

Obituary: James A. Robles

By Timothy Cwiek
PGN Writer-at-Large

James A. Robles, head coach of the Philadelphia Fins Aquatics Club, died Nov. 26 from complications due to AIDS. He was 40 and lived in South Philadelphia.

Robles was born Dec. 30, 1965, and grew up in Tucson, Ariz. He moved to Philadelphia to attend the University of Pennsylvania and received a bachelor's degree in civil engineering in 1988.

He worked on a variety of projects as a civil engineer throughout the 1980s and 1990s, including reconstruction of the Philadelphia Civic Center, friends said.

In 1988, Robles and several water-polo players organized the Philadelphia Fins Aquatics Club for members of the GLBT community. Robles served as head coach until

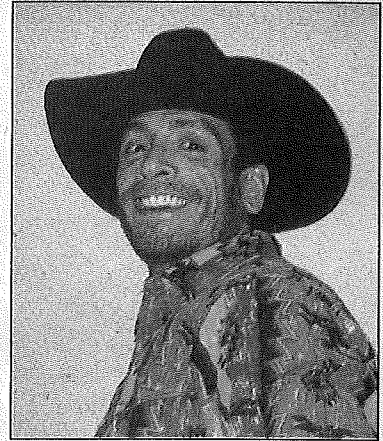
his death.

He helped many polo players improve their swimming and begin swimming competitively in the late 1980s, said Brian Cahill, a close friend.

"Jim was very proud of his coaching and helped many Fins members win championships at national and international competitions," Cahill said. "In August, the Fins brought home more than 50 medals [from the Gay Games in Chicago]."

Robles also became active with Team Philadelphia, the city's organization of gay and lesbian sports teams, and served as its secretary for the past few years.

Cahill said many are mourning Robles' death. "A lot of people are shocked and suddenly left without a resource, basically, because of his passing."



In addition to aquatics, Robles had a passion for country-western music. He won more than 15 championships in country-western dance competitions.

He also served as a coach, trainer and judge in the country-western community. "Jim was very active, right until the end," Cahill said. "He was constantly doing something."

Robles was active with the leather/bear community and worked as an attendant at a leather shop, The Gear Box, in the lower level of The Bike Stop, a local gay bar.

Robles is survived by his mother, Rachel Robles of Tucson, and two brothers, Robert and Peter.

A memorial will be held 3-6 p.m. Dec. 30 at the William Way Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center, 1315 Spruce St. Memorial contributions may be sent to MANNA, P.O. Box 30181, Philadelphia, PA 19103. ■

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