

Hubert Kennedy

In Memoriam

Five Gay Obituaries

Peremptory Publications

Concord, CA

2003

© 2003 by Hubert Kennedy

In Memoriam: Five Gay Obituaries is a Peremptory Publications ebook. It may be freely distributed, but no changes may be made in it.

Comments and suggestions are welcome. Please write to hubertk@pacbell.net.

Contents

Introduction	4
Glenn Hogan	5
Mario Mieli	7
Roger Austen	8
Peter Schult	10
Robert Turner	13

Introduction

I never met Peter Schult. I knew him only through his writings, which show an anarchist spirit that I find very congenial. I personally knew all the other four men remembered here, some better than others.

Glenn Hogan and I met in the fall of 1954 as Jesuit novices at St. Charles College, Grand Coteau, Louisiana. Neither of us completed the two-year novitiate—I lasted less than a year. We later got in touch with one another again and remained friends until his death in 1982.

I met Mario Mieli while on a sabbatical leave in Munich in 1982–83. I had visited friends in Rome who put me in touch with him, and I visited him in his home in Milan on my way back to Munich. We later corresponded, but I saw him only that once. As a touching gesture, he wrote me a farewell note, which he sealed with a lipstick kiss. In fact, it arrived after I had received a telephone call informing me of his death. The letter was like a voice from the grave.

Roger Austen stayed in my home in Providence, RI, while he was researching the history of the 1919–20 sex scandal at the Naval station in Newport, RI. But I actually saw little of him, since I spent most of the time he was there in Europe.

As I mentioned in my obituary of Robert Turner, I met him during a gay pride parade in San Francisco in 1987. We remained close friends until his death in 1991.

As a matter of curiosity I note that, of these five men, only Peter Schult died of “natural causes”—and even in his case it could be argued that the deliberate neglect of his medical condition by the authorities hastened his death. Glenn Hogan was murdered; the other three died by suicide.

[Glenn Hogan]

Gay Community News (Boston), 6 Nov 1982

Dear GCN,

I have just managed to learn some details of the tragic death of my dear friend Glenn Hogan, who was the first man to be incarcerated in the Treatment Center of the MCI Bridgewater. (On his release, the vindictive Middlesex County District Attorney obtained his *criminal* conviction on exactly the same charges for which he had been given a *civil* sentence earlier. Between Walpole and Bridgewater, he was eight years behind bars.) Since many readers of GCN, especially in northern Vermont, know him well, this may answer some of the questions that have been asked.

Glenn was murdered at 1:30 a.m. on 6 April 1982 in his hotel room in Madrid, Spain, where he was on holiday. The desk clerk heard cries from his fourth floor room. He tried to enter with a master key, but was stopped by the security chain, when at that moment the murderer, a 19-year-old Spaniard named Jesus Sepulveda, threw himself out of the window and was seriously injured by the fall. By the time the police broke through the door, Glenn was dead. He was lying on the floor nude, his jugular was cut, and he had stab wounds in the neck, chest, and shoulder. The bloody knife was lying next to him.

At the present time, the murderer is in detention and the case is still under investigation by the Spanish police.

It can hardly be doubted that Glenn was yet another victim of the hatred and intolerance of homosexuals by people who talk of love, but only hate. May they rot in their own hell!

Hubert Kennedy
Munich, Germany

(Added later) The above information was gained from a Madrid newspaper. I was unable to learn the fate of Jesus Sepulveda. The reply to my letter to the American embassy told me to write to the Spanish court. But when I did, I received no reply. Later,

however, I received a telephone call from the Munich police, who said they had been asked by Interpol in Italy, on request of the Spanish court, to find out my interest in the matter. I said I was a friend. This apparently satisfied the German police. I never heard anything more of the matter and of course made no further attempt to find out—or go to Spain.

[Mario Mieli]

The Advocate (26 May 1983), p. 14

Italian Activist, Author, Victim of Suicide

Mario Mieli, one of the leading figures in the Italian gay movement, took his own life on March 12. He died from asphyxiation by inhaling gas in his Milan apartment. He was 30 years old.

Mieli helped found FUORI (Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano), the first major Italian gay organization, whose acronym also means “come out.” Mario left the organization over political differences in 1974–75, when FUORI united with the Italian Radical Party.

A native of Milan, Mieli founded the city’s gay theatrical collective Nostra Signora dei Fiori, which performed *La Traviata Norma* in Milan, Florence, and Rome in 1976. The text of this spectacle was published in 1977, the same year as Mieli’s book *Elementi di critica omosessuale*, an important theoretical work based upon his graduate thesis in philosophy.

Mieli had recently been working on an autobiographical novel, set in Egypt and featuring a resurrected Jesus, which was to have been published this spring under the title *Il risveglio dei faraoni*. But in early March he decided to stop publication of the book, saying, in a letter to a friend, that the book’s autobiographical nature might inspire someone to “have his hide.”

Mieli was a controversial figure in the Italian gay movement, but was respected as one of its most important intellectuals, even by those who rejected his sometimes outrageous public behavior. With his death at age 30, the movement has lost one of its most stimulating and charming figures.

Hubert Kennedy

[Roger Austen]

The Advocate (Los Angeles), Issue 412 (January 22, 1985), p. 36

Roger Austen, Pioneer Gay Critic, Dead at 48

Roger Austen, author of *Playing the Game: the Homosexual Novel in America*, died in Seattle, Wash., on July 1984. He drowned in nearby Lake Sammamish. His death at age 48 was a suspected suicide. A native of Washington—he was born there on Sept. 25, 1935—Austen wrote a master's thesis on Tennessee Williams while studying at Seattle University. Austen wrote stories and essays, as well as numerous book reviews for several publications, including *The Advocate* and *The San Francisco Review of Books*, of which he was contributing editor.

During a five-year stay in San Francisco, Austen was also contributing editor of *The Sentinel*, a gay San Francisco newspaper, and was host of a local television talk show. He gave up a job in advertising in 1978 to devote his time to a biography of the writer Charles Warren Stoddard. Despite considerable interest in the manuscript, he was unable to find a publisher. His subsequent depression was relieved by a new interest, the Newport Naval Station scandal of 1919, but again Austen was unable to find a publisher for the resulting manuscript. His depression apparently led to an unsuccessful suicide attempt in the summer of 1981. With returning optimism he entered a doctoral program at the University of Southern California in the fall of 1982, only to leave the university a year later.

Austen's pioneering gay literary survey *Playing the Game* (1977) has never been surpassed. He hoped this book would mark the beginning of a career as a "gay author," but Austen was disappointed by publishers' lack of interest in his later writings. Eventual publication is hoped, however, for his biography of Stoddard, with which "genteel pagan"—as Austen called him—he strongly identified.*

Hubert Kennedy

* Added 2003. This was published: *Genteel Pagan: The Double Life of Charles Warren Stoddard*, by Roger Austen, edited by John W. Crowley (University of Massachusetts Press, 1991).

[Peter Schult]

NAMBLA Bulletin 6, no. 3 (1985): 11.

IN MEMORIAM: PETER SCHULT

by Hubert Kennedy

At the time of his death one year ago at age 55, Peter Schult was the best known boy-lover in Germany. This was due partly to a public campaign to have him released from prison on humanitarian grounds, since he was terminally ill with lung cancer, a campaign that was strengthened by revelations that officials in the justice system had deliberately refused him treatment until the cancer had become incurable. Until then, however, he was generally known only to activist boy-lovers, left-radical political groups, and, of course, the many boys he had loved and helped and had sex with.

Peter found and took home the homeless—or they found him. In state institutions his address was passed from one boy to another as a place where runaways could find temporary shelter. His address was also well-known to the authorities, whose “authority” the anarchist Peter refused to recognize, and he was sent to prison numerous times on charges of drug possession and “seducing minors.” In 1971–74 he was in prison for “kidnapping” (read: sheltering a runaway from a state institution) and spent nearly two years in isolation, in part a result of political organizing among inmates.

With the publication in 1978 of his autobiography, *Besuche in Sackgassen: Aufzeichnungen eines homosexuellen Anarchisten* (Visits in Dead-End Streets: Memoirs of a homosexual Anarchist), written while he was again in prison, Peter became notorious, both for the frankness with which he revealed and accepted his sexuality and for his antagonism to the state. The book shows a colorful life.

Peter Schult was born in Berlin on June 17, 1928. He briefly saw military service at the end of the Second World War, escaped from a prisoner-of-war camp in the Eastern Zone shortly after internment in 1945, and by the end of that year had fled to the West, where he lived from black market trading and theft from automobiles, for which he was

sent to jail. From 1950 he led a respectable life as an active political liberal, directed a youth home and was, briefly, married. As a result of a homosexual affair he resigned his political offices in 1955 and joined the French Foreign Legion, serving until 1961, when he settled in Munich. There he took part in the anti-establishment subculture, among other ways, by editing an underground newspaper and dealing in drugs—and this in a city notorious for its right-wing politics.

When Peter was convicted for the last time in 1982 for “corrupting a minor” and was given the lengthy (for Germany) sentence of two years and ten months, the judge particularly pointed out Peter’s lack of regret for his actions. Nor were the authorities pleased by Peter’s writing in prison his second book, *Gefallene Engel* (Fallen Angels, 1982), a collection of short stories and essays, again describing his experiences with boys and his anarchist views.

Although Peter was unable to obtain treatment for what he believed to be a tumor in his lung, he finally gained a transfer to a prison in Berlin, where the presence of the tumor was confirmed. Efforts to gain his release having failed (although 1,500 people signed the petition), Peter fled the hospital in Berlin in March 1984, and a month later was back in Munich, where he died of bleeding in the lungs on April 26, 1984.

As Peter lay dying in Munich, a special issue of the journal *Die Aktion: Zeitschrift für Politik, Literatur, Kunst* was being prepared in Hamburg. It was devoted entirely to Peter and expressed an appreciation of him and outrage at his treatment. Edward Brongersma wrote:

“Society will one day have to admit—just as with witch hunts and the fight against masturbation—how insane and damaging all this was, how many have been made unhappy and socially ruined in the name of morality and law, instead of learning from them and gaining from their special talents. It still clings today to prejudices, whose falseness has long been scientifically demonstrated.

“What all could a man like Peter Schult with his intelligence, his understanding, his insight into youth, his warm love of the young, not have done for society! And to what has this world reduced him?

“It would be better to have less outrage over the faults of the past and a bit more over our contemporary Schult. His fate is a symptom of the sickness of our society.”

Germany is not the United States, and it is difficult to draw parallels, since our laws are harsher and our prison sentences brutally longer than those in Germany. But our struggle is basically the same, and one need not be the complete anarchist that Peter was to be inspired by his integrity and his determination to follow his feeling in the knowledge that his love for boys was good.

[Robert Turner]

NAMBLA Bulletin, September 1993, vol. 14, no. 6, pp. 10–15

[The article included several drawings by Robert. The one reproduced on page 13, the example of “mirror writing” was, alas, reversed so that it was no longer mirror writing. It is given below correctly.]

Rob the Artist

Hubert Kennedy remembers Robert M. Turner

THE DRAWINGS of Robert M. Turner—known as “Rob the Artist” to his friends—have been a wonder to all who saw them. This is due in part to the realization that they came from raw talent alone, for he had no formal training. They could have been better, but any suggestion that he could improve his technique with study was immediately rejected. He fancied himself, half-seriously, as the reincarnation of Leonardo da Vinci and perhaps thought, mistakenly, that Leonardo had not studied art. At any rate, Rob’s drawings were universally recognized as good, indeed very good. At times, he also fancied himself the reincarnation of Hank Williams. He told me many times of songs he had written and performed; but I never heard him sing, perhaps because he did not have his guitar with him.

Most of Rob’s drawings were meant as gifts for his friends, especially for the boys he was attracted to and who were attracted to him. He did occasional drawings on commission; his one commercial publication was a calendar for the year 1990, from which most of the illustrations here are taken. The twelve drawings for it were signed and dated simply “ART 89.” The drawings of a boy contemplating a skull, which is published here for the first time, was done as a gift to me. It has the following inscription (in mirror writing, in deliberate imitation of Leonardo): “For a real special friend, thanks for all you’ve done for me, and for all the efforts to NAMBLA from Rob the Artist (1-1988).”

I first met Rob on 28 June 1987 at the Gay Freedom Day parade in San Francisco. He had somehow heard of NAMBLA and had come for the occasion from his home in

Sacramento. He joined our small parade contingent somewhat fearfully. I made a point of talking with him during the parade (the only one he had ever participated in) and at the end of it invited him to stay with me whenever he visited San Francisco. This he did many times in the following years. During this time he was a generous and affectionate friend. Although I did not press him with questions, he naturally talked about himself and so I came to learn something of his background.

One of the strongest influences was his earlier enthusiastic commitment to Jehovah's Witnesses. Although he claimed to have rejected their teachings, he still felt the need to constantly confront them and all Christian fundamentalist religious groups. He was strongly compelled to watch their television programs—and argue back. He did not watch those programs when he visited me, but he always told me about them. At first, I thought he would work through this compulsion, but there was never a resolution. The arguments were always the same, over and over, until I grew tired of hearing them.

Rob loved being around boys, whom he never saw as being at fault in even their crudest acts; he always blamed adults. He believed, probably correctly, that he was a good role model for them. Because of this—and his limited education (he had difficulty reading)—he worked at low-paying jobs in the public school system: as school-yard monitor, school bus monitor, etc. And he volunteered much time with Little League. The result was that he lived on the edge financially. When the schools began cutting back on services, his work hours were the first to be cut. His desperate financial situation must have contributed to the depression that led to his suicide.

But his depression was mainly caused by his frustration at not being able to express the love he felt for boys, for he was very fearful of the possibility of prison, should anything happen. It probably never did; I doubt that he ever had sex with a boy. And yet, he could not accept the fact that the world is cruel and mad and that his was the sane view. He made the mistake of trying to argue with his opponents on their terms—a project doomed to failure. His psychological problems finally began to show up in a physical way—near the end he would have a burning sensation and literally rip off his shirt. He went to a psychological counselor, but here he was caught in a trap. He knew that if he talked about what was really on his mind, the counselor would not help him, but

would instead report him to the authorities. Thus he talked about other things—and was not helped.

Rob had long talked of suicide; his mother told me that he had talked of it for years, so that she no longer took the possibility seriously. But it had now become the only way out for him. In looking over his final phone bill, his mother saw that he had called a number of his friends a few days before his death. She called each of us, trying to trace his last movements. Some of us apparently saw his call, in retrospect, as a farewell. That was not clear to me, but it may have been felt as such by him. At any rate, I did not see him on his final visit to San Francisco.

After Rob's death, I wrote the following brief obituary, which appeared in the *Bay Area Reporter* (25 July 1991):

Robert N. Turner April 17, 1956–July 11, 1991

At age 35 a gentle and loving spirit left us. A talented artist, his drawings delighted young and old. But it was boys that he worshipped and loved, and for this he was branded a monster by society, now in the grip of “sexual molestation” hysteria. Hemmed in from all sides, unable to express himself, his life was made literally unspeakable by the insanity of our age. Then he chose to take total control of his life in the only way left to him. His courageous leap from the Golden Gate Bridge set his spirit free at last. Robert's friends and admirers in the Bay Area will greatly miss this harmless, loving, gentle man.

