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SPEAKERS

Jimmy Carper, Vanessa Edwards

Jimmy Carper 00:00

The following program contains language or images of a phrase or a sensitive nature which may be considered objectionable by some listener discretion is advised. Oh yes, you've tuned into after hours queer radio with attitude right here on KPFT Houston 90.1 FM. The crew of after hours is ready to bring you news interviews, dialogue and music geared for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people and their friends. Hear it after hours. We may be diverse, but we have one thing in common. We are all out of the closet and urge everyone to come out of their closets. That means standing up for yourself taking responsibility for your own life and being proud of who you are. Realistically, we know not everyone can do that because of age job or frame of mind. That's okay, we're here for you too. So sit back, relax, and enjoy this week's edition of after hours. Hello, hear Stan and college station and possibly Huntsville, and welcome to after hours queer radio with attitude. I'm Jimmy Carper. And this is the December 9 edition.

Vanessa Edwards 02:20

Happy Holiday

Jimmy Carper 02:21

Happy Holidays is right. And to my right is when nessa Edwards Foster. Do you mean

02:30

you haven't a good holiday

Jimmy Carper 02:31

so far? Well, as always, time slips through my fingers.

V Vanessa Edwards 02:36
Well, it kind of happens this time of the year we get involved with a lot of things. been a very busy season for us. No kidding. Parties, fundraisers, the holidays, the shopping the traffic, the madness. I

J Jimmy Carper 02:50
know the lover.

V Vanessa Edwards 02:54
Yes, I can be busy. Ah,

J Jimmy Carper 02:57
um, what have you got cooked? cooked?

V Vanessa Edwards 03:01
And what have you what have I got cooked up cooking? Let me get my teeth in. Right. I'm actually what I got cooked up for tonight. Is we just finished with the Day of Remembrance. Yeah. Just unpacked a little over a week ago. Yeah. And

J Jimmy Carper 03:16
now I want to say that was an incredible experience. Thank you. I really, I thought I had a tremendous amount out of that. To

V Vanessa Edwards 03:25
me, that was something that I felt very, very touched by just by actually going through the exercise of it. I didn't really think of it until we were actually doing it. And it made such a different presence when it actually was occurring. Yes. Oh, I'm sorry. I'm looking at your pointing. It's like okay. The thing was that it really meant a lot to the transgendered community to have something that commemorated the victims of violence. Yeah. And on top of that, to not only have us out there but to have the support from the rest of the community, which we did. And I was very touched by them by having a nice out there. Yeah. By having Jimmy Well,

J Jimmy Carper 04:11

you know, it's, it's all our community. Thanks. I can tell you that. The way you had had it, we'll talk about this a little bit later, but the way the way you did it, I had the exact same feelings as the first time I visited the quilt. Same those same emotions. It really came up.

V

Vanessa Edwards 04:35

It tugs at your heartstrings. It looks one way on paper. I really didn't. I was trying to do it to create a little bit of a dramatic effect here, but I did not have any sense of the impact that it would actually

J

Jimmy Carper 04:48

it was it was it was very powerful. Well, thank

V

Vanessa Edwards 04:51

you. Yes. In fact, actually, that was kind of the same sentiment that was echoed from around the community. Actually what I plan on doing tonight is getting in contact with when Smith, she is the actually the creator of the remembering our dead website, which kind of spun off and he spontaneous candlelight vigil out in San Francisco a year ago. And as a result of that candlelight vigil had created so much reaction there locally, that all of a sudden a lot of the other cities around the nation decided, hey, we want to get in on this as well. We understand yes, we want to start doing a little bit more than just simply lamenting the problem without you know, having, I guess any kind of, I guess, a grieving process, or I guess a cathartic because that's, that's probably one of the things that's been missing is we really haven't had much of a chance to actually get the grief out into, to speak our minds and to to actually remember this, the way that these victims families remember these victims as friends? Yes, yeah, it's very painful. It's a very heart wrenching situation for them. And we wanted to at least share a little bit of that not to, I guess, play on the grief aspects so much, but to at least kind of let people know that we are there and that we feel what they're going through and that we are here for support. And hopefully, a little bit of education as well. Yeah. Can make us whole where?

J

Jimmy Carper 06:26

Well, that's going to be pretty powerful in itself. Just going over all of this. Later on in the show. Of course in the middle. We've got the news interviews with big Ryan, Chris. Second half of the show is the Latino hour. It's Francisco Sanchez and Sandy Lopez, they don't have kind of a title yet. So it Latino, our Hispanic segment, whatever.

V

Vanessa Edwards 06:53

The Latino There



Jimmy Carper 06:55

you go, there you go. And throw out we'll be playing Christmas music naturally by openly gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered artists. If I happen to play a straight artist, I'll let you know just in case. So if I don't say anything, just assume



Vanessa Edwards 07:12

as long as it's a train thing. Yeah, yeah.



Jimmy Carper 07:17

Well, we're going to, you're going to call Gwen right now.



Vanessa Edwards 07:22

Ah, yes, actually, I am. Let me go ahead and give her a call. Do you want to Sure. Yeah,



Jimmy Carper 07:26

I've got I've got some music. And in fact, I want to mention the music that we opened with the first song was by the South Coast chorale and off of their their Christmas time, CD, it's called coming out for Christmas. And that was that was pretty funny. And and of course after that, I had to play the classic the classic get it out of the way because you know people are going to call for it anyway. by Bob rivers and twisted radio and he is a straight man. And it was walking around in women's underwear. Oh, yes, indeedy. Remember those days



Vanessa Edwards 08:08

transition all of a sudden it stopped. Now you start looking good.



Jimmy Carper 08:15

Yeah, now you're looking for comfort.



08:20

Freedom.



Jimmy Carper 08:22

And so while we're calling Gwen and getting that set up, I've got a piece of music by the lake great country and western singer said Spencer from his Christmas CD family ties And it's it's

great country and western singer said Spencer from his Christmas CD really does. And it's it's kind of the way I'm feeling right now. And it's an old favorite and I hope it gets you into the mood and you're listening to all this on after hours queer radio with attitude on KPFT Houston and ke o s College Station Hello there. Yes, we are back. That was the great city Spencer with It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas. Yeah, right here on KPFT. Houston. Reason Jimmy

 Vanessa Edwards 09:15

was laughing as I was asking him when he's going to transition.

 Jimmy Carper 09:20

Oh, well. Oh, well. It's taken a while. It's taken a while is right. Anyway, we have we have one

 Vanessa Edwards 09:28


headway. What do I do? What do I push? Hold?

 09:32

This should work. Let's see here.

 Vanessa Edwards 09:35

Hello, Gwen. No.

 09:39

Hello, boy, their knee. Hey. Modern technology and everything.

 Vanessa Edwards 09:45

Latest? How can I move forward? Okay, sounds like we've got a little bit of feedback, but oh, sorry. Okay. Anyway, Gwen, I just wanted to who basically has some of the other background questions first, before we get started on the Day of Remembrance? Obviously, this didn't really start out as the vigil per se. It was something that developed as a result of the remembering our dead website. Right? And what happened afterwards? Um, how did it briefly kind of explain for the audience, roughly how this all got started? Well,

 10:27

it really got started, I guess, November of 99. There was a trans murder up in Boston, that of Rita Hester. And it was, when that case happened, I noticed similarities between it and some

Rita Hester. And it was, when that case happened, I noticed similarities between it and some other cases. And what was really taken by how many people in the trans community really didn't know of any of these other cases didn't know about other murders. So I really started to research from there to try to try to bring up a community awareness of these cases happening.

V

Vanessa Edwards 11:05

And these were things that just kind of popped up from, I guess individuals comments on the gazebo says, Cory, yeah,

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11:11

well, that was the online chat room, that gazebo because I had a couple of nights after Rita was killed. I was hanging out there and comparing it to the Chanel pickup case from three years earlier, and was getting back from people who Chanel pick it. And this was a case that was very heavily demonstrated. in the Boston area, William Palmer's, William Palmer was the killer. His case was very heavily promoted in trans circles. And it just surprised me that there was seemingly no knowledge of it happening.

V

Vanessa Edwards 11:49

That's something that kind of surprised me when I heard it. It was amazing that something received that much publicity was so little known. But I'm actually I kind of touches on the fact of, I guess, maybe history or lack thereof, that's been documented within our community. In essence, the website was a way of documenting probably one of the, the darker moments of history.

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12:15

Yeah, it was an attempt really to get the information out there that this does happen. And it happens frequently, that we need to be aware of this. Very

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Vanessa Edwards 12:25

much. So and actually, it's worked very successfully. In fact, what were the reactions to the site when you first brought it online?

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12:34

Well, I first brought it online, it was a much smaller site. But even at that point, it really took a lot of people back, it really surprised a lot of people to see this

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Vanessa Edwards 12:43

information out there. It's very much kind of brings it home, but it makes it a lot more personal, I guess, to the the individuals when they can actually see the actual names and see some of the stories behind right find out a little bit more about the people, right, it's not just a name and a number, you actually get a little bit of what their life was like and how they ended up dying, which oftentimes is very, I guess, rather, sadly, very heinous crimes. Were much overkill. We're



13:18

very rarely killed by a single wound. It's usually it's it's as if the killer wants to not just kill us, but obliterate us a race. Exactly.



Vanessa Edwards 13:28

Um, just out of curiosity, how did the actual vigil kind of sprang up, as a result of the site, give me a little,



13:37

well, it's about a year into the site. I like I said, it actually started, the site started to be worked on in 98. And then by 99. But a year after, I kind of say, you know, this needs, there needs to be more, there needs to be something, you know, we're getting the message to those of us in the community. But we need to do something that's a little bit more visible, to bring more attention to it. Because by that point, one of the things that came out of the project was the fact that there were murders happening about once a month,



Vanessa Edwards 14:16

right? In fact, 99 was a very deadly



14:19

99 was a very bad year 99 2000. So, you know, I decided, okay, we need to do something a little bigger. And I kind of floated the idea out in the community to say, what if we did some sort of vigils or website blackouts, or leafletting or something, to draw attention, and a couple of cities participated in a few sites blocked out. That's kind of where it started.



Vanessa Edwards 14:48

And what happened in San Francisco specifically was more than just the blocking out of the or the blacking out of the sites was



14:55

last year, or last year for the first year. The first year. We are actually had a visual a little bit earlier in the year, which got about 100. Folks. It was actually same time as the showing of the brand and Tina's story at the Castro Theatre.

V

Vanessa Edwards 15:13

In fact, was there not some problems there in San Francisco at that time, I think there was a murderer. And

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there had been some there had been some, not murderers. But there had been some cases of violence that had taken place. There was a couple of individuals who had been attacked in the Mission District, which is to have little attend our district.

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Vanessa Edwards 15:40

And I guess that first video was at, more or less what coincided with what is now the National Day of Remembrance. It

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was actually a little bit earlier than that, but it was also one of the seats.

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Vanessa Edwards 15:55

And on the, I guess, the first actual day of remembrance vigil, which was the anniversary of Rita Hester's. Approximately what I guess the type of participation came about how many people it

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16:12

was pretty small. Because we had had the one that a little bit earlier in San Francisco, we didn't really do a visual, we did some leafleting down on the Castro, and there were a couple of other cities that participated. Boston, which had a Rita Hester March, and Massachusetts, or excuse me, that was Massachusetts. Baltimore, also had an event. But that was really about it and website Blackhat.

V

Vanessa Edwards 16:46

Knew how did that I guess kind of transpire into what we've, I guess, develop now is what I hope will become a national event for the transgender community. How did this I guess kind of evolved from being a local issue into something nationally, and

evolved from being a local issue into something nationally, and



17:09

I think Evolve is really the right word. It's been evolving over the last couple of years. This year, it really, I really went much bigger, there's a lot more attention being focused on these cases. A lot more people within the community understand that these cases are going on and want to get the word out and discuss this. As a result, this year when I started talking about okay, we did it last year, we started we started the ball rolling, what are we going to do this year, there were quite a number of cities that ended up doing events.



Vanessa Edwards 17:49

Well, it's something that I feel was probably long overdue for the community, we really have, I guess, maybe done a poor job of, I guess, even remembering our basic history, but especially when it comes to the violent crimes we we kind of tend to, I guess, focus on them very intensely, for a short period of time afterwards. And then after that short period is up, we kind of go off on to other things. And there's no real, I guess, no thread, no history, right. And so this actually kind of brings it home. At one point during the year that everyone can remember, right? What actually occurred over the course of the year last year in Texas was pretty deadly. So we actually had a couple of them here in Houston, and one in Austin as well. And it was, in fact, as you mentioned, it was one of the bloodier years the United States, but out of what happened in San Francisco and in other cities around the country. How did I guess the decision? come about to hold a candlelight vigil into I guess, maybe take this nationwide? Was that something that began with you? Or was this something that began with the some of the others asking? How or you know,



19:14

well, I guess, I guess, I mean, it's, it's, it's somewhat me somewhat others, it's, it's the ideas seem to come together at the right time. I mean, I had suggested such an idea back in 99, and kind of got going there. And then this year, when I started to discuss it, and people started to come in on it. It just seemed right. And it just seemed like something that needs to be done.



Vanessa Edwards 19:43

I've got to commend you on this. This is something that, to me is probably one of the most inspiring things have seen in the transgender community and especially on a nationwide basis. We don't really see that much. That really I guess, affects an entire community this way out of I'm sorry, I was getting ready to read the last question I had for you. Describe what was done in San Francisco this year during your event



20:13

or San Francisco, we had a candlelight vigil in un Plaza United Nations Plaza, which is about a block away from San Francisco City Hall. And it we had a number of different speakers, who

had arranged to have come down and say a few words about remembering and about cases of the past year. We had speakers as well as speakers we had, amongst others. SF supervisor Mark Leno. Jameson green, formerly of FTM International. Deon Manley, the current president of FTM are here national Yesenia Lewis of intact Dana rivers, who is a high school teacher who was sort of kicked out of her School in Sacramento. Quite a number of other speakers or local local individuals, Joan roof garden, Veronica, Callie and so forth.

 Vanessa Edwards 21:18

So I'm like he lined up a good set of speakers, it's

 21:22

a pretty good slate of people.

 Vanessa Edwards 21:23

It's pretty good slate, and have been impressive. And

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then we finished off the night with a reading of each of the names. We had each of the speakers as well as some of the individuals who helped make the night happen. Each of them had a name to read as well as information on the case. And we set them up on the podium. I basically let the crowd know I kind of said, This is what it looks like this is I mean it since November of 99. Now we've had 18 cases. I said, this is what it looks like this is what 18 People, this is what it is, did I miss one. There was one there was one in 1999 Towards the end of the year, and there were 17 and 2000. And each of the individuals and read their information ended up personifying it and saying, Well, I am Tyra Henderson, I am Jill Seidel. And when each name was read, we rang a bell, which was part of a maritime tradition, to remember these people with the hope that we would never have to ring it again.

 Vanessa Edwards 22:42

I remember reading through some of the the notes from the organizers on the organizers list. And as soon as I heard the, the idea about having the bail out there totaling once for each of the victims, I thought this has to be done. This is just that alone was very powerful. Yeah. And we did something very similar to that here in Houston as well. We had only the 18 candles, which at the time were only for the 17 victims that we know about right, and one candle at the end. And what we did was similar to we had the name read with the individual speaking for the victims. In other words, I spoke for coincidentally Vanessa Lorena Ledesma. And they would read the name and read the little bit about their life and the way they died. And then, as soon as the name had been read, and the other story had been read, a candle was snuffed, and the bell rang once. And that alone was it was very powerful. It was awesome. They actually, to watch and to experience. And I was very, very touched just by the ceremony. But at the end,

we had the one candle left and that was passed around to to our speakers as well. In fact, one of the speakers is here in the audience with us tonight. From the Houston crowd. We have with us in the studio audience Kristen Williams. Alyssa, also right. Sorry. Alyssa, right. Melanie black, and Sarah Jane Connell, and they were all at the memorial with us in Houston. And in fact, Kristin was one of the speakers, as well as myself, Phyllis Bri and a nice Parker and Terry dipalma. Chris, could you give us an idea as to I guess how the ceremony affected you or what your first thoughts were?



24:55

Well, I'll tell you the entire thing affected me Hi. When, whenever I was going through, we did some leaflets, with with some of the names of the individuals who had been murdered this year, and in previous years, and as I was going through collecting the names and just the raw data, the names, the way that that they died and the date of death. It was an extraordinarily moving thing to do I, you know, I just wept. And what I talked about, whenever I spoke at the vigil was that I was not only grieving these individuals, but I was grieving my innocence. It was the first time that I had looked at those names down in black and white and studied them, and really became aware for the first time that I was a part of a community that's targeted. And that there are people really, really there are people out there who would kill me for just being who I am. One of the questions that I had for you is, this is a, this is a wonderful project you've undertaken. But I was curious as to how this has affected your personal life. Wow.



26:29

Which of course, I was already going to with what you had said there. Certainly, when doing the project, it's something that I've noticed as well is that a lot of these people have been through situations that I've been in. Some of them or people that I've known, that are on the site.



26:52

There's one of the cases child by name of Steven Wilson. Steven was eight years old, and killed by a 15 year old neighbor boy,



27:10

who was basically, thing was Steven, Steven liked to play with girls toys, and the neighbor kid and a lot of the kids talented, talented Steven. But this one neighbor kid finally decided he was going to teach Steven a lesson. And raped him, hit him over the head and then drowned him in a river. And this case of any of the other cases is the one that's probably affected me the deepest. Because when I was around Stevens age 13 year old neighbor boy, taught me a lesson and raped me. But didn't kill me. And so it's there, but for the grace. There's a lot of cases on there that, you know, people who were living otherwise unassuming lives. They weren't what you would consider victims, or potential victims, and yet they're dead. For being trans.

V

Vanessa Edwards 28:21

That was the one item in the entire website that struck me the most, in fact, that's, I guess, kind of what made me become a bit of an activist of sorts. And, at the time, Danielle McClenney. In fact, actually, she's here with us, sitting out in the studio was, at the time, my best friend, and I started seeing the correlations between this individual's life. And Danielle at that age. And I started realizing that Oh, my God, this could have happened to her. This could have been my friend. Right? And I just, to me, that shook me to the core. I realized then it's not about politics, it's not about even just simple things like trying to transition successfully or live our lives successfully. It's about human beings and what we're doing to each other, and what we're allowing, I guess, by not taking action, and the thing that really I guess, hit the most was that a lot of the politicians have constantly pushed that what we're doing is our choice. And this is something that we as adults should know better than to do and yet, here is an eight year old child. How can they actually state that a child that young number one doesn't even realize sexuality, much less gender identity and yet this was a child that was a victim of hate violence due to gender identity, right? It's something that's undeniable. And yet, even though a lot of the legislators now at least have the information about it, we've still seen very little action.



30:21

Well, it's really it's, you know, it's something that goes beyond a lot of the, you know, we can we can fight for inclusion in Endo, which is important. We can fight for reform of the gin of GID in the DSM, gender identity or gender. But gender identity is right. Disorder. But this is this is like the right to exist.

V

Vanessa Edwards 30:53

Exactly. And we're talking about the United States, this isn't a third world country with limited resources and limited education, we should know better, right, and to allow these things. That site has been an inspiration for a lot of people a lot of action, both political land, the the vigil itself. And as I mentioned earlier, it occurred more than just Houston, San Francisco. How many other cities participate in



31:25

there were a total of 14 cities that took action. from Boston to SF. from Houston to Minneapolis, St. Paul.

V

Vanessa Edwards 31:39

Just all over this country, smaller cities as well.



31:43

Some smaller cities Fort Myer Beach, Florida, but mostly it's larger ones at Cleveland, Tallahassee, New York City, Alberni, New York, Baltimore, several others, did

 Vanessa Edwards 32:00

all of them do the same things as far as their what they did to remember the victims on the vigil,

 32:09

a lot of them a lot of them did similar things, most of them did candlelight vigils. All of them at least had like a reading of the names. New York's is a little different, they opted to have a forum on their news statewide hate crimes law, and invite several District Attorney representatives and state representatives to come in and talk about that law. And if it covers trans people, and why it doesn't cover trans people. Oh, I'm sorry. So it was kind of a different step that they took with it. The reason they opted to do that was because they had just a couple of months before had had a major candlelight vigil for one of the victims this year.

 Vanessa Edwards 33:01

With Amanda Milan. In fact, a lot of people had mentioned how much that had affected them as well. In fact, it was something that galvanized the the unity in the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities up there. Well,

 33:16

it's a horrible case, here's an individual who's killed on the street, and you've got a line of taxis and their drivers who are there who could have called something into could have helped and instead opt to cheer and applaud. Because this person bled to death

 Vanessa Edwards 33:34

really points out the humanity or lack of involved in a lot of this. It's It's frightening to a lot of individuals to actually realize this to, to have it personalized in their lives. But for the most of for most of the rest of us. We usually think God, I don't have to deal with that on a personal basis. And it's always around the corner. It's one of those, I guess, the things that we hope will never happen that we hope will never touch our lives. But it's a specter that's behind us every second of our lives nonetheless, just because of who we are. Absolutely. Let me get some of the reactions from some of the Houston participants in how they felt or particular Houston visual, touch them. Alyssa this is really one of your first times actually out in a community event at all. And I was kind of surprised to Well, number one, I was glad to meet you finally for the first time. But I was also very touched that you and Laurel as well. We're attending the first community event ever and we're taking the stand initially on this vigil Could you give me a little while

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34:58

I wouldn't have missed it. For anything, I was a little concerned, because unfortunately, I'm not living full times female, and the media was going to be there. So it's like, well, my brother in law works in TV news as a cameraman. And I'm just wondering if he's going to be there. Then I got there. And it was a little bit taken aback that really we didn't really have much of an audience or anything at all, it was just ourselves. And the Houston voice showed up. And actually, I made the front page misidentified as somebody else. But that's said, I think we put out some really good energy it was, it was really incredibly sobering. I mean, this, it could be me, it could be could be, you could be Kristen, or Melanie or Sarah, or to name a few people here in the city, or it could be anybody who driving down the freeway listening right now. And who happens to be transgendered in some way, look at somebody cross-eyed And somebody looks back down the barrel of a gun. I mean, so it's, and you're mentioning the case of the person who's bleeding to death with the taxis cheering on and applauding. I just thought of a thought that I've had no, I'm no Luddite knife. I love my technology and everything. But sometimes I think we're just a bunch of primitives with a bunch of high tech, well, high tech toys. And we certainly have a degree of humanity, but just how much humanity do we have here when we have these people dying? It's like I said, really sobering.



Vanessa Edwards 36:50

So, Sarah.



36:55

Yes, I'm Sarah McConnell. And that night, it really it moved me a lot. For many reasons, first of all those that have died by being killed. It also made me think of those that have died for through other ways through their own hands, due to all the the things that had been done to them, by people that haven't finally driven them to that final point of not being able to live anymore. It made me remember how I feared for my own life one night, when I was stopped up in Huntsville by a police officer. And this officer was not professional and had his hand on his gun and made me a very, I was petrified. And I feared for my life that night. And I when I was at this vigil that was going through my mind to how these girls probably felt at the time this was happening that fears that they had for their lives, and they actually lost theirs. I have a little altar area at home that I have for mementos special things that are dear to my heart and things that that mean very much to me and on that altar. Now I have the candle that I had that night and I haven't laid across it's an interesting parallel I guess or not. I was matron of honor at Jesse Brooks wedding over in San Antonio and I have my three white roses that I carried in that and I have that on the altar and I crossed my candle with that because the one the one gives me sadness and the other gives me hope for our communities and and I was touched also by having our our friends there you know a nice was out there and Jimmy who's here tonight was there. I mean, it's wonderful. I have people that love us and care about us that are there to celebrate life because we were celebrating life there not only the death of these people but the lot of celebrating life and help and and that's what I remember of this thing and I will carry this with me the rest of my life. It was it's even if I participate in many, many more of these down the road. This will be a special one to me. It was the first one and