



## **Tony Vincent, Splunk Employee in Washington, DC**

'But deep inside, our being said "You are one." from ONE by William Victor Pass (uncle to Splunker Tony Vincent)

William "Victor" Pass was in all intents and purposes my uncle at a time when it was illegal for him to be so. The partner of my blood uncle Richard for 23 years, he was diagnosed as HIV positive in 1985, AIDS in 1986 and passed away in 1992. To work around the legal constraints that bounded their relationship, Victor adopted my uncle Richard (20 years his senior) just before his HIV diagnosis in 1985. -Tony Vincent



Victor and Richard were a couple from 1969 when they met at the first meeting of what would grow into MCC Dallas (or for those familiar, the Cathedral of Hope). Richard was the first and founding Pastor of the church and Victor one of the first 4 Deacons. In the 70s, 80s, and 90s, gay relationships were neither recognized nor legally allowed. In fact, until the 2003 SCOTUS decision on Lawrence vs. Texas consenting same sex intimacy was a Class C misdemeanor in Texas where they lived. As their life partnership continued, Richard and Victor realized the need for some legal protections usually offered by marriage but not available to them until the SCOTUS Windsor decision in 2013 and Obergefell in 2015. Looking back at Victor's and Richard's lives through the lens of today, it may be hard to comprehend the struggles in these earlier times of the gay rights battle. Victor was denied the ability to serve our nation's military in 1963 because he was gay ("found to be a permanent PHYSICAL reject" even though he had no physical disabilities). He was thrown out of his group home (he was an orphan) at 16 for the same reason. Their relationship was not supported legally until after BOTH of their passings (Victor died in 1992 and Richard died in 2012). Victor was never really accepted by my broader family even though I and my own husband are warmly and lovingly embraced by the same people. During Victor's increasing illness from 85 to 92, he was unable to gain medical coverage neither through Richard's VA benefits (since they could not marry) nor personal medical insurance (since HIV/AIDS was a preexisting condition). Today's struggle to gain/retain/expand LGBTQ+ rights is made even more clear by seeing their own pain caused by our country, our laws, our culture, our lack of acceptance. I worry literally every day for these rights and those we still struggle for. At the same time, I am truly joyous for how our Splunk community accepts and supports us just like every other Splunker. THANK YOU to my Splunk family for that!



## **Rosie Sennett, Splunk Employee in San Francisco, CA**

In 1987 I moved to New York City and started work as a specialized prop builder and customer on Broadway. I worked in large shops where often I was "The token Lesbian", accepted as a kind of exotic mascot by the many, many, many gay men working in the industry at that time.



Everyone was terrified for our boys (it was thought that HIV/AIDS was exclusive to gay men at the time) and every time anyone got so much as cold we'd worry. One by one, my colleagues and friends got sick and many died almost immediately. The NAMES Project was born that year out of the sorrow and in celebration of the lives of those we lost.

I'm astonished when I realize this was 35 years ago. It seems impossible that these folks are gone so long and passed so quickly through my young life that I can't recall their names. I was in awe of all of them as it was my first time in the workforce and these beautiful men were so talented. There were hundreds of quilts created back then and I stitched on many of them. I remember the quilts, and I remember being honored to be asked to help... but I can't remember their names. Back then the quilt was displayed many times in part and in full. And every time I'm lucky enough to be near I stop and look at each one. Because when you read their names, they are remembered. There are so many now that I honestly have never located one I remember working on. I remember the faces... and I remember moments. Funny weird memories of new experiences and the odd sense of danger that comes with being new to the adult world. From 1991 through 2004 I was a member of the Stonewall Chorale, the oldest LGBTQ four-part choir in the nation. We sang at countless memorials, nearly one every weekend for a time. But I can't remember their names. If I saw them written... I would remember.

This is what the NAMES project and the quilt are all about. We go about our lives, and people come and go. But when we see their names, we remember.