

OBITUARY

Eric J. Otto

April 17, 1962 - October 12, 2000

BTL

Oct. 19-25, 2000 p. 11

WINDSOR - Former Between The Lines entertainment writer and local personality Eric J. Otto died of an apparent allergic reaction to a prescription drug on Oct. 12. He was 37.

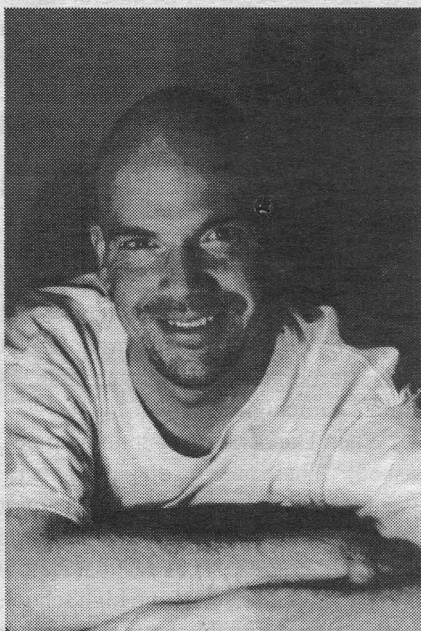
Born in Bay Village, Ohio, Otto spent most of his school years in Canada, graduating from St. Anne's High School in Tecumseh, Ontario, and later obtaining a degree in communications from the University of Windsor.

In 1994, Otto was the victim of a car jacking and suffered a gunshot wound to the arm. The injury was ruled permanent and forced him out of full-time work. Otto's dual citizenship allowed him to accept a position with BTL in October 1997, where he helped develop Arts and Entertainment content. He was best known for his column, initially called "My Gaily Observations," but later known as simply "Nite Out."

Friends say that with a renewed sense of purpose Otto blossomed.

"When I first met Eric Otto at the Happy Tap he was the quiet man in the corner observing," recalled female impersonator Amanda Collins. "And then once he became a part of Between the Lines, he was a new man. He brought excitement and the party to the people who had missed out. And he gave them good reason to want to come to the next party."

But the long hours at the club took a toll on Otto, who was often much more frail than he let on. He still suffered a great deal of emotional and physical pain from the shooting, and was on a heavy prescription regimen to combat both that and his HIV-positive sta-



tus. Eventually, health problems caused him to leave the paper in early 2000.

The last few weeks had particularly difficult for Otto, who friends say had been tired and weak. Then, on Oct. 12, Otto was taken to the hospital where he was given a new drug to combat the apparent allergic reaction he suffered. Otto returned home but, later that day, was found dead in bed.

Otto's funeral took place Monday at the St. Anne's Cemetery. He is survived by his mother, Kathryn, sisters Margaret and Leslie Stevenson, brothers Greg, John and Michael, and two nephews.

"Eric will be remembered as someone who made a major contribution to the paper as a writer for the entertainment section," said Jan Stevenson, co-publisher of BTL. "His frenetic energy and love for the extreme pushed us to a new level."