



Gay Microsoft original employee takes his own life

Death of Weiland, 53, mourned by gay rights leaders

SEATTLE | Jul 1, 12:52 PM

Leaders of a half-dozen gay rights groups mourned Friday the death of Ric Weiland, one of five original employees of Microsoft, who had given hundreds of thousands to support gay rights and the fight against HIV.

Weiland, 53, died last Saturday, June 24, in his Seattle home of self-inflicted gunshot wounds, the King County Medical Examiner's Office reported Friday. Friends say he suffered from depression, the Seattle Times reported.

"We are profoundly saddened by the death of Ric Weiland," said Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, in a statement released late Friday.

"Ric is someone who quietly, and with great humility, supported the work of many organizations dedicated to advancing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. The breadth and scope of this commitment was immense and unwavering," Foreman said.

Weiland attended high school with Paul Allen, who co-founded Microsoft with Bill Gates, and the duo hired Weiland in 1976 as one of the software giant's original five employees. Weiland worked as a program on BASIC and COBOL, two of Microsoft's original, signature computer languages.

Allen described Weiland in a statement as "very warm and thoughtful" and "a longtime friend," the Seattle Times reported. "Ric was certainly a key contributor to Microsoft's early success, and was a brilliant programmer. I have many fond memories of Ric and all the things we did together, and I will miss him."

Weiland retired from Microsoft in 1988 and became a benefactor, donating an estimated \$100 million to various gay and HIV groups, along with his undergraduate alma mater Stanford University.

Kevin Jennings, Founder and Executive Director, Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN), echoed Foreman's praise in a joint statement along with a half-dozen other gay leaders, issued late Friday by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation.

"Ric Weiland was a sweet and gentle man whose generosity transformed the LGBT movement," said Jennings. "His magnificent gifts helped numerous organizations, including ours, to not only survive but to thrive. He never sought anything — attention, credit, fame — in return for his giving, which is the mark of a true philanthropist."

Weiland gave generously to the Pride Foundation, a Seattle-based fund that contributes to hundreds of gay organizations in the Pacific Northwest. Audrey Haberman, its executive director, said Weiland, who was a board member, will be sorely missed.

"Anyone who knew Ric would say he was amazing," Haberman said. "He gave new meaning to the word humility. Despite his tremendous professional and personal achievements, he specifically requested no special attention for his generous charitable gifts, or the hard work he did on behalf of Pride Foundation and many, many other organizations."

Survivors include Weiland's partner, Mike Schaefer; nieces Emily Smelser and Heidi Kupitz; nephews Fred Smelser and Henry Smelser; and grand-nephew Josiah Kupitz, according to the Post Intelligencer.