

## 21

**“HE WHO DIES WITH THE MOST  
COLUMN INCHES WINS!”  
NIECE SALUTES UNCLE IN *LA TIMES***

Larry was avuncular with fans the way he was Dear Old Uncle—DOU—to his nieces and nephew. On July 31, 2008, his niece Tracy Tingle sent me a copy of the endearing press release she sent to the *LA Times* and the *Bay Area Reporter*. We were comparing notes to coordinate versions of his obituary to reach his variously diverse friends and fans. It was wonderful she submitted her straight personal profile “to give a glimpse of Larry’s life” to add unconditional family love to the gay obituary I was writing to profile Larry as a colorful person beloved by real people before his became a soulless or inimical entry in Wikipedia where nothing prevents revisionists from posting specious narratives. I knew that Larry would like all the column inches we could get him. I once told him my little joke: “He who dies with the most column inches wins.” His niece felt very honored to be one of the two women (in addition to Jeanne Barney) who had ever seen inside Larry’s very private dungeon which he described as a minimalist space in his *Handbook*.

She wrote:

I was pretty close to my Uncle Larry. He has always “been there” for our family. Despite what would by most seem a very non-traditional lifestyle, he was in many ways quite traditional. He really loved celebrating holidays, Christmas in particular was a favorite. He loved decorating his tree, and putting out all his Christmas “knickknacks.” He and Fred were with our family for most holidays while we were growing up in the 60s/early 70s, which I guess was

probably somewhat unusual. They continued to celebrate with us some, but this was made more difficult over the years since we all left living in L.A. We are all resettled in the Bay Area now (Berkeley and Healdsburg), so over the last 10 to 20 years we've had more "family time" with him up here [where Mark and I live].

He (and Fred) enjoyed visits to the Bay Area quite a bit, though Larry would often remark how sad it was that so many men he knew from up here (and everywhere else, of course) had died—many from AIDS. He was always a really dedicated uncle—never forgot birthdays, etc., etc. In the last 15 years or so he started referring to himself as our "Dear Old Uncle." He was also very sweet and thoughtful with my 2 kids and my brother's 2 kids. He always sent them great birthday presents, and loved getting them lots of chocolate things at Easter, and so on. Who knew the big bad leatherman was such a sweetheart, eh? Not to say that he couldn't be extremely opinionated and difficult. He could. We did love to rail against the Bush administration together. He voted for Obama in the primary, by the way. [The general election itself was a hundred days after he passed.]

He was a huge classical music and opera fan/buff. We played classical music for him the last couple of weeks in the hospital—which if he registered it, I'm sure soothed him. [In an earlier email, she had told me: "I kept whispering to him on his hospital bed that if he came through, I'd have a margarita with him...I know how much he loved his little indulgences."]

He was fairly social. He loved to eat and enjoy meals with friends. He and Fred joined a gay men's supper/social club in LA probably about 8 years ago or so, which provided him/them with a lot of enjoyment. His friends and family were really important to him.

He and Fred really loved collecting things—clocks, anything Doberman Pinscher, pigs. His house is full of many of these items. He had a succession of Dobermans (real ones)—really, I think for most of my life (I'm 47)

until his last died about 5 years ago. [She hadn't yet heard about his newest Doberman, Brandon.] I can also claim to be one of 2 women who ever saw his dungeon, that used to be in this kind of basement/storage area of his house. (The other woman was a dominatrix who lived up the street). I happened to be at his house for a party with [porn director] Bob Jones, [porn star] Rick Bolton, and a bunch of other guys [young porn actors] from Bob Jones Productions, plus a lot of older gentlemen who were greatly enjoying the company....anyways, there was a group going down to see the famous Larry Townsend dungeon, and my uncle asked if I wanted to go too. Well, duh! It was small, and dark—not as gothic as I had imagined or wanted it to be, I suppose. He did have a collection of some antique restraints there. I suppose such an event was a little lost on me, but I do really like having the honor of being one of two women... One more thing that might be of interest. We are going to put his “archives” (books, artwork, memorabilia, etc.) in the Brown University Special Collections.

As happened, in spite of the astrologer's warning against changing his birth name, Irvin-“Bud”-Townsend-Bernhard-Junior-Michael-Lawrence-“Larry” Townsend, became a star and left a cultural legacy.