

## SLAIN MAN LIT UP LIVES, IF NOT DOME

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Thursday, March 1, 2007

Author: SUSAN AGER, Free Press columnist

The day before somebody beat up my friend, shattering his spine and stealing his life, **Andrew Anthos** sent me an e-mail, the last of hundreds.

"dear mRS. AGER," it began. "these MACHINES ARE DRIVING ME UP THE CELING SO PLEASE exc USE ANY TYPING MISHAPS AS I JUST DON"T WANT to waste time going over them as they only give us so much time at these machines at the public library."

I had to laugh out loud. It's me who told **Andrew** a couple years ago that you shouldn't send e-mails that SHOUTED IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS, but **Andrew** had so much to say and so little time to say it.

I hope you've heard a lot about **Andrew** since he died Friday, at age 72, after admitting to a stranger with a metal pipe that, yes, he was indeed gay. People tended to diss and dismiss him because he was obsessive - a word he wouldn't like - about one simple dream.

He wanted to see our Capitol dome in Lansing lit a few times a year in what he called - over and over, a thousand times over - "the soft, muted hues of the American flag."

Man on a mission

I met **Andrew** about 10 years ago when I wrote about his mission, in which he briefly enrolled others by standing on street corners with a big sign, asking them to honk in support, or collecting their signatures. (He was shocked when someone from the state told him that among the 25,000 signatures he turned in, many did not count because they came from children.)

He shared a lot with me; he'd share a lot with anyone he trusted. He told me he was the product of a fling between a Greek woman and a black bus driver; his father rejected him early. So did the military after he honestly answered inquiries about his sexuality.

Later, in low-paying jobs swabbing floors and washing dishes, coworkers made fun of him. **Andrew** was easy to make fun of, with his lilting voice and cherub cheeks and deep passions for certain movies and especially for Ava Gardner.

But when they teased him, he got angry. Too angry. A quarter century ago, the state put him on disability, a disability he described as "emotionalism."

"I can handle the R-E-E-L world," he told me, "but the R-E-A-L world scares me." He'd never been in love: "I don't feel worthy of love." And so, he told me, "I have to do something to make myself feel I'm worth something."

He tried, setting himself up for hurt by begging for endorsements from presidents and governors, mailing in scores of fervent letters to the editor for each one that got printed.

A final e-mail

My last e-mail to **Andrew** went out in the early evening of his 72nd birthday on Feb. 19: "Happy birthday, **Andrew**! Or, as we sing in Polish, 'Sto lat, sto lat, etc., etc.,' which translates to, 'May you live 100 years.' I hope your day has been special in some way, and that you know that you are loved and appreciated."

I knew he'd reply the next day with delight and abundant gratitude. When he didn't, I worried my e-mail got lost in cyberspace. I did not learn until it was too late that he spent his birthday in Detroit Receiving Hospital, paralyzed and, I'm sure, hurt beyond words, hurt in his heart, that someone would insult him for being gay then smack him with a metal pole until he fell into the snow.

But, oh my, would **Andrew** be moved, moved to tears, I know, to see more than 50 people at his funeral, to see strangers angry at what befell him. To hear people say they loved him.

The only thing that would make him happier is a Capitol dome, lit in muted shades of red, white and blue, on this coming Fourth of July or, for that matter, any day at all.

Contact SUSAN AGER at 313-222-6862 or [sager@freepress.com](mailto:sager@freepress.com).

ILLUSTRATION: Photo

CAPTION: **Andrew Anthos** wanted the Michigan Capitol dome lit in red, white and blue.

CAPTIONWRITER: J. KYLE KEENER / Free Press file photo

MEMO: LIFE.

DISCLAIMER: THIS ELECTRONIC VERSION MAY DIFFER SLIGHTLY FROM THE PRINTED ARTICLE

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: FTR; FEATURES

Page: 1C

Index Terms: column

Record Number: dfp0000396358

Copyright (c) Detroit Free Press. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.