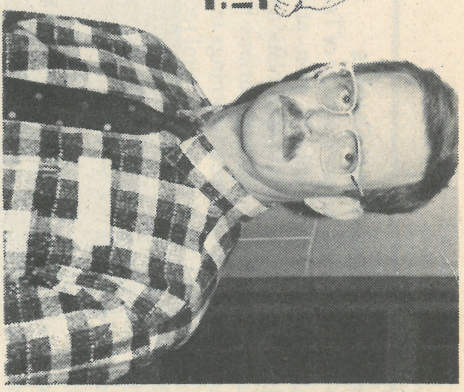




Left: Michael Lynch at the University of Toronto, Right: Lynch was a founder of AIDS ACTION NOW! as well as many other community and activist organizations. Below: Lynch, centre, takes unapproved anti-AIDS drug on Parliament Hill.



PHILIP HANNAN

A Community Father Dies

Michael Lynch: 1945 - 1991

Michael Lynch, one of Canada's leading gay rights and AIDS activists died July 9 at age 46. For over 20 years, he spoke, wrote, and organized for the lesbian and gay liberation movement. He was an early activist in Toronto's Gay Alliance Towards Equality and Gay Academic Union, chair of the Committee to Defend John Danien, founder of Gay Fathers of Toronto, and a member of the editorial collective of the influential gay journal *The Body Politic*.

Michael made energetic and articulate contributions to the growth of an AIDS movement in Canada. He was a founder and early chair of key organizations, including the AIDS Committee of Toronto, AIDS Action Now! and the AIDS Memorial. He originated the idea of AIDS Awareness Week in 1983. As a contributor to the influential gay journal *The Body Politic*, he wrote

the first major article in Canadian journalism on living with AIDS in 1982. Beginning in 1983, he wrote other articles which reflected one of the few sex-positive voices in the North American gay press at the time, analyzing the AIDS crisis from a gay liberationist perspective.

More recently, Michael wrote an op-ed piece for the national daily *The Globe and Mail* on the Canadian government's insensitivity to AIDS issues, and gave interviews as a person living with AIDS on national television and radio, and in the gay and non-gay press. "He played an enormous role in pressuring the government to make changes to permit people with AIDS to begin accessing life-saving treatments," said Joan Anderson, chair of the Canadian AIDS Society.

In his 1989 book of poetry, *These Waves of Dying Friends*, Michael's lyric and elegiac gifts memorialized, among the many touched by AIDS, his friend Bill Lewis, an AIDS researcher and fellow gay activist, who died in 1987.

Michael's talents and vision also extended to the growing field of lesbian and gay studies. He was the main organizer of the first gay history conference in Canada, "Whitman in Ontario," in 1980. His article about phrenology, "Here is Adhesiveness: From Friendship to Homosexuality," won the first Crompton-Noll Award from the Gay Caucus of the Modern Language Association (MLA) in 1981.

For ten years he edited the *MLA Gay Caucus' Gay Studies Newsletter* (now known as the *Lesbian and Gay Studies Newsletter*), which has had a major impact in

connecting a growing network of scholars in the field. His first historical book, *The Age of Adhesiveness*, a study of male-male intimacy in New York City between 1830 and 1880, left unfinished after almost 10 years of painstaking research, will be completed by his friend Bert Hansen, of the City University of New York. Another testimonial to Michael's academic achievements is the Toronto Centre for Lesbian and Gay Studies, of which he was the founding chair in 1988.

Michael could play as avidly as he worked, and would want to be remembered as (probably) the first gay academic ever to be a nude centerfold for both *Honcho* and *Mandate*, and as a sweaty, shirtless 5 am disco reveller at Stages (Toronto), The Saint (New York), and the Ice Palace (Fire Island). He spent hours, too, at his grand piano and harpsichord,

honoring his style of Bach or Schubert, or accompanying friends' renditions of the classics of torch. And he loved to host. Many friendships were celebrated over intimate dinners he cooked with panache and at lavish soirées where he presided as "diva divine."

Memorial donations may be made to the Michael Lynch Endowment Fund of the Toronto Centre for Lesbian and Gay Studies, 2 Bloor St. West, Suite 100-129, Toronto ON, M4W 3E2.

Information supplied by Toronto Centre for Lesbian and Gay Studies