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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

aids, christianity, people, ruth, talking, mistletoe, son, parents, love, gay, christmas, december, home, fatal illness, celebrate, druids, nativity, die, good, ken

## SPEAKERS

Speaker 10, Speaker 7, Speaker 11, Speaker 9, Speaker 15, Speaker 1, Speaker 13

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**S** Speaker 7 00:02  
I have to tell you, this man was unbelievable.

**S** Speaker 1 00:05  
I have to inject something into what she's saying lievable

**S** Speaker 7 00:07  
He was unbelievable.

**S** Speaker 1 00:08  
I wanted to reassure him that we were going to make it. He was and I said, we're so positive, don't even mention the word die, because he must remove it from the free of your vocabulary because you have to think along the lines of getting better. And I said, your illness is just beginning and we have a long way to go. We're by time, and maybe they won't find a cure for it, but they'll find something that will alleviate the problem, and you'll be able to survive.

**S** Speaker 11 00:42  
Mark Frank was 27 years old in 1985, when he told his parents Sandy and Ken, both that he was gay and that he had AIDS. Sandy was afraid not only for her son, but also for the safety of her family. She had read newspaper accounts of entire families ostracized in their communities, even being firebombed in their homes because someone in the family had AIDS. Ken Frank refused to accept his son's death as inevitable. Mark, too, got his share of fatherly pep talks.

S**Speaker 13 01:15**

The attitude right from the beginning was you don't have to die. This is something we can fight. This is something we can do. We want to keep as normal life for you and everyone else as possible.

S**Speaker 11 01:30**

And he did. Despite Ruth Glenn's newfound sense of independence, she had grown to depend upon her son Russ for spiritual strength. Russ also untangled some of the difficulties in which Ruth found herself sometimes sorting out her jumbled finances. Russ protected his mother so well, that he even helped her through his own fatal illness.

S**Speaker 1 01:52**

I really didn't realize until he was gone, how brave he had been and how much he was enduring and not talking about to me. In fact, he used to say to me, I was very serious. And he said, Mom, lighten up, come on, lighten up mom.

P**02:09**

As a lesbian and as a mother aware of her son Hunter's activism on behalf of gay issues, Ajavia, lived close to the plague every day, one might suppose that she wasn't as likely as some parents to harbor any false optimism in the face of AIDS. But when Hunter became too ill to live on his own, he moved in with his mother, Ajavia found herself caught up in her son's futile search for a cure.

S**Speaker 15 02:34**

When he got sick, he was home, dependent on the sofa and needing us and making a lot of demands, and it felt like you wanted desperately, you know, make this better that if you would just go out and buy me the right juice or the right food or the right magazine or something, it would make it all better. And so it was very difficult. Because I would panic and go back out at 11 o'clock at night to an open 24 hour day store to try to find the right juice or the right iced tea or something to make it better. And that really wasn't going to make it better. A lot of it, I believe that because it seemed that that by giving him very good care, he was staying alive that that was just going to continue.

P**03:31**

Most parents know the experience and the exhaustion of children home with measles or chickenpox or some other childhood ailment. But an adult child returning home with a fatal illness requires energies that aging parents may no longer possess. Maybe because the reality

of certain death did manage to creep in even if subconsciously. These parents tried to make the best of the time they had left with their beloved sons. Sanford Levy recalled some tender moments with Ken.



04:03

Through this sickness, somehow rather, he always wanted to have his back rubbed and I couldn't understand it. Like you know, I would do it for him you know, I would do it let's say five, eight or 10 minutes of it and I get done. And he'd say dad, would you please do it again? It feels so good. And you know, I'm not too young, anymore. And I said okay, we'll give it another shot, you know, and I rubbed his back again.



05:21

For those clinging to every meager bit of faith, the limits of denial are defined only by reality. And it's rock hard bottom. With the gradual failure of hope each of these parents surrendered their sons lives to the sure and winding arms of cool, enfolding death.



Speaker 7 05:41

I think the first time I ever heard him admit out loud, that he wasn't going to make it that he was going to die was. There was something about the flyers. And he had heard people talking, they came to visit, and they were discussing things back and forth. And Mark finally said, it's only a game. And Mark never would have said that, because those things were not a game to mark. Those were, that was life. I mean, that's what you lived for to go to see these. These good games.



Speaker 15 06:22

He said to me before, one of the last conversations we had when he was in the hospital. He said, I guess I used up my wishes. And I said, What do you wish for hon. And he said, a cure for AIDS. And he says, and then, and my body and I said to be like it was he says, Oh, no much better. And then he, he drifted off.



Speaker 13 06:46

I said, I gotta talk to you. I said, you know, we've pushed for two years. And I said, I guess that with everything. There's a time when you have to stop pushing, and maybe just lay back and let what's going to happen happen. And I said, Marcus, I think that you've reached that stage. And this is what we have to do. He was so tired. And he looked at me and I said, but there's one thing I want you to promise me. I said, when my time comes, I said, I want you and only you there to meet me. I said now that's providing we go to the same place. Well, he laughed at that. But he knew what I meant. And he died about a little before 10 o'clock the next morning.



08:18

Upon the deaths of their sons, some of the parents dealt with their loss and their anger by becoming AIDS activists. While none of them has participated in the Die In, nor in any other form of street activism, some have found a way to reach out to others affected by the disease. Ruth Levy first took action just by opening the New York Times, she offered to share her experience and strength with other parents facing the same kind of sorrow. Ruth neither regrets the past nor wishes to shut the door on it.



Speaker 7 08:51

It's a difficult, difficult thing, but I feel that we stand out of people for it.



08:56

Some people can't deal with it. They don't want to deal with it. They want to put it behind them and that I cannot understand putting it behind, can I put this behind me?



08:56

Well, I had to do I have to tell you one thing about this lady sitting next to me, we've been married 46 years. But we lost Ken. Somehow, this is gonna sound a little bit corny. But you start reading obituaries and she would read in the obituaries about some young man who died of AIDS. And if there was any kind of an address there, she would write them a letter. And, and in the letter, she would say if you would like to talk to me, I just went through what you have gone through. I would be glad to give you you know my input and maybe in some way I can help you or your sorrow. And we got about what she got about I'd say 25% response from the amount of people that she sent letters, but--



09:34

Ruth :evy also sells jewelry, brooches designed by a gay man specifically as memorials to those who have died of AIDS. Ruth derives satisfaction from this in two ways. The jewelry helps raise both money and consciousness.



10:18

And they are gorgeous. I mean, people stopped me on the street and will say, what is that thing you wearing? Is it an antique? And I'll say no, it's and then there are two people or three people and we're talking about the disease. So this is AIDS awareness. And I feel it's so important.



10:34

He would be so proud of his mother, he would be telling the whole world, they had an excellent relationship. We had a very good relationship with our son.

relationship. we had a very good relationship with our son.



10:44

While Sandy Frank has taken some time to heal from the grief of her son Mark's death from AIDS, her husband Ken has been busy producing his own roadshow. He travels the region where they live speaking about AIDS and Mark's death. He especially likes to target young adolescents. He thinks they require an honesty that adults sometimes prefer not to hear. He bears his soul to them, hoping that by doing so he'll save some lives.



11:12

One of the first questions that I was asked when I spoke to a group of I guess, 15, 16, 17 year old boys and girls together at a synagogue was "Were you made at your son?" And top my head and so it was I guess I still am. Because I feel cheated. We abandoned him when he told you he was gay. And no, no, I'm mad because he's not here.



12:09

With the specter of their son's AIDS ravaged bodies still so present in their memories, the parents heal their lives by remembering better times.



12:18

I talk about him. I have a lot of, he used to be a model. So I have a lot of photographs of him, very beautiful photographs. And at times, it's hard to look at them because it's hard to believe that some when so vibrant and alive and beautiful is gone. But I dream about him. I think about him we talk about and we laugh together about him, we cry together about him. I have a lot of faith. I believe that he's somewhere that his energy is somewhere. And it's and it can be with us. And that helps me



12:57

We enjoyed movies together and he was a good cook. And I loved his cooking. And he didn't like the way I cook, he could cook better, which was okay. And he liked to have me there when he entertained. And he was just very sweet, very caring. He was not perfect. But he brought me out of myself. He helped me to find myself. And I learned a lot from him. I miss him. I miss him very, very much.



Speaker 7 13:35

It's still so, um, such an open wound to me. I miss him so, so much. There are times when when I'll be sitting in a restaurant and I'll say to my husband, oh my God look, that looks just like Mark and I once I said to him, to my husband. Do you think if I went over and spoke to that

young man and taught him how much he looked like my son he would just let me touch his hand and my husband said no, you can't do that.



14:59

The world is a richer place for this beautiful young man that I miss very much. And it might not know how much it's lost but I certainly do. And I wish the world was aware I wish this government was aware of how here was this half, this half black Jewish, Native American handicap gay man. How how much it's lost by his being gone.



15:31

And even now I think to myself, did I tell him enough? Did we talk enough? Did I tell him I loved him enough? You know, you just I would say to any mother out there if your child is sick this way just tell them that you love him just keep hugging them and kissing him and we did and the one thing we said to each other every night and I still say the same thing. "Give me a kiss, I love you." And that was our last thing to each other every night. And so every night before I go to bed I say the same thing he should kiss I love you.



16:38

Give me those moments. Parents remember their day sons who died of AIDS is produced by Bert Ron at WXPM Philadelphia.



16:55

Oops, oops, oops. I wasn't paying attention because the end of this tape does do that. It gets funny. But it's right at the end of the tape. And all it's got our the kinda has been you know, thank yous and all of that.



Speaker 10 17:11

I think he's done all that. Well. Hi. And thank you.



17:13

Yes, yes, yes. So you take that is a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful piece of tape. And I was gonna have either like a song already to go afterwards and all that kind of good stuff. And here I am sitting around talking with Jim and Eric. Get good sense. And here we are today. So why don't we? Oh, okay.



17:41

I wanted to read something. Yes. I thought it was really interesting. For those of you who are a lot of Trivial Pursuit players. This might be interesting to you. I found it in the December issue of the Express. And it talks in here. The Making of a Christmas tradition. This is a great, great article. You want to understand Christmas traditions read this article in this month's issue of Uptown Express you can--



18:09

That is really a good publication.



Speaker 10 18:12

I loved it since I first saw it and--



18:15

Nancy works on that doesn't sometimes? And her real good friend Greg Joo.



Speaker 10 18:21

They do pieces why? I know him. What a hot man hot, hot, hot, hot.



Speaker 9 18:27

But I wanted you guys to hear this hot little thoroughly loved reading Emerita real quickly. Not so quickly. You want to understand me. It's why we celebrate the things we do Christmas on December 25. The idea to celebrate the Nativity on December 25 was first suggested early in the fourth century, a clever conceit of the Church Fathers wishing to ellipse the December 25 festivities of a rival religion was threatening, that was threatening to, threatening the existence of Christianity. Theologians attempting to pinpoint the actual nativity have come up with several dates, January 1, January 6, march 25, or may 20. The later came became a favorite date because of the Gospel of Luke states that the shepherds who received the announcements of Christ's birth are watching their sheep by night. Shepherds guarded their flocks by day and night only at lambing time in the spring in the winter, so if they were watching their sheep at night, that means it was lambing time in the spring. The animals were in the winter the animals were kept in the corrals unwatched, so it wasn't a wintertime, it was a springtime. At that time, Christianity's major rival religion, Mithraism, was practiced by pagan Romans who were still in the majority. Mithraism originated in Persia and rooted itself in the Roman world in the first century BC, and by AD 274. It was so popular with the masses that the Emperor Aurelian can proclaimed it the officials state religion. In early 300 AD, the religion seriously jeopardized Christianity, and for a time it was unclear which faith would emerge victorious. One of the Mithraism's holidays was the Natalis Solis Invicti Mithras, the birthday of the invincible sun god, which was celebrated on December 25. Thus to cover, excuse me, thus to offer converts and occasion to celebrate in December, the church officially recognized Christ's birth as a head on competition to the sun worshipers feast. The mode of operation would be the characteristic,

characteristically prayerful maths in fact, Christ's maths through centuries, though centuries later, social scientists would rise to the psychological power of group celebration, the unification of ranks and the solidification of collective identity, the reinforcement of common objectives, the principle has long been intuitively obvious. This is a wonderful article, talks to you about where Mistletoe And Holly came from, where the word X-mas comes from, where the Christmas tree how it came about.

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Speaker 10 18:34

That's German, right?

S

Speaker 9 19:03

Yes.

S

Speaker 10 19:08

Okay.

S

Speaker 9 19:19

And how, let's see it says, it was the custom the Christmas tree undecorated is believed to have begun in Germany in the first half of the 700s.

S

Speaker 10 21:25

Wow, that oh, that old.

S

Speaker 9 21:27

Their earliest story relates how British monks and missionaries at St. Barnabas born Winford and in six in, 600 AD, was preaching a sermon on the Nativity to a tribe of Germanic Druids. Outside the time of our turn, excuse me, outside the town of Gossamer to convince the idolaters that the oak tree was not sacred. The Apostle of Germany fell on the spot, toppling it, crushed every shrub in its path, except for a small first sapling. Legend has it that the Boniface, that Boniface, attempting to win converts, interpreted the first survival is a miracle. Concluding, let this be called the tree of Christ child. Subsequent Christmases in Germany were celebrated by painting first saplings by planting, sorry, first sapling, but it talks about where Santa Claus came from, how the poinsettia became part of Christmas. And how Rudolph the reindeer. The Red Nosed Reindeer came about.

S

Speaker 10 22:28



No kidding.

**S** Speaker 9 22:29

If you're fascinated by some of this. Trivial Pursuit trivia Yeah, it's really an interesting article in the Uptown express this December, and I thought you'd like to know that Christmas was, uh.

**S** Speaker 10 22:44

I always, I had always liked NBC programming a great movie.

**S** Speaker 9 22:47

Monday Night Football.

**S** Speaker 10 22:49

Exactly. I had always heard that Christianity had taken away from a Roman, the Roman Holiday, Christmas that there was a Roman holidays on the 25th. But I never knew what it was about.

**S** Speaker 9 23:03


The Druids had a lot to do with our Christmas and the custom of embracing under sprig of mistletoe, not actually kissing under it. At first it was embracing originated amongst the Druids. That learned class, the learned class of the CELT, an ancient British round the sun, ancient Britains, around the second century BC 200 years before Christ's birth, the druids celebrated the start of winter by gathering mistletoe and burning it as a sacrifice to the gods. Sprigs of mistletoe are hung in homes to ensure the years good fortune and family aren't money and guests at the house embraced under the auspicious sprig. And that's how mistletoe came. Of course. You know, after you get a couple of horny people under mistletoe, they just don't. It doesn't take very long before forget that and stuff. Let's get to that.

**S** Speaker 10 23:51

By the year 2000, there will be fondling underneath the mistletoe.

**S** Speaker 9 23:54

Yes, that's right. It has interesting things about.



S

Speaker 10 23:57

But that's exactly what I had heard that Christianity had done is take things from everybody else's religion to put it together.

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Speaker 9 24:06

And consciously so trying to bring people in. I mean, it's like, you know, Oral Roberts, when he wants to, you know, get the youth vote gets his, you know, 17 year old son after preaching. And it's like, you know, what's his name? Till, tilling?

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Speaker 10 24:24

Tilton?

S

Speaker 9 24:25

Tilton up in Dallas, who wants you to put your hand on the screen and he'll pray for your prosperity, and you'll get rich, because he knows that's what I'll bring you in. And all these things. I'm not knocking Christianity, don't get me wrong. I have a lot of people who are very religious and very devout and I have no problem with that. I just wanted you to know that Christianity is as diverse. The things that pull it together and the traditions and the holidays are as diverse as every culture on our planet.

S

Speaker 10 24:55

And you don't know at the beginning of it, when when when they started doing all of this kind of stuff you don't know what was in the minds of the people who did that. See? The people who put together Kwanzaa? I think it's only been like 20 or 30 years.

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Speaker 9 25:11

Yeah.

S

Speaker 10 25:12

And they took elements of Christianity and Judaism and other religions to put together to form this type this, this religious celebration. And it was done not to take away from Christianity or Judaism, but to take kind of maybe the best elements, put them together and and maybe some original elements to form a new, something new,

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Speaker 9 25:41

Right. The poinsettia. Interesting enough is called the. Wait, let me look real quickly. It's called

the flower of the blessed night. And the reason it has been adopted as the official flower of Christmas is because it was believed.

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Speaker 10 25:41

Well, where did it go?

S

Speaker 9 25:57

It was because it resembled the Star of Bethlehem.

S

Speaker 10 26:01

Oh, no kidding. That's what that's where it you know, and it says here, I believe it says here. It was 1828 when it became the official flower of of Christmas time. Anyway, there's some wonderful little tidbits including Santa Claus and Rudolph. So if you have an opportunity, this is really a great little article. That is neato. And that's the Uptown Express, right?

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Speaker 9 26:23

The Uptown Express December issue.

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Speaker 10 26:25

A free publication I might add.

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Speaker 9 26:27

That's right and you can pick up all over Montrose.

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Speaker 10 26:29

Absolutely. Or downtown. That's right.

S

Speaker 9 26:32

Yes, that's right. What do you got there?

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Speaker 10 26:34

Well, we could go to a song by the Seattle Men's Chorus. It's one of my favorites. It's kind of an

well, we could go to a song by the Seattle Men's Chorus. It's one of my favorites. It's kind of an up one. Ding dong, merrily on high.

S

**Speaker 9 26:48**

Ding dong, woo. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. I love that. I love the QA. Thanks, Jeff. For that call. It was really nice. Jeff called to tell us that the holiday that we were talking about, the Roman Holiday, we were talking about what's called Saturnalia. Oh, I think that was a good pronunciation. And he said he loved our show. And I am so grateful that people view and let us know what they think about our show. That is neat to hear. Especially at three in the morning. Even though I may not have been correct. Happy birthday. Oh, ah, we're gonna play some, what was that you were gonna do? We're gonna close out and

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**Speaker 10 27:30**

We're gonna close out we're gonna start it off as bed music. It's from Richard Audd, who is the conductor and performer and engineer of the East Pacific Symphony, the electronic stuff. And oh, yeah, I can I can start that now.

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**Speaker 9 27:55**

And I want to take this opportunity to tell you that I'm doing my shows the fourth weekend of every month. And that the way you can tell when your favorite host is going to be on? Is by what weekend they're doing, that weekend they'll be doing it every month. Yeah, that's that's all your favorite host. Of course, we hope and we want you to listen to us all. But if you have a favorite host, just catch which weekend they're on. And that's the weekend they'll be on all the time.

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**Speaker 10 28:19**

We understand. We can't We can't bring shows of interest to 100% of the gay and lesbian community every week. That's right. Sometimes it's going to be women's issues, sometimes men's issues. But you know, if you're a man, you know-- We're a fun bunch. You might want to listen to what's going on in the women's community and vice versa.

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**Speaker 9 28:39**

That's right. I have a unique perspective on men being at the care center. Yeah, absolutely. I still find myself dealing with my little o'l train sexist ways. But working with all these men, and and then working with me, we've developed a very good relationship down there.

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**Speaker 10 29:00**

I have to say it's probably harder, from a man's point of view to erase sexism. And I don't know that we ever do because it's so prevalent in our society. It's it's coming in at us all the time

that we ever do because it's so prevalent in our society. It's it's coming in at us all the time, faster than we can throw it off. Anyway, this has been the last show of the year of After Hours, a continuing tradition on KPFT Houston, 90.1 FM. We're glad you listened. And I want to thank everybody who's been involved in the show. It's been fun working with everyone here. I've had a good good time all year long. I mean, as long as I've ever been here and I've been here since oh god March of '88.

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Speaker 9 29:56

Child. I've been doing the show three years. See, look at I'm looking forward to next three years. But I want to tell you people out there who are listening at 3am, send us some information on what you'd like to see on our show. We do read our letters and we do respond. Send us letters at 490 Loveett Houston, Texas 7706 KPFT, just write After Hours on it or one of our names and we'll get it.

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Speaker 10 30:17

We will

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Speaker 9 30:18

Happy new year.