

**HAROLD ARMWOOD**  
34 years of disco dancing

Harold Armwood and Steve Royston were at separate tables in a Hollywood restaurant in 1977 when a mutual friend introduced them. They hit it off, hooked up and went on to spend countless nights at discos dancing the night away in a relationship that lasted 34 years.

After that first year they were inseparable, traveling back and forth from San Francisco to family in Chicago, working as picture framers, bike messengers and day laborers. Their relationship ended when Mr. Armwood, who had been in ill health and cheating death for several years, died at San Francisco General Hospital Feb. 6. Cause of death wasn't official, but Mr. Armwood had long been HIV-positive and for two years underwent kidney dialysis treatments. He was 58.

Mr. Armwood's memorial was held in the spacious second-floor community room at 1180 Howard St. A half-dozen friends sat on folding chairs in a semicircle under the 20-foot ceiling with light streaming in from more than three dozen vertical windows and large glass doors.

Royston, dressed in a black track suit with gold trim, had his Pomeranian-Pekingese dog Oscar on a leash. He thanked the five other mourners for attending as he reminisced about his partner and their many fun-filled days. He, Mr. Armwood and Oscar were in a framed color photo on the table next to the flowers.

"We went to discos — we loved dancing — and to the beach," he said. "And we both liked to paint — his grandfather in Hollywood taught him and he was a very good sign painter. Harold took an art class at the Lighthouse for the Blind just two years ago, too.

"He battled HIV for 18 years and he lost a kidney. We almost lost him several times. But he was a fighter."

The two men lived at 1180 Howard for 13 years until Mr. Armwood, who lately used a wheelchair, fell ill and was sent to Laguna Honda Hospital and, after several weeks, to S.F. General. Royston moved to TNDC's recently renovated Civic Center Residence at 44 McAllister.

A woman said Mr. Armwood happily tooted around "on his little scoot-



PHOTO COURTESY STEVE ROYSTON

**Harold Armwood, left, and Steve Royston with Oscar.**

er" and was always grateful when people did things for him.

Dennis Wilson, in dark suit and tie, had heard about Mr. Armwood's death and memorial just that day. He had been a friend of the couple, often seeing them at dance spots in the city.

"It's hard to lose a true friend," he said, turning to Royston. "I still consider you a friend."

Royston read "Brotherhood," a poem that was in a frame next to the picture:

*He shares the same dreams and vision  
stands by you in the strongest wind*

*without fear  
He is brother  
You can count on his friendship,  
strength and loyalty  
He believes his actions speak for themselves  
He is friend.*

Saying this was the last time he'd be with his longtime friend, Royston went to the table, held up the picture and said to it, "Goodbye, I love you so much."

Mr. Armwood's body had been sent to Chicago, where his relatives lived. He was to be buried the next day. ■

— TOM CARTER



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- PHONE:** (415) 626-1650
- FAX:** (415) 626-7276
- EMAIL:** centralcityextra@studycenter.org
- EDITOR AND PUBLISHER:** Geoffrey Link
- ADVERTISING DIRECTOR:** Heidi Swillinger
- SENIOR WRITER/EDITOR:** Marjorie Beggs
- COMMUNITY REPORTER:** Tom Carter
- REPORTERS:** Jonathan Newman, Mark Hedin, Brian Rinker, Ed Bowers
- DESIGNER:** Lenny Limjoco
- PHOTOGRAPHER:** Lenny Limjoco
- CONTRIBUTORS:** John Burks, Diamond Dave
- DESIGN CONSULTANT:** Don McCartney
- DISTRIBUTION:** Mark Hedin
- EDITORIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE:** David Baker, Michael Nulty, Debbie Larkin, Nicholas Rosenberg, Brad Paul, Tariq Alazraie

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