

RUBEN
1963 - 1990

This panel is dedicated to Ruben who died of AIDS. His life is remembered in this quilt. Ruben died homeless living the last year of his life at shelters and on the streets of Champaign-Urbana.

Ruben denied his illness and refused treatment. Ruben also had a mental illness which had much to do with his homelessness and ability to understand how best to care for himself. The door represents all the doors that were shut to him. Ruben could be full of energy and life despite his trouble. He often spoke of dressing drag, for which he had a talent. He talked of going to Trinidad as if it were a paradise. His Trinidad was in Colorado, however, where he hoped to gain peace with a sex change operation. The dress sewn onto the panel symbolizes this side of Ruben.

Rubens' favorite hobby was writing lyrics and collecting 45's which he played for hours at a time. Even when he did not have a home he carried notebooks of his lyrics around with him. The music notes represent this aspect of his life. Ruben spent years of his life in prison. The prison scene is symbolic of those years. He was sentenced to three years in prison for stealing food to eat when he was homeless. Ruben seemed different after this occurred -- less full of life, more to himself. And then he was sick and we all lost Ruben.

Ruben's last name is not used as his family has not given their permission.

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