

OBITUARIES

Steve Endean

SPECIAL TO PGN

Steve Endean, the man who 20 years ago moved the fight for gay rights from street corners to legislative corridors of power, died August 4 at his home in Washington D.C. He had AIDS.

Endean would have turned 45 August 6.

Endean was the first executive director of the Gay Rights National Lobby and in 1982 founded the Human Rights Campaign Fund. Today, HRCF is considered the country's largest lesbian and gay organization.

"Steve was one of the bravest, toughest and most skilled fighters for human rights in our nation's history," said Congressman Barney Frank. "People who know how hard it can be to fight for gay and lesbian rights today should appreciate how many times harder it was to do that 20 years ago when Steve was a pioneer in the effort. I grieve at our loss."

Endean's activism began in Minnesota during the 1970's where he was this country's first full-time paid lobbyist for gay rights. He successfully lobbied for enactment of gay rights legislation in Minneapolis and St. Paul. The culmination of his home-based effort came in March when,

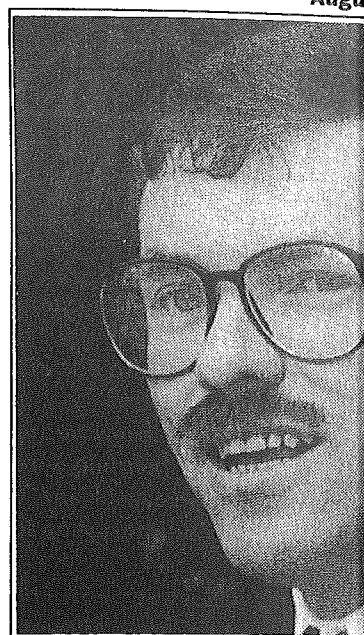
after sixteen years of debate, Minnesota became the eighth state in this country to pass a gay rights bill.

In those days he was criticized by gay people on both ends of the political spectrum—those who opposed any effort to bring visibility to the gay community and those who thought mainstream political organizing was too tame. Endean said later that handing our leaflets in gay bars was the most difficult thing he ever did.

"You could almost count on a third of the fliers being tossed

on the ground, a third actually being taken home and read, and a third of them being rolled up in a ball and thrown in your face," he said.

Endean would later use the techniques he developed in Minnesota to mobilize the lesbian and gay community nationally as a potent force in politics. He believed in creating coalitions with other progressive organizations, including labor, civil rights, women and religious groups, and in building on small advances in



▶ ENDEAN, P. 6 Steve Endean

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