

## Early Microsoft Employee Leaves Most of His Fortune to Charity, Including \$65-Million to Gay-Rights Group

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By Maria Di Mento

Richard (Ric) W. Weiland, one of the first Microsoft employees, has bequeathed most of his fortune, worth an estimated \$175-million, to charities. The biggest single commitment, \$65-million, went to the Pride Foundation, a Seattle foundation that advocates for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, and supports HIV/AIDS organizations.

Officials at the foundation announced the bequest today. Mr. Weiland, whose estate has only recently settled, died in June 2006 at age 53. He committed suicide after years of battling depression.

Mr. Weiland's second biggest gift — \$60-million — went to his alma mater, Stanford University.

The donation to the Pride Foundation is believed to be the largest bequest to support gay rights groups in the United States.

Mr. Weiland stipulated in his will that he wanted \$46-million of the bequest to be used to set up a special fund, which Pride officials have named the Weiland Designated Fund, to benefit 10 nonprofit groups chosen by Mr. Weiland: Amfar, the Foundation for AIDS Research; Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation; Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network; In the Life; International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission; Lambda Legal; **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**; Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays; Project Inform; and Servicemembers Legal Defense Network.

He earmarked the remaining \$19-million for the Pride Foundation's endowment and its scholarship program.

A long-time donor to the 10 groups, as well as to Pride, Mr. Weiland left specific instructions in his will about what percentage of his donation each group would receive. He did not place any restrictions on how the groups should use the money.

He designed the bequest so that the Pride Foundation would distribute the money to each one of the groups in quarterly payments over eight years. The payments will begin this year.

Of the groups willing to disclose how much money they would receive, Lambda Legal will receive a total of about \$11-million from the fund; Amfar will receive \$8-million, the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network will receive approximately \$6.5-million; and the **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force will receive slightly more than \$6-million**. All three groups are in New York.

Project Inform, an advocacy group in San Francisco that helps people who have had HIV/AIDS for 20 years or more, will receive slightly more than \$1.6-million; the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, in New York, will receive just under \$1.6-million; Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, in Washington, will receive approximately \$1.5-million; In the Life, a New York organization that produces a documentary television series on gay

and lesbian issues, will receive \$800,000; as will Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, in Washington.

One organization – the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation — would not disclose how much money it will receive from the fund.

### **Joining Microsoft**

Mr. Weiland attended the Lakeside School, a private school in Seattle, where he befriended Paul Allen, who worked with Bill Gates to found Microsoft. After graduating from Stanford University in 1976, Mr. Weiland joined the fledgling software company where he helped design and program some of the first interface systems for personal computers.

He started donating to Pride and to most of the beneficiaries of the designated fund in the early and mid-1990s, giving \$35 to \$1,000 each time. His donations to the groups grew bigger, often reaching tens and hundreds of thousands of dollars, by the end of the decade.

“He was very hands off as a donor, although he closely followed the work that was being done,” said Kevin Cathcart, executive director of Lambda Legal, who said he thinks Mr. Weiland’s bequest sets a new bar for financially affluent people who support gay causes.

Mr. Weiland served as a board member of both the Pride Foundation, and the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network. People who knew Mr. Weiland described him as fiercely intelligent, yet unassuming, modest, and quiet.

“He’d come to a board meeting and might say one thing the entire time, but when he did, everyone listened very closely,” said Audrey Haberman, executive director of the Pride Foundation.

He also had a sense of humor, often referring to himself as an “entrepreneur,” said Kevin Jennings, founder of the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network.

“He’d done so much to alleviate other people’s pain and had never asked for anything in return,” said Mr. Jennings. “He helped so many organizations, and here, obviously, he needed some help and we didn’t even know.”

In addition to his donation to the Pride Foundation, Mr. Weiland left approximately \$13-million to the Nature Conservancy; \$8-million apiece to Children’s Hospital Foundation and to Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, both in Seattle; \$7.6-million to Seattle’s United Way; and \$3.1-million to the Sierra Club Foundation, in San Francisco.

He also left \$3.2-million apiece to Environmental Defense, in New York; the Lakeside School; and the National Wildlife Federation, in Reston, Va.