

Dick Leitsch passed away June 22, 2018. His passing left us with sorrow, pride, gratitude as well as inspiration for his accomplishments and his friendship.

He was the pioneer for the Gay rights movement in the 60's. His courage and his demand for equal rights was instrumental in changing a discriminatory practice which made it unlawful to serve homosexuals in bars.

Today, I write about the private man, the friend, not the activist.

I met Dick Leitsch two years ago when we planned the 50 year anniversary of the Sip-In at Julius' Bar.

The meeting and gathering took place at my friend Tom Bernardin's apartment. The moment Dick and I met he thanked me for taking care of Julius'. I was humbled by his gratitude and his warmth. We all had a fabulous time.

He frequently came to the bar with friends and family and we enjoyed having him there. Dick always lit up the room with his smile and warmth. We celebrated birthdays, holidays and Mattachine parties together.

When I received the call about his terminal diagnosis my heart immediately felt the void. A few days later he stopped at Julius' and we had a drink and chatted for some time. I asked him where he was going and he said he was on his way to plan his funeral. I was distraught and he said "will you come visit my grave and bring a beer?" I was startled and then we laughed. I said "of course". I told him I would learn to love beer and that I would come with a six pack and we both laughed again. We talked about his church, his faith and his service at his church. I spoke of my son, my friends and my dogs. I enjoyed listening to him speak, every time he told a story I learned something new. These are the moments I will miss tremendously.

We celebrated his last birthday together by going to see the play, The Boys in the Band. The surprise was after the play, we were going backstage to meet the cast. This was pre-arranged by John Cameron Mitchell and director Joe Mantello. Dick was delighted to be there and the cast thanked him for his activism.

I am so grateful and honored to have met him and to have called him a friend. The Julius' staff and I will miss him tremendously and will treasure the times we shared together. We offer our deepest condolences to his loving family.

\*\*\*\*\* Rest in Peace \*\*\*\*\*

Helen Buford

Julius' Bar