

THE QUILT

The other day, I saw the Quilt . . . you know,
The one begun not many years ago,
A melancholy spectacle of care
By those remaining, latching their despair
In pictures, words, and lamentation's wave
On panels cut the size to fit a grave.
The older ones, of course, were for the men
Who merged to form the incubation pen
That housed this lethal, viral strain of death
And spread it, while it stifled each one's breath.
Not only restless, multi-partnered gays
Lay pasted on those colorful displays,
But several later banners bore the names
Of guys and girls who fell to fatal claims
Of unprotected promiscuity
And pleasure's risky immorality;
Then babies, little ones who entered here,
Who died in innocence and free from fear
About their future in Eternity
Before a holy, just Divinity;
And spouses of an active, wedded trust
In mates who ruptured marriage vows for lust;
And workers with the dying, as they pass,
Who pricked their skin on sharps or deadly glass;
And borrowers of blood they had to use
To save the lives that they would later lose;
And sharers of a needle's many sticks
Who struggled finding veins to take their fix.
And yet, not all who loved those lost to AIDS
Made patchwork memories of men and maids
Who left our reckless, fornicating world.
Some saw beyond, in phantom haze unfurled
From shadows in their loved one's parting sigh,
The masses doomed to follow and to die.
Bright epitaphs, created out of grief
And love, adorn and wrap a rampant thief
Who thrives upon our nation's moral cloud
And gathers up this Quilt, as one huge shroud,
To hide beneath its sentimental power
His horrid, hellish hunger to devour.

--- *David L. Hatton, 9/29/93*