

"Ross and Erv"- Ross Walker and Erv Uecker

Born: Ross 1938, Erv 1932

Died: (living)

Primary

Involvements: Community Activists
Philanthropists



(summarized from **"Our Village Elders"**
article, *Wisconsin Light*, volume 12 issue 14,
March 12, 1999; written by **Bill Meunier**)

Ross Walker and Erv Uecker met in June, 1957 through a mutual friend. It wasn't love at first sight. "We were friends at first sight," said Erv. They say "we are still friends" 42 years later.

Perhaps that's the key to a relationship which has taken them from a Lutheran parsonage in Chicago to a horse breeding farm and finally to Milwaukee, where they are instrumental in keeping the BESDT Clinic open.

Erv said he is a "recovering Lutheran." He was ordained as a Lutheran Minister in 1968. For ten years, he was the Pastor at Chicago's St. Lukes' Lutheran Church where he directed a staff of four associate pastors.

Although the church was in a middle class, blue-collar neighborhood, the couple lived together in the parsonage. "Everybody did what they had to do to deal with it," said Erv. Ross



Elders article,
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added, "Some people thought we were brothers until both our mothers showed up at church one day." Meanwhile, Ross was a special education teacher in the Chicago School System.

The two also bought a horse-breeding farm in Oxford, Wisconsin. They bred horses there for about 12 years before selling it. But it was not their idea of retirement: "Who wants to shovel horse dung all day?", asks Ross.

In 1983, the couple stopped in Milwaukee on their way to sell a property. "We were going to retire at Marco Island in Florida," said Ross. But "we met some friends in Milwaukee. We decided we didn't need Florida."

That fateful decision was Milwaukee's gain. Ross and Erv got very involved in the BESTD Clinic. They work full time- without pay- for the Clinic. Erv said he likes the structure of BESTD. "Everybody works. Our Board consists of active volunteers."

Ross and Erv were also instrumental in the founding of its new [Milwaukee LGBT Community Center](#). In addition to activism and personal time involvement, they provided the initial money by making a long-term pledge of money toward rent and operating costs of a true community center.

UPDATE: as of May 2005, Erv and Ross continue to be actively involved in the BESTD Clinic. (The BESTD Clinic is still totally volunteer, with no paid staff.) They are also consistently accounted for in numerous other community events and fundraisers.