

Obituaries

Dominic Bash, hairdresser who helped AIDS victims

By Ralph Cipriano
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Dominic Bash, 46, a South Street hairdresser who ministered to men dying of AIDS and made flamboyant public appearances in drag, died Sunday at his South Philadelphia home of complications from AIDS.

Mr. Bash, who had pale, shoulder-length, blond hair, loved to be outrageous.

Last year, he led the Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade, strutting from Rittenhouse Square to Penn's Landing in a purple-and-pink sequined leotard and a lavender feathered boa.

In 1991, Mr. Bash was master of ceremonies at the third annual Coming Out Block Party on Pine Street. He wore a tight black skirt, fishnet stockings and a tiara.

"Dominic was sort of a working, living example of what being out of the closet really means," said David Fair, director of We the People Living With AIDS.

"He was joyful," Fair said. "Dominic celebrated every moment of his life, even his anger. And he had a lot of anger. He was very bitter about how he was treated as a gay man by his church, and how people with AIDS were treated."

He found a positive outlet for his anger.

In 1973, Mr. Bash, a former seminarian, co-founded Dignity of Philadelphia Inc., a church group for gay and lesbian Catholics. For the last dozen years, he was coordinator for Dignity's AIDS ministry.

In that role, he visited hundreds of men dying of AIDS, and he managed to stay remarkably upbeat. On the dashboard of his car, he had a sign that read, "Expect a miracle." There was no miracle, but Mr. Bash hugged and kissed AIDS victims anyway. He also helped men renew their spirituality and plan their funerals.

It was emotionally draining work. "After the first experiences, I cried my eyes out," Bash said in a 1991 interview. "Now, I just feel like the guide, guiding men along. I just give a little nurturing, loving and caring that they're not getting from mother church."

"He gave to people what he so much wanted for himself — unconditional love," said Joseph Ciavarella, a close friend.

Mr. Bash was always hugging people.

When he went to Mass, and it was time for people to offer each other the sign of peace, Mr. Bash hugged everyone in sight.

"They had to hold up the Mass because he was still working the crowd," Ciavarella recalled.

So none of the time Mr. Bash spent in the seminary was ever wasted.

"Dominic was a priest in the true sense of the word," Fair said. "He had the three essentials of being a priest: He truly cared about people, he understood what God meant to people and he knew how to dress up."

Mr. Bash was a Kensington native who graduated from North Catholic High School in 1965. He was seminarian in the Oblate of St. Francis DeSales.

"I was brought up as a Roman Catholic, being taught to love one another," Mr. Bash said in the 1991 interview. "Yet they couldn't love me and I couldn't live a lie. They say they hate the sin and not the sinner, but that's bull. You cannot separate my sexuality from me."

At his South Street salon, the Abbey, Mr. Bash cut hair while his Siberian husky, Natasha, hung out looking for treats. His customers included many nuns, whose haircuts were always free. Mr. Bash often amused his patrons with stories about the social life of seminarians, or the latest parties he attended on his last all-gay cruise.



Dominic Bash at a memorial service.

He was so honest about who he was that he forced people to make a decision: lighten up or check out.

One of cross-dressing inspirations was Madonna. When Mr. Bash

strapped on his cone-shaped bra and the rest of his vamp costume, he dubbed himself MaDominic.

"He scared me," Ciavarella said. "He was all the stereotypes of what a gay person is supposed to be."

Ciavarella recalled watching Mr. Bash parade around in drag and thinking to himself, "This man is being all of who he is and saying 'To hell with you.'"

Mr. Bash sometimes made the clergy just as uneasy.

"He challenged traditional religious people to expand their understanding of the place of religion in your life," said the Rev. Rodger Bradley, rector of the Episcopal Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany, of which Bash was a member. "He really believed that your whole life, every aspect of your life, was related to your religious spirituality," the rector said.

Mr. Bash made a habit of showing up at city shelters for the homeless, where he cut hair for free. He got to know the people on a first-name basis.

"Renee likes her head shaved, then she wants me to put a part in it," he said in a 1984 interview. "It looks like somebody put an ax through her head."

In 1991, Mr. Bash helped organized a demonstration where protesters from Act Up, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, sprinkled condoms on the altar of the Cathedral Basilica of SS. Peter and Paul. Cardinal Anthony J. Bevilacqua was preaching at the time.

Mr. Bash met the cardinal on many occasions, once giving him a flag that represented gay and lesbian people. He also offered the cardinal unsolicited fashion tips.

Four years ago, Mr. Bash tested

positive for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

"All my friends have passed," he said in a 1991 interview. "I don't know why I'm still around."

Mr. Bash was afraid of pain, but he never feared death.

"It's an experience you only do once," he once told a man who was dying of AIDS. "Death is like a roller coaster. At the end of the ride, you're going to end up in the hands of God. So enjoy the ride."

He is survived by his mother, Marge, and two brothers.

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday at St. Luke and the Epiphany.

Contributions in his memory can be made to the St. Luke's Hospitality Center for AIDS Ministry, Church of St. Luke and the Epiphany, 330 S. 13th St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19107.

Death Notices

ASHER

Jan. 25, 1993, LILLIAN (nee Rosenber), of Phila., Pa., wife of the late Abraham Asher, mother of Barbara Bronstein and Howard Asher, sister of Frances Kaufman and Joseph Rosenberger, also survived by 7 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren. Relatives and friends are invited to services Wed., 10 A.M., JOSEPH LEVINE AND SON, N. Broad St. above 71st Ave. Int. Adath Jeshurun Cem. Family will return to the Bronstein residence.

BARATTA

JEAN (nee Ciancaglini), Jan. 23, 1993, wife of the late Frank, devoted mother of Richard; also 2 grandchildren Jennifer and Staci, dear sister of Fred Ciancaglini, Guida Faropiere and Anna DiEva. Relatives and friends are invited to viewing and funeral Thurs. morning 8:30 to 9:30 A.M., at Epiphany Church, 11th and Jackson Sts. Mass of Christian Burial to begin 9:30 A.M. Int. private. Arr. by VINCENT GANGEMI FUNERAL HOME, INC.

BERMAN

Jan. 25, 1993, HERMAN, husband of Roslyn (nee Rosenzweig); father of Risa Berman, Phyllis Barnett, Joel Berman and Linda Berman; brother of Yetta Gold; grandfather of Nathan. Relatives and friends are invited to Funeral Services, Wed. 1 P.M. precisely, GOLDSTEIN'S ROSENBERG'S RAPHAEL SACKS, 6410 N. Broad St. Int. Montefiore Cem. Shiva will be observed at his late residence. Contributions in his memory may be made to the American Heart Association.

BINDER

On Jan. 20, 1993, MARGARET, beloved wife of the late Nicholas and devoted mother of the late Frank and Jacob Binder; grandmother of Marie Feldt and Frank Binder. Relatives and friends are invited to attend her Memorial Service FR., 11 A.M., from FLUEHR FUNERAL HOME, 864 Bristol Pike (Rt. 13), Bensalem.

BLUM

CATHERINE E. (nee Schragen), age 104, on Jan. 24, 1993, formerly of Phila., wife of the late Peter, devoted mother of Joseph, Elizabeth Schuckebier, Henry and Vincent and the late William, Charles, Bernard and Leo; also survived by 20 grandchildren and 36 great grandchildren. Relatives and friends are invited to call 9:30 A.M., Thurs., Nativity of Our Lord Church, 625 W. Street Rd., Warrminster 18974 (at York Rd.). Mass of Christian Burial, 11 A.M. Int. Holy Sepulchre Cemetery. Remembrances in her name to the above Church or a charity of your choice would be appreciated by the family. (ANTON B. URBAN, Ambler)

BORRELLI

Suddenly, Jan. 24, 1993, WILLIAM F., age 35, beloved son of Mary (nee Joyce) and the late William A. loving brother of Carol Trost and Edward Borrelli, dear uncle of Kelli Anne and Daniel, brother-in-law of John Trost and nephew of Jack McCue. Relatives and friends invited to his funeral Thurs., 8:30 A.M., MURPHY-RUFFENACH FUNERAL HOME, 3rd and Wolf Sts. Mass of Christian Burial 9:30 A.M. Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church. Int. Gates of Heaven Cem., Berlin, N.J. Friends may call Wed. eve. 7 to 9. The family requests donations be made to Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church.

BOTTGER

Jan. 24, 1993, JOHN ROYLE, of Villanova, Pa., husband of Frances (nee McGurn) Bottger, father of John B. Bottger, M.D. and David A. Bottger, M.D.; also survived by his granddaughter, Hanna R. Bottger, his daughter-in-law, Karen Bottger and his brother, William C. Bottger. Relatives and friends are invited to his Memorial Service FR., 11 A.M., St. David's Episcopal Church, Valley Forge Rd., Wayne, Int. private. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be sent to the Baker Rehabilitation Institute, 13 Railroad Ave., Paoli, Pa. 19301. (MCCONAGHY FUNERAL HOME, Ardmore)

BOYLE

GEORGE J. (BUD), on Jan. 25, 1993, husband of Kenneth Frederick Boyle, of Linwood, Pa. Relatives and friends are invited to attend his funeral 8:30 Thurs. from THE WARD FUNERAL HOME, 1459 Market St., Linwood, Mass of Christian Burial, 10 A.M., from the Holy Saviour Church, Linwood. Burial will be in SS. Peter and Paul Cem., Marple Two. Friends may call Wed.

Death Notices

DERMODY

Formerly of 2224 Memphis St., Holy Man Phila., Pa., on Jan. 25, 1993, FLORE daughter of the late William and Katie (nee) Dermod. Relatives and friends are invited to attend her Mass of Christian Burial in the Chapel of St. Joseph's Manor, Mead, Pa., where friends may call after 9 A.M. Cathedral Cem. No viewing Thurs. eve. JOHN F. FLUEHR AND SONS, INC.

DIBIASE

On Jan. 5, 1993, ANGELINE (nee Caro of Emerald, N.J., age 81, Emma and daughter-in-law Carol, Joe and son-in-law, Wayne Lucarini, or or of 4, sister of Mary Cacchio, Jean Ralph Carozza and Louise Lista. Fun Thurs. 10 A.M. from Our Lady of Grace Somerdale, N.J. Ent. New St. Mary's Cing Thurs. morn. 8:30 to 9:30 A.M. from GENE J. ZALE FUNERAL HOME, 18 White Horse Pike, Stratford, N.J. In lieu family requests donations to The Sama pic, P.O. Box 4, Moorestown, N.J. 08055

DIMASCIO

On Jan. 24, 1993, ANTHONY C., of formerly of Yeadon, Pa., beloved husband (nee Bonvini), father of Denise Dou Mark DiMascio; grandfather of Katie Lauren and Mark DiMascio, Jr., brother DiMascio, of Valosta, Ga. Relatives are invited to attend the funeral FR., 9 THE LOGAN FUNERAL HOME, 501 E. 13th St., Camden, Pa. 17002. Mass of Christian Burial, Lawrence Rd., 10 A.M. Int. SS. Peter and Paul Cem. Fri. Thurs. evening 7 to 9 P.M. (Arr. Wm. H.

DOMIT

On Jan. 25, 1993, HANNAH, of So. Phi sister of Joseph and Marina and The and Mrs. Emma Anthony and the late Selma; also survived by niece and nephews and friends are invited to her VIGIL MASS Thurs. eve. 7 to 8:30 P.M. in Church. Mass will follow 9 P.M. Thurs. at from St. Marcons, 10 A.M. FR. to SS Paul Cem., Springfield, Pa. In lieu of flowers requests donations be made in her Marcons Church, 1010 Elsworth St., 19147. (Arr. by FUSCO FUNERAL HD)

DUFFY

On Jan. 26, 1993, TERESA L. (nee Norwood, beloved wife of the late Da devoted mother of Teresa F. Miller, de Ellen O'Neill and Frederick Seib, ez Stone, Richard Seib and Robert O'Neil and friends invited to attend her Fun FR. at THE CAVANAGH FAMILY HOME, 301 Chester Pike, Norwood 19104. Mass of Christian Burial in The C Gabriel 10 A.M. Int. Holy Cross Cem. F call THE CAVANAGH'S Thurs. eve. 7 to 9 P.M. in lieu of flowers Memorial Contributions made to Children's Hospital of Phila Civic Center Blvd., Phila., PA 19104.

FIZZANO

CATHERINE (KITTY) (nee Dembost 24, 1993, of Swarthmore, wife of the late W. Fizzano, mother of Guy Fizzano DeRitis; also survived by 4 grandchildren and friends are invited to attend Christian Burial THURSDAY, 10 A.M. Christosom Church, Providence Rd. In lieu friends may call after 9 A.M. Michael's Cem. Memorials may be Retirement Fund of Felician St Woodcrest Ave. Coraopolis, PA 15102. JAMES F. KNOETGEN FUNERAL

FORGIONE

On Jan. 25, 1993, QUINTA M. (nee I loving wife of Stanley; beloved mother Jr., Anthony, Michael and Marcy de Joseph D'Agostino Jr.; grandmother Relatives and friends are invited to Funeral on FR. 9 A.M. at ANGELONE HOMES, INC., 1414 Easton Rd. (Roslly of Christian Burial, 10 A.M. at St. Dav 316 N. Easton Rd. (Willow Grove). Int. chre Cem. Viewing Thurs. eve. 7 to 9 Funeral Home.

FREDERICK

Jan. 25, 1993, CLAIRE M. (nee Vott wife of Leo G., mother of Richard J. and grandmother of Richard, Joy and J Anthony Votto and Dolores Watson. R friends are invited to viewing Fri. Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, 8 Rd. Mass of Christian Burial, 11 A.M. Cem. Donations in her memory to Ann. Assn., 121 S. Broad St., Phila., 19101 appreciated. (KOLLER FUNERAL HI

GALLAGHER

Suddenly, Jan. 25, 1993, FRANCIS J. husband of Joyce F. (nee Booth); father J. Jr., Steven E., Brian S., and Gallagher; brother of Anna Slattery; also 3 grandchildren. Relatives and friends viewing Thurs. 9 A.M. Holy Family Heritage St., followed by Mass Burial 10 A.M. No viewing Wed. eve. (I

GLAESER

BILL C., 76, of Scottsdale, AZ, died 1 survived by wife Elizabeth M. (nee I daughter Carolyn Luendert and 2 of Service Thurs. 1 P.M. MESSINGER & CHAPEL, SCOTTSDALE, AZ

GREENING

on Jan. 25, 1993, IDA M. (nee Seatho wife of the late Adolph K., mother of Kenneth M., Bruce A., Lynn M. Ret late Elmer L. Greening and Elaine B. I survived by 23 grandchildren and 32 children, she was in her 85th year. I friend are invited to attend her Vie neral Fri. 9:30 A.M. JOHN F. FL SONS, INC., 3301-15 Cottman Ave. A.M. Int. Greenmount Cem. No viewi

HART

Jan. 25, 1993, CHRISTIAN V., husband (nee Liddell), father of Nancy Lloyd, I hater and Christian V. Hart III; also 3 grandchildren and 3 great grandchild and friends invited to the Funeral Ser P.M. from THE MARTIN P. BEAL FUNERAL HOME, 100 S. State Rd., Intermount Arlington Cem. Friends I hour before Service.

HERMAN

On Jan. 25, 1993, BETTY (nee Klein), dephian Apts., 2401 Penna. Ave., Phi late Ralph Herman, sister of Shirle notice of a Memorial Service will follo MURPHY LEVINE AND S