

Paul Arnold Memorial Scholarship

This scholarship was established by Bill Fleming in 1996 to support students studying interior, fashion, or graphic design.

Words about the Scholarship:

A physical memorial, such as a headstone or other monument, could not have contained the spirit of my late partner, Paul Arnold. With the possible exception of the men's store at Bergdorf Goodman, there is no place he wanted to be buried. Nor did he think much of having his ashes scattered at a particular locale. "No folding chairs" was the only instruction he left for his memorial service.

When Paul died of AIDS in the summer of 1995; it was a challenge to find appropriate ways to honor his memory. He was a decorator by trade, and for some time I unconsciously turned our house into a museum, preserving everything as he had originally designed it. Of course, if he were still alive, that house would have experienced several reincarnations by now.

Paul was constantly creating, playing, spotting new things and trying them out. At the same time, there was consistency in his efforts and coherence in his imaginings. He changed his environments, not out of restlessness, but in pursuit of beauty in all its variety.

My years of involvement with Pride Foundation ultimately helped me hit upon a perfect testament to Paul's dynamic spirit: an ongoing scholarship in his memory. Each year since Paul's death, a Pride Foundation scholarship has been awarded to one or more students studying design (graphic, fashion or interior) who demonstrate the originality and clarity of vision that those who knew Paul so admired in him.

In the early years of Paul's scholarship, I kept some distance from the process, perhaps for fear of unduly influencing the committee's selections. However, for the past several years I have served on the committee, and it has been a most moving and gratifying experience. We have not awarded scholarships to clones of Paul (and he would certainly not approve if we did). In fact, there has been incredible diversity of backgrounds and interests among the applicants and recipients. Yet I can sense Paul's presence as a silent member of the committee – an unusual role for him, to be sure – and I feel his support and validation of these talented applicants who reflect so many of his own qualities: humor, originality, skill, tenacity, deftness of touch, and that little extra something beyond definition.

Thank you, Pride Foundation, for helping us keep Paul's spirit alive in this way!

Bill Fleming lives in Seattle, Washington.