

Performer's death was AIDS-related - Austin American-Statesman (TX) - November 7, 1989 - page A15

November 7, 1989 | Austin American-Statesman (TX) | AP | Page A15

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) - **Amanda Blake**, who played Miss Kitty in the long-running Gunsmoke television series, died of AIDS-related complications, not cancer as previously reported, her doctor said Monday.

Blake's fifth husband was Austin City Council member and developer Mark Spaeth, who died in 1985. Spaeth's cause of death was listed as pneumonia, but later reports were that the pneumonia was AIDS-related.

On Monday, Sacramento internist Dr. Lou Nishimura said that while Blake did have throat cancer, "that wasn't the reason that she died."

After Blake died Aug. 16 at Mercy General Hospital in Sacramento, a statement by the hospital and the actress' friends reported her death as the result of her long battle with cancer.

Once a two-pack-a-day smoker, Blake had undergone surgery for oral cancer in 1977 and afterward made appearances nationwide for the American Cancer Society.

Blake's death certificate, however, listed the immediate cause of death as cardiopulmonary arrest due to liver failure and CMV hepatitis. CMV or cytomegalo virus hepatitis is AIDS-related, said Nishimura, who treated Blake during the year preceding her death and signed her death certificate.

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome and cancer were listed as contributing to her death.

Jerri Ewen, a Mercy General spokeswoman, said the hospital reported the death to the federal Centers for Disease Control, which monitors AIDS and other contagious diseases.

Blake, a longtime resident of the Sacramento area, had AIDS symptoms for about one year, said Nishimura. He said he didn't know how she contracted the disease.

AIDS is caused by a virus that is spread through sexual contact, needles or syringes shared by drug abusers, transfusions of infected blood or blood products, or from an infected mother to her baby before or during birth.