

## Remarks by Brooks White, December 1, 1998

Good evening, and welcome. My name is Brooks White, a volunteer with the Friends of the Key West AIDS Memorial Committee.

I am a Witness to the Grief of AIDS.

We gather here to dedicate the installation of 17 new granite stones, celebrating the lives of 119 Keys people who have been claimed by the AIDS plague.

This is the second year we have gathered to add names. It is the objective of the Friends of the Key West AIDS Memorial Committee to continue adding names on World AIDS Day, each year, until this horrible plague finally ends.

In a City of 25,000 people, the fact that 842 names lie on these granite stones is testament to the impact AIDS has on our community.

But today is not a day for statistics. It is a time for us to remember the individuals, to celebrate in the memory of every one of their lives, and grieve in each of their premature deaths.

This is not about the hope many of us share for those living with HIV and AIDS today, but rather to remember our relatives, friends and lovers for whom science came too late, or were unable to take advantage of its benefits.

This ceremony will be brief, for I want each of us to have time to tour the Memorial. The uniformed ushers from the Wreckers Club will be glad to assist you in finding any name you seek, or answer any other questions you may have. There are booklets available with an alphabetical directory to the names.

Please also visit the Key West Quilt, which is displayed on the raised platform on the beach.

Several of your neighbors have been invited today to share their experiences with dealing with the grief of AIDS. But first, I welcome Jacquelyn Williams and the Horace O'Bryant Choir.

I am a Witness to the Grief of AIDS.