

Peter Thornley



Peter Thornley, who once owned one of the area's first retail shops catering to the GLBT community passed away Friday, Aug. 26, 2006. He was 63. At one time, Thornley's Rainbow City helped define the area of North Mills Avenue between Colonial Drive and Virginia Avenue as Orlando's GLBT district. During the store's heyday, the Vi Mi District solidified its recognition as the core of the city's GLBT community and helped draw the Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Community Center of Central Florida from Colonial Drive to two doors down from Rainbow City.

In 1998, Watermark sponsored an effort to fly the rainbow flags throughout Downtown Orlando. Though supporters had followed proper procedures, anti-gay activists petitioned the city to not allow the flags to be flown. During city commission hearings, the opposition appeared wearing black armbands. Thornley responded by fashioning makeshift armbands from a roll of rainbow-striped cloth and distributed them to the flag project's supporters. Besides owning Rainbow City, Thornley also owned a residential real estate venture and a miniatures company, Cottage Industry, which specialized in dollhouse accessories. He had retired from a career teaching French at Edgewater High School and in Newport, R.I. He had travelled throughout Europe and was a member of Mensa.

Thornley was survived by his partner, Guillermo Rodriguez of Orlando.