medical center stemmed from September and October 1989, when Combs waited six days for a semi-private room and James waited 11 days.

James, who subsequently died at the hospital, lapsed into a coma for four days while waiting for a room, according to the complaint.

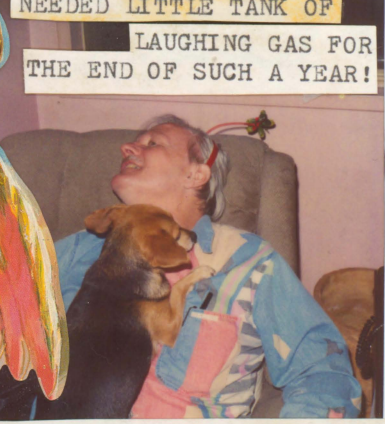
DeLeon said NYU Medical Center did not admit guilt in agreeing to the settlement that calls for the facility to pay \$25,000 in "unrestricted" grants and donations to organizations selected by executors for Combs and James.





Do not open this  
Until After  
Finishing  
The entire  
Letter!

- AND HERE, DEAR FRIEND, FROM US TO YOU -



MUCH NEEDED LITTLE TANK OF LAUGHING GAS FOR THE END OF SUCH A YEAR!

ALL THOSE HOLIDAY PRANKSTERS HELPED KOO-EE GROW ANTLERS!

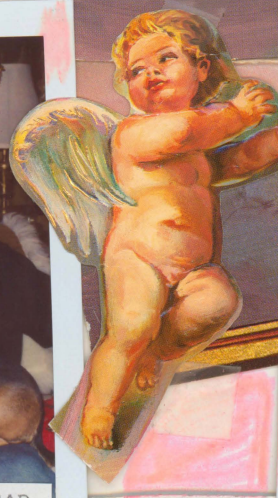
KOO-EE KISSED AND LICKED TO & FRO, 'CAUSE RANDY'S HEAD HAD SPROUTED A SPRING WITH MISTLETOE!

Happy New Year

1991



A DOCTOR FRIEND USED A REINDEER'S BELL TO HEAR; OUR HEARTS BEATING STRONG, AND BURSTING WITH CHEER.



THE MORE I KNOW MEN THE MORE I LOVE MY -OO-DOG-

AS SEASONED SURVIVORS, WE ALL WANT THE WORLD TO KNOW; WE'LL RUN EVERY LAP THAT FATE CAN THROW!

SEEING THIS SHOULD MAKE IT CLEAR, THE LUNATICS ARE RUNNING THE ASYLUM THIS YEAR!



SUZANNE'S ARTWORK CUP FOR RANDY'S XMAS, FILLED UP WITH LAUGHTER FOR ALL TO WITNESS.