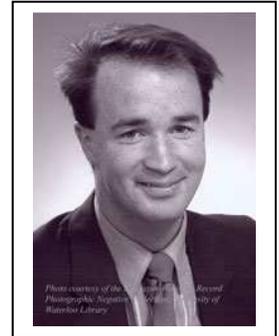


Greg Cassidy

Like so many young people from small Ontario towns, Greg Cassidy came to Waterloo for a university education. By the time he left, however, he had enriched the public library system and deepened awareness about people with AIDS in this community.



Most importantly, Cassidy touched many people with his passion for justice and his unique ability to be a good friend.

“He was just a very dynamic, caring, committed person, who had an awful lot to share with the community and certainly did so,” a friend recalled after his death.

Cassidy, who was only 35-years-old when he died of AIDS, is remembered as an enigmatic presence in Waterloo during the 1980s and early 90s. He was a small-town boy from Deseronto, Ontario who had a cosmopolitan flair and an insatiable curiosity for music, art and culture. “He was urbane beyond belief,” recalled long-time friend Lynne Woolstencroft. “He had a tremendous capacity to absorb information.”

Cassidy, who served on the Waterloo Public Library board for five years, believed strongly that public libraries were the “great levellers” in a community. Cassidy loved the fact that, “it didn’t matter how much money you had or didn’t have, or how disadvantaged you were, you could still reach for the same book on the shelf.”

After serving as chair of the library board, he moved to Toronto in 1993 to study library sciences at the University of Toronto. Despite being very ill near the end of his studies, Cassidy persevered. When Woolstencroft asked him whether he thought he could complete his degree, “he got a very fierce look in those snappy blue eyes and he said, ‘Absolutely’.”

Cassidy graduated with a Master’s degree in library sciences in June 1995, and passed away in December. That year, the University of Toronto awarded him a Faculty of Information Studies Alumni Association Student Jubilee Award for his outstanding contribution to the life of the school. His fellow students also named a computer laboratory in his honour. While at the school, Cassidy served as faculty president and was instrumental in establishing a student technology fund.

His undergraduate degree was in environmental science from the University of Waterloo, and upon graduating he worked as a circulation manager at the *Waterloo Chronicle* from 1983 until 1993. While serving on the library board and working full-time, Cassidy also served as the president of the AIDS Committee of Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo and Area (ACCKWA) for two years.

Cassidy believed strongly in fighting for the dignity of people with AIDS, and he began working with the local organization at a time when it appeared as if it would fold. “He accomplished quite a bit in moving the agency along,” said Bill Hoskinson, a former ACCKWA president. “I remember he went to one regional council where they were going to cut back contributions to ACCKWA and he made such a barn-blistering appeal that we got our money. You could just see that he really believed in what he was doing.”

Woolstencroft remembers Cassidy as being “quite courtly and well-mannered” in his public appeals to local politicians on behalf of the AIDS committee and the library board. However, he would confront individuals in private after a public meeting, with a vengeance that was unique to Cassidy.

“He saw that he had a certain obligation to the community,” recalled Woolstencroft. “He wanted to do what was right.”

*Photo courtesy of the Kitchener-Waterloo Record Photographic Negative Collection,
University of Waterloo Library*