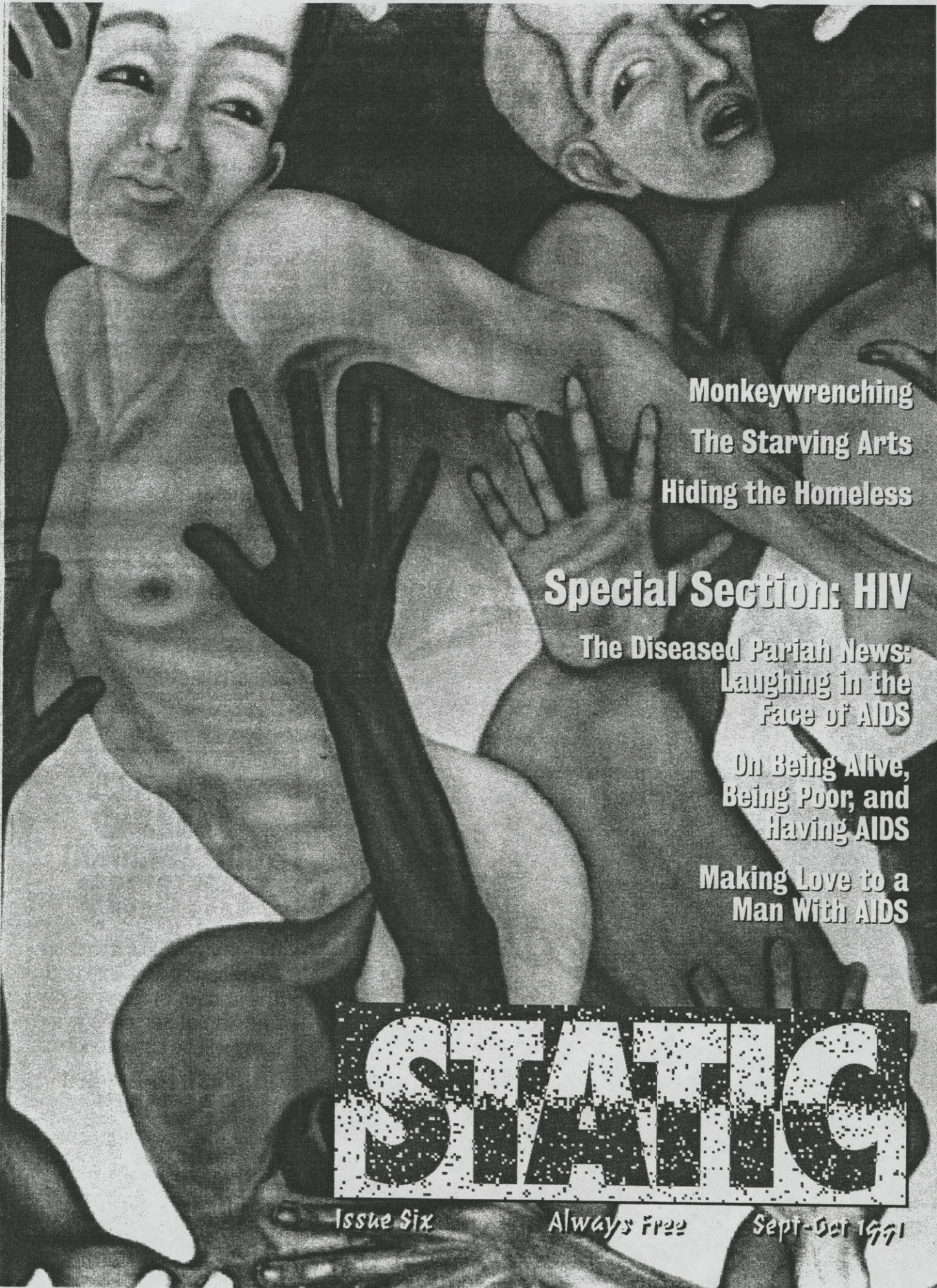




**Monkeywrenching
The Starving Arts
Hiding the Homeless**

Special Section: HIV

**The Diseased Pariah News:
Laughing in the
Face of AIDS**

**On Being Alive,
Being Poor, and
Having AIDS**

**Making Love to a
Man With AIDS**

STATIC

Issue Six

Always Free

Sept-Oct 1991

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issue 6



Photomontage by Alex Pitchka

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Special section
▼
HIV/AIDS



Scannertweek by Alex Pitchka

On Having AIDS, continued from page 11

copy your sticker and use that, it works for billing and Medi-Cal never seems to mind. The only thing is convincing the clerk to go for it. Doctors usually will, pharmacists usually don't.

Having AIDS

So many of my attitudes have changed, so much of my lifestyle has changed, but I'm still the same old guy. I love to stay up all night, play loud music, read strange literature, and take long drives down the coast. But things are different. Strangely enough, my sex life has totally picked up. I had more safe hanky-panky than I ever thought was possible for a really sick dude.

I remember reading a pamphlet written by Dan Turner, co-founder of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. I read the first thing to I you should do is quit your job, go on disability, don't do anything you don't enjoy, do the things you love.

Some of the things I hate are some of the things my doctors think I should be doing. AZT for instance has been a big dilemma for me. I was first prescribed AZT in May, when I was still getting over my bout with Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia. (One of the many opportunistic infections. A myco-bacterium infection in the lungs. In the past it was 100 percent fatal but is now easily treatable with sulfa drugs.) I was constantly feeling shitty, but I persevered and stayed on the stuff until August when my doctor doubled the dose. I tried my best, really I did, but as I write this in mid-

September, I haven't taken any all month. I'm not sure how much it's helping but it makes me feel better to know that I'm not swallowing poison five times a day, even if it does work.

My latest fling has been with Eastern medicine, Chinese herbs and acupuncture. I've got this herbalist who has concocted a formula that just might take care of some of worst symptoms I've been having; energy loss, high fevers, and peripheral neuropathy (Also called the Polynesian Firewalk, numbness and painful burning sensations in the hands and feet). It's another irony of sorts, I hated having to take five doses of AZT every day, so now I take twenty-eight herbal pills every day in addition to numerous vitamins and an experimental drug.

One of the things PWA's are occasionally asked to do is to take part in double blind/placebo drug trials. This is where neither the patient nor the health care workers know who's getting the real stuff. So I'm taking this experimental drug, and it works out for the better. In exchange for my precious time and energy they do all of my blood work, and work with my doctor, taking a whole lot of the load off of his back.

All in all I've enjoyed doing the drug trial. My health care worker at the clinic is HIV+ himself, I find that very comforting considering all the recent hooplah about whether or not doctors should be allowed to have AIDS and all that. As a matter of fact, my health care worker at the clinic referred me to the Chinese herbalist, so everything is sort of inter-connected.

So where do we go from here? Forward. I'm not afraid, I'm not a total emotionless machine either. I get my bad days, and my much worse than bad days. Recently I've actually come to the realization that it's okay to be sad. Feel the sadness and then carry on. I try not to get to carried away with the negativity, but it is there. Some of my friends say that I can get pretty gloomy, maybe even depressed. When I asked my doctor about seeing a shrink, he smiled and said that I didn't strike him as the type that needed a shrink. Hmmm.

So I'm staring out the window a lot these days. I don't even care if I don't know exactly what I looking for, because I making the best of it. I'm with the ones that I love, I do the things that I love. And I'm still breathing. X

A Nation of Ostriches

by Kim Hiecht

Late at night when all the lights in the house are off and I can't sleep because I'm lying in bed, listening for hitches in Nicolas' breathing, hoping that it's not the return of the pneumonia that landed Nick in the hospital and almost killed him, the pneumonia that turned out to be AIDS related, I start to think. How different our little family has become from everyone else's. We don't think like other people anymore. We think in life and death terms, and there is very little planning ahead, because it is all too possible tomorrow might never come.

Late in those nights, when the leaves rustle against the windows, and Nick's body grows hot from another fever, I suddenly realize that I'm nineteen years old but I feel like I'm one hundred. I can no longer relate to the people I went to high school with four years ago.

Then I was just another girl. Now, to most of them, I'm someone they might read about in Newsweek. The goals we shared have lost meaning — finishing college doesn't seem that important anymore, nor does a career or partying or any of the other things that we most often talked about. Nicholas and I walk in a place most of them know nothing of, where death is never far away from our thoughts.

I know that I am in a different world from most people now. But why? Of course, any fatal illness is frightening and hard for healthy people to relate to. But there is a core of denial and repulsion with AIDS that does not exist, for people with terminal lung cancer or Lou Gherig's disease.

What I eventually realized is that for the majority of people, despite the endless media depictions, AIDS does not have a human face. They are separated from people with AIDS by an emotional barrier of otherness. To put it bluntly, people with AIDS are faggots and drug addicts, and therefore less than human.

The article "The Implicated and the Immune" by Richard Goldstien, from the book *A Disease of Society* explains this very well. "AIDS," he writes, "more

than even other sexually transmitted diseases, has seemed to 'select' its victims from among previously defined groups: at first, homosexuals and IV-drug users; more recently, women of color and their children." It is this quality of selectiveness, he says, that "has made it possible for mass culture to assume the perspective of a 'witness' to AIDS who also stands outside it."

So although the bombardment by the news media means that anyone who gets a newspaper or has a radio is aware of AIDS, its severity, and its consequences, few people outside of the gay community have any deep emotional response to the disease. AIDS, when it comes right down to it, is still an "Us-versus-Them" disease. This fear, and feeling of sepeation has allowed people to suggest such inhumane measures as quarantining, long after methods of transmission were understood. A Blendon and Donelan survey showed that in 1988, 30 percent of Americans still supported some sort of quarantine for people with the HIV virus in their blood.

I first started noticing this "witness" tone a few weeks after Nicolas was diagnosed. I was, of course, reading everything I could get my hands on about AIDS. As I came to accept living with a person with AIDS (PWA), it became harder to move from the literature of the AIDS programs, or the gay community, to the mainstream media, where everyone with AIDS is an AIDS VICTIM, and is DYING TRAGICALLY. The media seem to assume anyone with AIDS should thereafter be defined by their illness.

I find this Us-vs.-Them or "witness" tone taken in the major publications appalling. Television and movies, where most people get their insight into other peoples lives, continues to perpetuate and reinforce old stereotypes.

According to prime time, we live in a society where gays, drug users, and sick people are the Other. Thus we can pity them, the newspapers whisper, but we can't relate to them. Their difficulties, it seems, are no closer to our hearts than those of the Kurds in Iraq. Further, maybe. We (or at least so the media tells us) are the healthy, young,

beautiful that's the

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David and autho people "...

beautiful (mostly white) people. And that's the way we should want to stay.

The more I observe, from my newfound position as one of Them, the more I realize that we are a society that wishes to remain safe, even if that safety is only illusory. No one escapes death, and illness, suffering, and misfortune are forever only a roll of the dice away. But even death so martinized, sanitized, and hidden away by our consumer-oriented culture that it is no longer considered something we have to suffer, if we eat enough wheat germ.

We are a nation of people that has come to believe death is something unnatural, and we don't want to be reminded that it is going to happen to us. On every doctor's waiting room table is a copy of Longevity Magazine, with beautiful, fit models telling us that if we cut down on our cholesterol, if we exercise and eat right, we will never die. We want to believe it so badly that we adopt a selective blindness.

People Magazine publishes a special edition every so often entitled "The 50 Most Beautiful People in the World." The Spring 1991 edition contained an editorial by Richard Lacayo that gives an interesting look into America's views on the subjects of beauty and living forever. "As we said earlier," he writes, "We're always on the lookout for beauty because it says things we can't express in words. One of those things is our desire to live forever. And in their way, Great Looking People kindle our hopes for eternity."

What does that say about how society will react to the man whose face is covered with the purple blotches of Kaposi's Sarcoma, (a cancer that often strikes PWAs)? Who is going to be able to feel good around him? Who is going to want to be around him? His very presence will have the opposite effect from that Great Looking Person's, reminding us of the possibility of death, and so we separate ourselves from him, not just physically but by constructing an invisible barrier of otherness.

People even seem to be afraid that the very presence of the ill will infect them. For instance, an issue of Newsweek this spring reported that many people survive cancer, with paid sick leave from their workplaces, only to get fired when they return because their employers don't want to be near someone who had cancer, who would be a reminder of their own mortality. Now multiply that times 10 for any PWA.

David Wojnarowicz, a gay artist and author with AIDS, writes that most people "...feel quite safe from any terri-

ble event or problem such as homelessness or AIDS or nonexistent medical care or rampant crime or hunger or unemployment or racism or sexism simply because they go to sleep every night in a house or apartment or dormitory whose clean rooms or smooth walls or regular structures of repeated daily routines provide them with a feeling of safety that never gets intruded upon by the events outside."

This ability to feel safe in the face of terrible situations is having desperate consequences. It is leading to a society where people ignore problems. Sure, there is compassion. But it is far too often compassion without action. Helping others has become the occasional hobby of the rich, rather than a way of life for everyone. There has to be an incentive, like nine hours of big-name bands. Compassionate attendance at Live Aid, uh huh.

A phrase of generals is "divide and conquer." This country (and others) is doing this to itself. If America collapses, whether because of garbage buildup, global warming, or nuclear war, it will most likely be because it was always the problem of the "other guy." If we just ignore him, the problem will go away, thinks your average American, who these days is better represented by the ostrich than the eagle.

And getting back to the idea of compassion—I have often heard it suggested that AIDS will never be the enormous threat to the heterosexual population that experts now predict, but that creating hysteria about possible infection was, however, the only way to get the straight population to do anything about AIDS.

Well, I'll let the experts argue about infection vectors and whatnot. But I do know that at last report there were 118,000 deaths from AIDS in America ALONE. That's more than twice as many as the number of American soldiers killed in Vietnam. And I suggest that if this seems less meaningful to you because only maybe 6 percent were confirmed totally and completely heterosexual, non-drug using, and not from Haiti, then you are pretty cold.

Unfortunately, for a lot of people it still does make a difference, like all the people who laugh their guts out when comedian Sam Kinison asserts that gay men spread lies about the need to use condoms in order to repress the heterosexual libido, and jokes about HIV being caused by gay men's propensity

for "screwing monkeys."

The federal government is not overflowing with compassion, either. In case you think it is, let's try a little comparison here. The defense budget for 1990 ran something along the line of 200 billion dollars. For AIDS there was the Ryan White Bill, which released, at long last, emergency monies of about 200 million to go to desperately needy hospitals and groups. It was then cut to 88 million, of which

Even death is so martinized, sanitized and hidden away by our consumer oriented culture that it is no longer considered something we have to suffer.

only 44 million ever saw the light of day. Is there any clearer message that people with AIDS are expendable?

Or if this comparison seems a little unfair (after all, this is defense for the whole country, and these are only a couple of sick people), try comparing expenditures on Toxic Shock Syndrome, or Legionnaire's Disease. In both cases, millions and millions were immediately spent to find the cause of diseases hurting only a few isolated people. It took months, and several hundred deaths before recognition was given to AIDS, let alone funding.

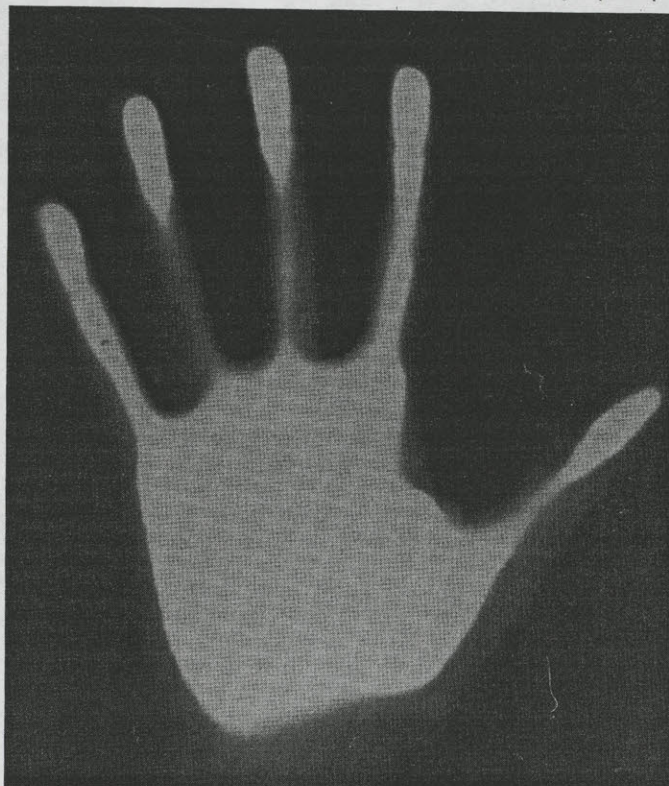
So I think I have a pretty good basis when I say that everyday compassion is necessary. No one is going to take care of our problems for us, and we can't consider buying a ticket to Live Aid as enough anymore. There can be no more "I'll pay attention to that when I have more time, when I'm making 30k a year." We have to do something now,

and something real. We have to face our fears and try to create a better reality, not hide from it. Death may be inevitable, but a painful life is not. I challenge you to do something now. And if we can't act together to save our own, then maybe we deserve

whatever plagues we get.

So as I lie in bed late at night and listen to Nicolas coughing, I want in your minds to be the thought that Nicolas's favorite ice cream is Rainforest Crunch. That when he sleeps he curls up on his side. That he calls our kitten M.C. Kitty and makes up raps for it. That in the third month I knew him he cleaned my entire apartment for me while I was at school and left a love poem on the bed which was so beautiful that I cried. I want you to think about it all and say Nicolas is expendable. That he is one of Them. X

Photogram by Andrew Penn



Special section HIV/AIDS

DPN stands for Diseased Pariah News, the one and only AIDS humor magazine. Started by Tom Shearer and Beowulf Thorne, the quarterly magazine contains humorous stories, advice such as Biffy Mae's 'get fat and don't die' recipe column for people with AIDS, porno reviews, and a personals column for the HIV+. Static interviewed Beowulf Thorne and received permission to reprint some DPN articles. So welcome to the world of AIDS humor...

DPN

This article, written by then editor-in-chief Tom Shearer, introduced the very first issue of DPN. Written from his hospital bed, Tom talks about teddy bears, hug objects, and diseased pariahs. He died of AIDS in April of this year.

Our brave new world

And now for something completely different. Not something completely different, 'cause many publications address the HIV epidemic, and not all of them are sanctimonious teddy bear droolbuckets, but we are certainly breaking new ground approaching the plague of the century from the angle of humour. So what's this? A bunch of AIDS jokes? What's so damn funny about a pandemic devastating the world? Well, we have it, and sometimes we find it amusing. After all, life itself kills everybody, and there's much about life that is purty darn funny, if you like humor. Besides, who wants to be serious all the time, even about fatal illness?

So what were hoping to do here is bring some much needed levity to the experience of HIV infection. We should warn you that our editorial policy does not include the concept that AIDS is a wonderful learning opportunity and a spiritual gift from above. Or a punishment for our previous badness. Nor are we interested in being icons of noble tragedy, brave and true, stiff upper lips gleaming under our oxygen hoses... We are not saints nor devils, just a couple-o-guys who ran into a danger penis and caught something we don't like very much. And we HATE teddy bears.

Part Two: the dreadful but true origins of DPN. Once upon a time, there was a sniveling young (moderately young) homo

poet (me) who was looking over his recent acts of pewtry, wondering why the world was not beating down his door to publish his work. Hmm, he said, perhaps I could self publish them, but what will I call it, Tom's Poetry Magazine? Mrs Shearer's Favorite Son? Glancing over the more recent poems, I noticed an awful lot of HIV related stuff. (Important aside: A few years before, I had seen a bitter little cartoon. An airline had refused passage to a person with AIDS, and there was a big stink about it. The cartoon showed a man at an airline counter, and the clerk was saying "...and would you like smoking, non-smoking, or diseased pariah section?" Mr. Tom was much impressed by this terminology and began to refer to himself as a diseased pariah, to much dismayed fluttering from his friends. At this time, remember, the only acceptable role for an infected person was Lan-guishing Saint and Hug Object...) Anyway, back to that poetry newsletter. The Diseased Pariah News! What a concept!

Issue One: Self Pity. Issue Two: Self Pity. And so it goes. Lucky for the world, I never made that poetry thang, but I did eventually start GAWK, a fagazine of the Yarts. When visual genius Beowulf joined the GAWK staff, or maybe when he told me he was positive, I told him about the Name Without a Publication. He was most delighted, and extremely enthusiastic about using the skills we were honing in GAWK to make a DPN. And so it was born.

And now you may participate in its growth. Send us money. Do you have any idea how much it cost to send a magazine to medical school these days? **DPN**

by Tom Shearer
Reprinted with
permission from DPN

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Static Interview:

Too sexual with Beowulf Thorn

Beowulf Thorn is the cranky editor of the only AIDS humor magazine in the known world. Recently, Kim Hecht spoke to Beowulf about public perceptions of DPN, politics, and sex.

Interview by Kim Hecht

Why start DPN?

The idea was originally Tom's. We had been working together on a magazine of Tom's called GAWK, the Gay Artists and Writers Collective. Which, by the way, is available to anybody who would like to take it over. He had mentioned the idea in passing "oh, wouldn't this be funny, a magazine called Diseased Pariah News" and I really liked the idea. So I drafted a cover of what I thought DPN would look like. It wasn't anything like what it would eventually look like, but he liked the idea and so over a period of about a year we decided what the magazine would be and we gathered up material and we made our debut issue.

So DPN didn't have any sort of political message?

Not in the beginning, no, because we didn't think it would be very popular. We thought, we're a bunch of hateful anti-authoritarians here, we'll make a really mean, nasty magazine for people like us. The popularity has really surprised us and, you know, we were doing it for fun. I think towards the end Tom was realizing that it is kind of a — oh, I hate to use the word — social construction, speaking for our reality. I think we know more now what the magazine is and what it should be, what we're trying to do, even though we didn't know when we started out.

So what is DPN?

Well, I guess I can best describe it by first describing what it is not, since I still haven't been able to say in thirty words or less what our manifesto is. I was at the...what was the last HIV conference in the city? The 4th annual? I don't know. But it was for health educators, basically. So it was really dry, full of mental health professionals named Doty from Carmichael, California, and there were several hospices and groups there tabling and one of them had this poster and this poster was of this sort of skinny man in bed, looking very ghastly, being smothered by the bosom of this large white woman — she had flowers in her hair. And then there were these rows and rows of caring people in the background, and you know, its like, that's the only image you have. That's what you're going to be when you grow up. And I don't want to be a languishing hug object. And so I think we're trying to provide an alternative image. You can take control of your life. You can turn this around. Not to your advantage but — how do I say it — well, you're gonna croak soon so you might as well have fun doing it.

What kind of response have you received?

We have yet to get a proper angry letter denouncing the magazine as a concept. We get people [saying] you're getting too commercial, or, you're too sexual, or whatever. We thought, you know, that the magazine would be just for us, but there are other people who are HIV+ where their friends or loved ones are dealing with issues of HIV who will get the magazine because it helps them know what's going on, kind of a welcome to my world sort of thing. Other people will buy a subscription for a friend who's just found out that he or she is HIV+. In kind of a way of, well, get over it. Other people

can survive with it, so can you. Some of it's self-help format there is also information (for HIV+).

You're currently working on issue four... tell me about it.

Each issue has sort of a feeling, a theme to it. Number one was, well, I guess the issue without a theme. I guess the premier was the theme. Number two was sort of grouchy. Number three was the death of the editor. Number four I think is going to be kind of bland. There's lots of funny stuff, but I don't think there is going to be much of an editorial presence. Number five is going to be quite, quite intense, since it's, theoretically the first anniversary issue, even though it's going to appear a year and a half after number one.

Do you consider yourself a political magazine now?

Well, I never considered myself the political activist. I just do and say things that make sense to me and invariably they become branded as political statements, because, you know, whew, that's so controversial. Like in college I founded a student group at UCSC that provided condoms and lubricants and other safe sex supplies at cost to the student body. It's still going, fortunately. And it's like, "wow, that so controversial, wow, you're a real activist." No, it just needs to be done. I don't like to think of myself as a professional politician, since that has bad connotations for me.

How do you feel about being part of a cultural movement centered around an illness?

It sounds kind of misleading to say 'Gosh it's kinda fun', because I really wish I wasn't in the situation I'm in that made this all possible, but it's definitely eye-opening. And oh, meeting people, having famous people come up to you.... its like "ooh, ah, I shook Larry Kramers hand..." [laughter]

You certainly did get a lot of national press, even interviewed by Newsweek...

That was certainly a fluke. Somebody liked us a whole lot, and said the right things to the right people and was quite persistent and that's how it came to be and I was really surprised. First of all that the thing was even as long as it was. I was expecting some little paragraph in a corner, and that they allowed certain words to be said, and that you could see that the cover said "piss Jessie" on the magazine in the background. It was quite good for them.

Has anyone responded negatively to the sexuality of DPN?

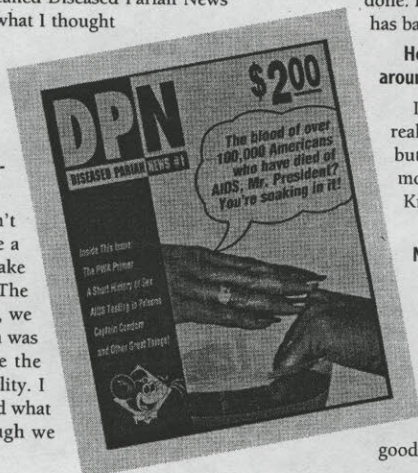
Yes. First of all, I like the fact that it has many prurient parts. Prurience, no apologies! [laughter] Also, this is part of our message. We want to eroticize the diseased pariah. That's why I'm trying to get a centerfold and stuff like that. I want to show that an HIV+ men, and perhaps in time HIV+ people, are worthy of erotic interest. And it's fun too. I've got a dirty mind, I like crawling in the gutter. But yeah, we've had comments on that, from interviewers 'hey, why'd you do this'. On our reader response part somebody from Louisville, Kentucky (we only have one subscriber there, so he's not really anonymous, actually) complained that he didn't like the last Captain Condom episode in #3 because it was too sexual for him to show his friends. Actually in issue #4 this Captain Condom is going to be a redone version of that last one, told in a parable. This is going to be a tale of Mr. Weasel and Mr. Bunny Rabbit in a nice nonsexual way so he can show it to his friends. But Captain Condom in #5, its going to have lots of violence. I decided we needed an episode of violence.

What is the future of DPN?

I don't know. I think it's viable for two years, at least. I don't think I'll get tired of it for two years. After that, who knows. We've got lots of ideas for future articles, future theme issues, and stuff like that. I have lots of ideas for Captain Condom. I'm working on a feature length episode, 'Captain Condom goes to hell...' X

DISEASED PARIAH NEWS

Subscriptions are available for \$7 a year, or \$2 for a sample issue. Please mail cash, stamps, or checks/money orders (pay to the order of FOG press) to PO Box 31431, San Francisco, CA, 94131.



"You can take control of your life. You can turn this around. Not to your advantage, but — how do I say it — well, you're gonna croak soon so you might as well have fun doing it."

Nookie in the Ninties

Making Love to a Man With AIDS

By Kim Hecht

I am a Nice Girl. I went to good schools. I received excellent grades. I didn't fool around. Now, I am in a monogamous relationship. Perfect, except that the man I sleep with has AIDS.

I can already hear a thousand outraged parent screaming "HOW CAN YOU DO THIS?"

My answer is...

Easily.

Society seems to have an unspoken expectation that people with AIDS should give up their sexuality, as well as their lives.

When I discovered my boyfriend had AIDS I didn't have time to think about sexual consequences. He had been admitted to Valley Medical that day with a preliminary diagnosis of pneumocystis pneumonia, a particularly virulent form of pneumonia that afflicts only the immuno-suppressed or very old. Of far greater concern at that point than whether we would ever sleep together again was the oxygen tubes and IV, the vomiting and strangled breath.

At that point I fell into some sort of manic overdrive. The guy I had loved and lived with for the last 7 months was in the hospital deathly ill and I was still trying to carry 19 units at school, move into a new apartment, and keep

looking happy and well when I was at the hospital. Nothing felt real and I was trying as hard as I could not to think about the consequences, the meaning of his diagnosis.

After a couple weeks, things slowed down, Nick was released from the hospital, I quietly stopped going to most of my classes, and I gave up and hired a

head. While he was still too weak to do anything, I thought. How far do the safe sex rules go, I asked myself? How certain are the authorities that invented these rules that these things are safe? Am I going to die if I sleep with Nick? How lame-brained stupid am I going to feel if I know better and I still get this

would have to be safe. But there is a point where you simply have to consider your life as a dignified human being, as opposed to a rat who is interested in nothing other than self preservation. Who was to be my master—the fear of death, or the desire to experience a totally full relationship with a person that I loved?

Discomfort was there. When I looked at his erect cock I couldn't help imagining it as somehow poisoned. Sex had always had an edge of discomfort and awkwardness for me...this redoubled the discomfort.

I didn't want to be giving him any goddamn charity fuck, either.

I didn't want to make love to him to prove something, to myself or him. That would have been tacky and meaningless.

I had to re-sexualize my lovers body, to begin imagining it again as sexual. I had to want to have sex not to prove something, but because it felt good, because it was the natural result of being in love.

Sex is so firmly rooted in the imagination, that the least sexual touch can cause sweat to film over the body, and the deepest penetration at another time can leave one bored and thinking about the dirty dishes. In re-creating our sexual life, one of the greatest advantages was my own pornographic imagination (and occasional literature—I've always had a dirty mind, and that led to a dirty bookshelf). We needed to create a sexuality that penetrates beyond the latex...the pornography I had helped fire my imagination to the point wherein I don't have to feel we were giving up the joys of easy sex by using a condom.

Strangely enough, we have better sex than before his illness. Maybe its because I pay more attention now and put more effort into it. When we don't feel like going into the condom folderol, I do posing and masturbation in front of him, to get him off, and I have discovered a very exhibitionist side of my nature.

I still have fears sometimes, but they tend to be a little more generalized. I have chosen to become less aware of death and more aware of the possibilities of my life.

None of which, of course, makes me feel any better about my boyfriend having AIDS. But what the hell. At least I'm getting laid. X

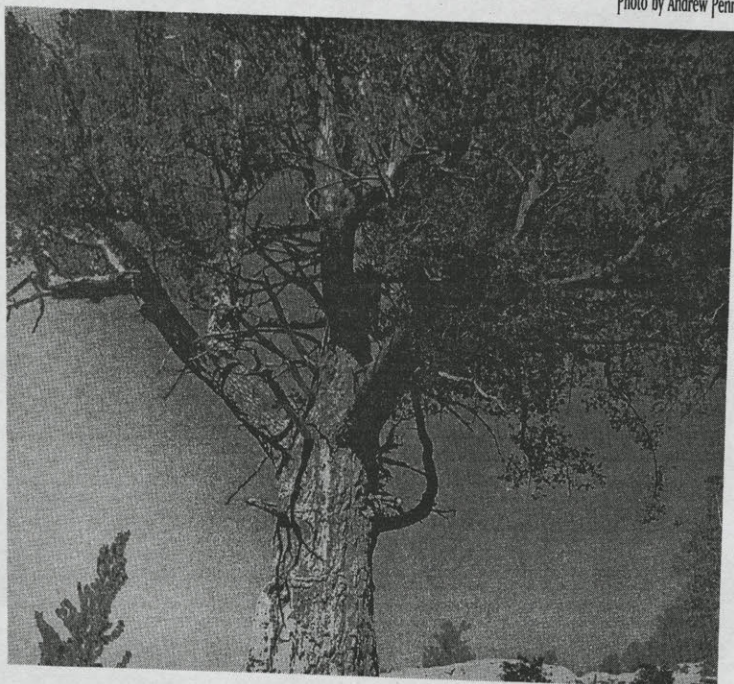
The woman in the couple screwed up her face in loathing: "How can they expect anyone to touch them that way?"

moving company instead of doing it myself. As Nick gradually regained some of his strength, sex crept back into the picture.

From the first there seemed to be something wrong with the idea of never having sex again. It just didn't jibe. I am not afraid to say (as Penthouse Letters as it may sound) that Nick's amazing sexual intensity was part of what drew me too him in the first place. He drew intense pleasure from all things sexual. It was part of his character, like musical talent or a taste for burritos. Castration through disease would be a death sentence, for him and our relationship.

Strange ideas flung through my

Photo by Andrew Penn



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By Tom Shee
Reprinted w

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had been for several inadequate: several was just my alrea. However, nally, ha physicia ly in cor ting...An long tim pneumo so eat th go home lously be again, ba his head, reasons way. Giv The next "We thin here so v meningit

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I want should cr, thoritative spect of h but the lig much that from unde don't spea bor, Mr. P

Tommy Hits the Big Time

Late Diseased Pariah News Editor Tom Shearer describes one of the many joys of having AIDS: The Hospital Visit.

By Tom Shearer

Reprinted with permission from DPN

Well, y'see, it was like this. Mr. Reasonable editor (that's me) had been feeling kind of inadequate for several weeks. Occasionally feeling inadequate is nothing new, except the several weeks part, and I figured that it was just another delightful wrinkle in my already splendid HIV adventure. However, I kept getting worse and finally had a friend trot me in to see the physicians. I was by this time not really in condition to do my own trotting...Anyway, they looked at me for a long time and said, "Well, you have pneumonia, but it's not pneumocystis, so eat these big erythromycin pills and go home." And I soon became miraculously better. For about two days. Sick again, back at the doc's, who scratched his head, said, "Well, there's a million reasons why you might be feeling this way. Give us your blood and go home. The next morning, they called me. "We think you should come right over here so we can treat your cryptococcal meningitis."

Pausing only to look that up and see that it is one of the AIDS-defining OLS, I took myself over there. They put me on a gurney and abandoned me for several million years, listening to my neighbor Mr. Gonzales Bad Day. Mr. Gonzales did not speak much English, and was apparently having a little trouble getting his needs met. When I first arrived, Mr. Gonzales was making a tiny little whimpering sound, and then began to say, in a piping, cartoon-like voice, "Ai!" (Ow! in Spanish) "Aiyiyiyi."

I wanted to go advise him that he should cry out in a deeper, more authoritative voice if he wanted the respect of his medical care providers, but the light was hurting my eyes so much that I was unable to come out from under the blanket. Besides, I don't speak Spanish. My other neighbor, Mr. Prunegobbler, was having a

better day than either Mr. G. or me. Mr. P. was telling the hordes of doctors who kept coming to ask him what his problem was, "I'm 70 years old, y'see, and I don't much expect I should feel up to 100 percent, but I just don't think I'm feelin' quite up to

rate. He was by this time shouting "Aiyiyi!" rather frequently, except when the nurse came by to lecture him for being such a sissy. They were quite nice to me though, which normally I would think was because I'm white, but Mr. Prune is black, and they were nice to him too, even though they didn't seem to be listening to a word he said. I think, just between you and me, that Mr. Gonzales was a little intoxicated, which I can tell you from personal experience can turn relatively bearable injuries into real nightmares. You wonder why I don't drink anymore?

So. The Sensitive Doctor, as op-

prepared for my style, but she recovered quickly though, and plunged a needle into my spine. Or so she said, but you coulda fooled me, cause they gave me some kind of happy drug and I don't seem to recall the next few minutes. Made my eyes stop hurting too.

Mr. Gonzales was apparently not getting any happy drug. "Aiyiyiyi!" he screamed, a whole lot of times. Luckily, my happy drug wore off and they rolled me out into another area with really bright lights and gave me my jacket to hide under. I could just barely hear Mr. Gonzales, and I did peek out and see Mr. Prune leaving. He

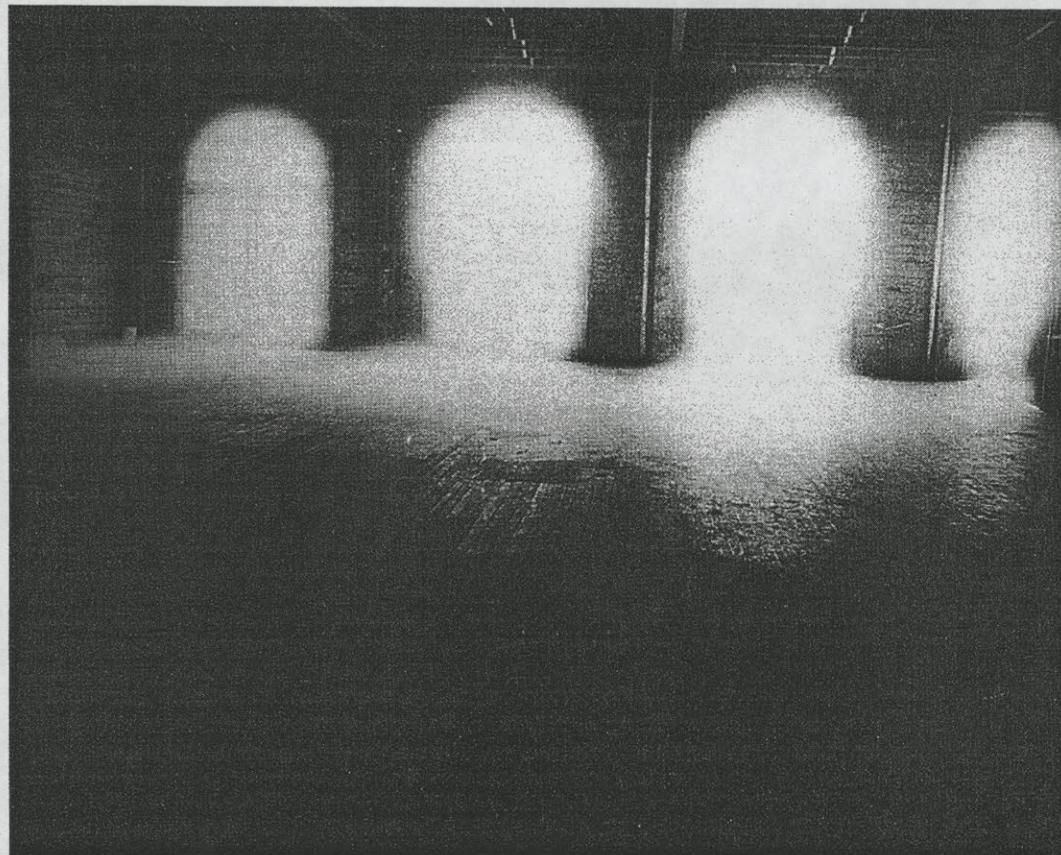


Photo by Andrew Penn

where I ought to." I heard Mr. Prune's story quite a few times, since none of the inquisitors seemed to be writing it down or talking to each other. Mr. P, however, was a very patient man, and he continued to repeat his story for each new visitor. Meanwhile, Mr. Gonzales' day continued to deteriorate.

posed to the Beeper Doctor and the Brusque German doctor, came by to explain to me that the cryptococcosis changed my diagnosis to AIDS, which I already knew. "Great!" said I, "This makes things lots easier for me at the Social Security office." The Sensitive doctor blanched. Most doctors are not

looks damn good for seventy, let me tell you.

So anyway, they gave me fluconazole and codeine and sent me home, and now that I have AIDS I feel better than I've felt in at least a year. What a goofy world. **DPN**

Sardonic Blades: Cutting Through Questions of Taste

by Richard Morrison

RECENTLY A NEW YORK Times columnist, while writing about the HIV/AIDS lifestyle magazine POZ, brought up "questions of taste" regarding the magazine's subject matter.

We can only hope that those scandalized by the thought that people with HIV and AIDS should have a publication that speaks to their experiences are subjected to underground publications like *Infected Faggot Perspectives* and *Diseased Pariah News*. These two 'zines quickly put to rest any questions we might have about "taste" by shoving their edgy, outraged and outrageous attitudes right down our throats.

Infected Faggot Perspectives, #14, Summer 1993. \$3.00; Free to the "Poor." Infected. PO Box 26246, Los Angeles, CA 90026.

The cover of *Infected Faggot Perspectives* screams that they are "Dedicated to Keeping the Realities of Faggots Living with AIDS and HIV Disease IN YOUR FACE Until the Plague is Over!!!" This pitch is maintained throughout all thirty pages of this issue with commentaries on the 1993 March on Washington and the IX International Conference on AIDS in Berlin.

This issue also features a poem by

current scapegoat to defund the NEA, performance artist Ron Athey, and an interview with Brian Grillo, the HIV-positive lead singer of Extra Fancy, an L.A.-based rock 'n' roll band. This interview, which takes a nasty little swipe at entertainment mogul, David Geffen, also provides an interesting discussion on being openly gay in the music biz. This issue of *IFP* also includes the advice columnist, Crypta from the Crypt, who chastises a disgruntled AIDS Conference-goer for

be Glamorous before you croak."

While individually the pieces in *IFP* may seem rambling and unfocused, the cumulative effect of this crudely xeroxed production is one of sharp critical analysis from those who live at the very edges of a marginalized community. The editors close out *IFP* with the command, "Even if we may be folding, send us some FUCKING money!" Being a total submissive, I did. And I recommend that you do the same. These boys will slay you with their anger and wit! (P.S. It's probably best to send them cash since it's unlikely that they have a checking account under the magazine's name. But, you never know.)

Diseased Pariah News, #8, \$3.00 per issue; \$10 for four issues. Make checks payable to Fog Press, c/o Men's Support Center, PO Box 30564, Oakland, CA 94604.

This 'zine is a much slicker proposition than *IFP* and its primary mode is satire. *DPN* #8 comes wrapped with a disclaimer warning that it "may be particularly offensive to some individuals." It then goes on to list the type of person you should or should not be in order to break the wrapper's seal.

Inside, *DPN* mimics the glossiest of the "lifestyle" magazines. We are treated to recipes, porno reviews, an investigative report on poppers, a cute centerfold, personal ads ("The *DPN* Meat Market") as well as an offer to purchase *DPN* merchandise: buttons, post cards, T-shirts and condoms.



whining about what the conference didn't do while bragging about getting to take a European vacation. "What are you complaining about," she writes. "You got to go to Berlin and Paris and

MEDIAWATCH

DPN #8 also includes work by David Feinberg, author of *Eighty-Sixed* and *Spontaneous Combustion*, as well as the what-may-now-be-legendary "AIDS Barbie" advertisement. The "ad" features three different dolls, each with their own opportunistic infections and medical accessories. The copy exclaims, "And she thought math class was tough!" Questions of taste?!? Forget it, honey! This 'zine is the most intensely hilarious thing you will ever read.

It's not all shallow laughs, however. The philosophy behind DPN is perhaps best illustrated in the editorial by "humpy editor and international liaison," Tom Ace, entitled "Dancing in the Streets." In this essay, Ace defends his (and DPN's) "demented sense of humor" as a way of critiquing and discarding received notions of etiquette, behavior and beliefs. He writes:

Unfortunately, being gay or HIV+ guarantees nothing about one's readiness to shed conditioned thoughts. Consider how many gay men continue to whine about the display of flesh at pride celebrations. Their letters of complaint appear in gay papers and in mainstream media. Why must we show our dark side to the world, they ask. Maybe these people miss the point because it's so simple: some of us have no respect for societal taboos about nudity and sexual expression. We feel that a society that cannot accept a naked human walking down the street is rotten to the core.

So, it's with this attitude that the beloved DPN editors and contributors stake their claims, and lucky for us! DPN is here to cut through the prim and proper, and to engage those who can't abide the duplicity of a larger community which proffers the notion that people can "be themselves" and then scowls when anyone steps out of line. This 'zine is the ultimate remedy to an epidemic of piety. ■

.....
Our regular Mediawatch columnist Michael Anthony Thomas is on vacation.

Richard Morrison lives in Durham, North Carolina. His work has appeared in Provincetown Arts, Holy Titclamps, Visions International, Christopher et and elsewhere. He is a contributing editor to Understanding.

Distant lands to see.
Goals to achieve.
Spirit to rejuvenate.

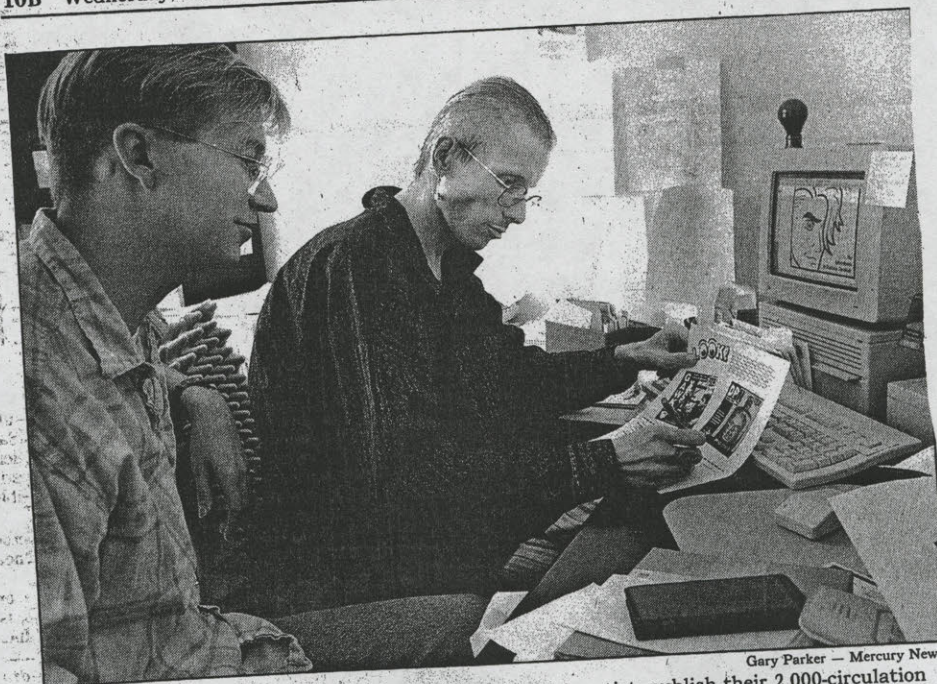
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Gary Parker — Mercury News

DISEASED PARIAH NEWS — Tom Shearer, right, a former computer technician, and his friend Beowulf Thorne, a graphic artist, publish their 2,000-circulation magazine for people with AIDS out of Shearer's San Francisco home.

Magazine publishers tell 'pariahs' that AIDS patients can laugh, too

By David Bank
Mercury News Staff Writer

A new magazine by and for people infected with the AIDS virus has staked out a clear editorial position on an increasingly divisive issue among those dealing with the epidemic: teddy bears.

"We hate teddy bears," said Tom Shearer, who is listed as "Your Serene Editor" in the masthead of "Diseased Pariah News." "We call them death teddies."

Shearer, a technician and writer at high-tech firms in Palo Alto, Cupertino and San Jose before he "retired" last year, and his partner, graphic artist Beowulf Thorne, say "Diseased Pariah" is the first and only humor magazine about AIDS.

"Don't you dare tell me not to laugh when I'm dying," is how they sum up the magazine's editorial policy.

With more than 100,000 people in the United States already dead from AIDS, the magazine provides an intensely personal window on the macabre and twisted experiences common in "AIDS culture."

"I am probably going to die of AIDS relatively soon, but relative is a relative concept," Shearer wrote in the editorial for the upcoming second issue. Shearer, 32, was told he had about three years to live when he learned he was

photocopying a gay literary magazine on his employers' office machines.

Cartoon inspires name

The name of the new magazine comes from the tag line of a political cartoon that satirized a one-time airline policy of refusing to board travelers with AIDS. "Would you like smoking, non-smoking or the diseased pariah section?" the ticket agent asked in the cartoon.

The idea languished until last year, when Shearer teamed up with Thorne, an old Palo Alto friend, who had become a wizard at using the Macintosh for graphics. Thorne himself had recently received the results of his HIV antibody test: positive.

"I told one friend who said, 'Oh good, now I can bring an erasable marker and connect the dots between your Kaposi's sarcoma lesions when you get them,'" said Thorne, 26, who dropped his molecular biology studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz to pursue his dream of being an artist. "That was the appropriate response."

ever, and at first they were afraid the magazine would fail because it offended nearly everyone.

"For a long time, the whole attitude (toward AIDS) was breast-beating, horrible, oh no, oh no," Shearer said. "The infected person sits quietly in a dark room in a long white robe, clutching his teddy and thinking positive thoughts."

"Then there's the Diseased Pariah school, which is more gonzo and over-the-top," he continued. "I think it's fun we've founded a new type of literature."

For Shearer and Thorne, humor is an end in itself, not part of some new laugh therapy or power-of-positive-thinking theory.

"A lot of this is I'll-look-back-on-this-and-laugh-someday type of humor," Thorne said. "Well, if you won't be able to look back on it, you can still look back on it now."

on a macintosh personal computer and illicitly photocopied at friends' offices, included recipes, resources, advice columns, reflections and comics. After exhausting five printings, Shearer and Thorne have increased the press run to 2,000 for the second issue.

"It always sells out," said Ra Reich of A Different Light book store in San Francisco.

Warning: The magazine is not for everybody, with its reproductions of photographs and drawings of naked men and frank discussions of sex acts and bodily functions.

Shearer, who sports a tattooed happy face on his bony right shoulder, dictated the editorial from a hospital bed at Kaiser-Permanente in San Francisco.

Now back home in his sunny apartment near Castro Street in the heart of San Francisco's gay community, he runs his modest publishing empire in pajama bottoms and red socks from a bed cluttered with papers and with medication to treat his AIDS-related complications. He's letting his bleached-blond hair grow out, revealing his natural, thinning brown roots.

Prize offered

The magazine offered prizes to the reader who most closely guessed Shearer's latest T-cell count, a measure of a type of white blood cell critical to the immune system. For non-infected people T-cell counts typically range from 500 to 1,800. The contest winner guessed 65. Shearer's actual T-cell count: nine. Shearer's response was to give pet names to each T-cell.

"I'm going to start a baseball team," said Shearer, whose soft voice lends credibility to his irreverence. "Who knows? Pretty soon it will be a bridge club, then a shuffleboard team."

Shearer was raised in Colorado, played bass in a rock band, drove his 1963 Mercury Comet west to Silicon Valley "to make big bucks in the electronics industry" and for 10 years was a "toiling drone."

"I spent a lot of time getting drunk in gay bars," he said, "which is basically responsible for my current situation."

Along the way, he learned about desk-top publishing and spent many late nights surreptitiously

Magazine tells 'pariahs' AIDS has its funny side

PARIAH, from Page 1B

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sions when you get them," said Thorne, 26, who dropped his molecular biology studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz to pursue his dream of being an artist. "That was the appropriate response."

That sense of humor shocked many of their other friends, however, and at first they were afraid the magazine would fail because it offended nearly everyone.

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Transit n

STREETWISE, from Page 1B
ment in which the people hold the ruling power either directly or through elected representatives; rule by the ruled."

As I read that, it says either/or. Not both. And certainly nothing about the Save Peninsula Area Rail Commuter Citizens' Committee, not to be confused with the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board Right of Way Acquisition Subcommittee, not to be confused with the San Jose Station/Tamien CalTrain Extension Project Joint Policy Board.

You want to know why it took nine years to plan light rail for downtown San Jose? Why it has taken 22 to figure out how to bring BART into Santa Clara County?

It's democracy gone mad: The insufferable combination of politicians who can't make a decision and an informed public that takes them up on their offer for input.

Just ask San Jose City Councilman Jim Beall. The man collects transportation committees like Cher does tattoos. He's on 20 transportation-related commissions

Do you want a s or just a specia



P.A. native tries to find lighter side

RUTHANN RICHTER / STAFF

Even while his friend lay dying in the hospital, Wulf Thorne maintained his irreverent sense of humor about AIDS.

He could not bring himself to cry as his friend slipped away. Instead, he laughed in the face of the disease.

"If I squeeze your IV bag, do your eyes bug out?" he would ask Tom Shearer in his last days.

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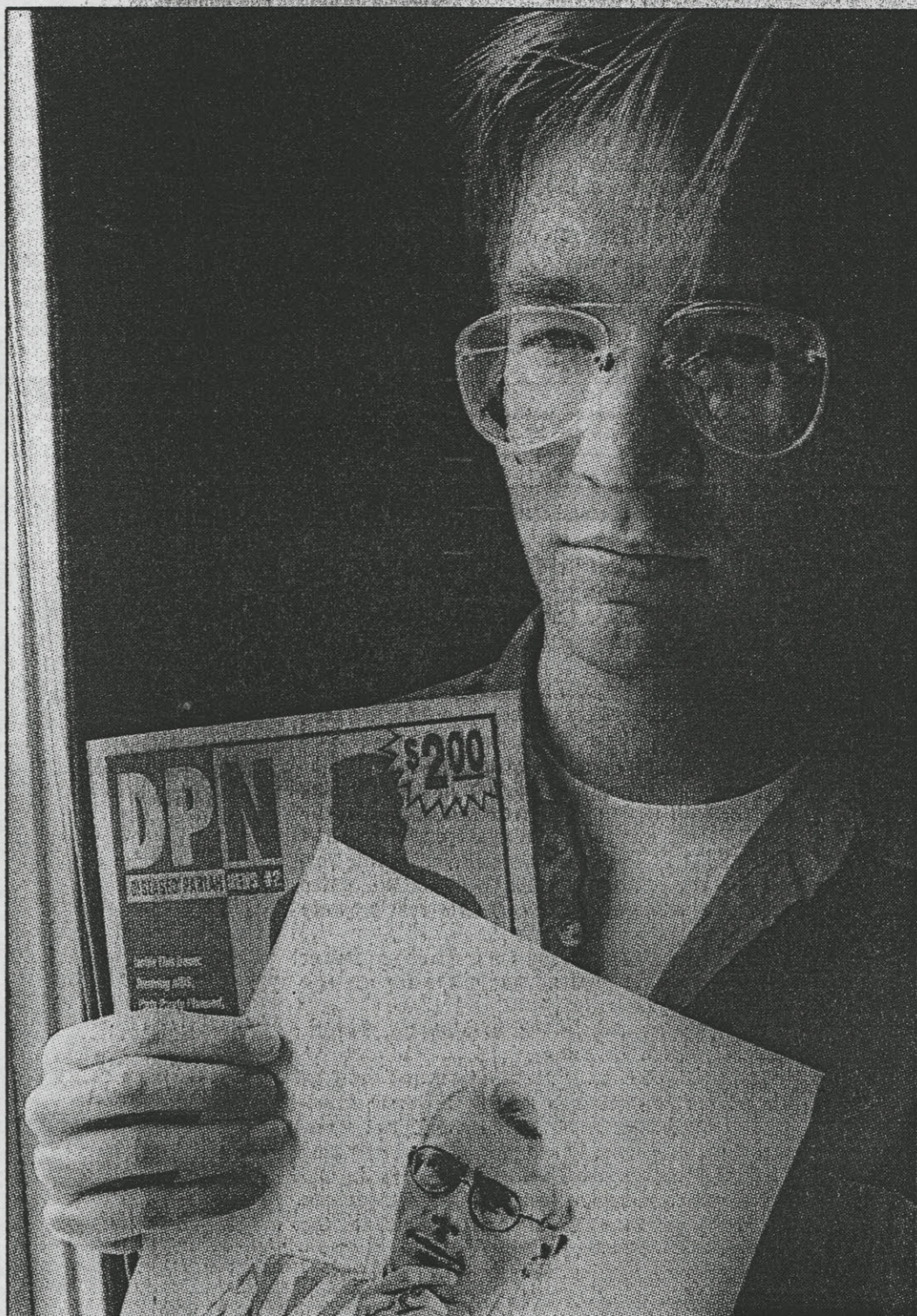
It's with that same tragic irony that Thorne and Shearer approached their joint venture, a quarterly "humor" magazine about AIDS called "Diseased Pariah News."

Shearer's death April 8 hasn't stopped publication. Thorne said he misses his friend, but the show must go on, if only to provide a continuing outlet for his own angst about the disease.

The magazine, begun about a year ago, is part informational, part prurient and part entertainment for those who have AIDS or who simply want a better understanding of what it's like to suffer from the terrible, terminal illness.

"It doesn't have 'ha ha' jokes. It's more ironic. Everything has a sense of irony," said Thorne, 26, a former Palo Altan.

The 32-page magazine can be deliberately provocative and very hard-edged, throwing



Anything That Moves

Karla Rossi, editor. \$25/year (4 issues; make checks payable to BABN) from BABN, 2404 California Street #24, San Francisco, CA 94115.

Easily one of the two best names for a magazine dealing with sex/sexuality ever. *ATM*, published by the Bay Area Bisexual Network in San Francisco, is a news, networking, and support zine for bis of both sexes. Their second issue contains articles on the problems of building a bisexual community, an interview with performance artist Keith Hennessy, letters, information on services and groups for bis, reviews of books and zines, fiction, and a calendar of events. An excellent magazine not just for bis, but for anyone concerned with sexual rights.

• **ATM:** What culture or cultures are you thinking of?

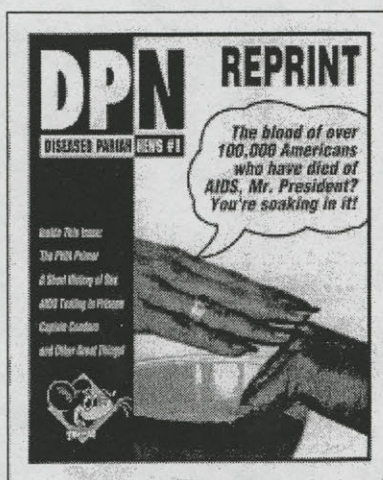
KB [Kate Bornstein]: A... tribe like in the film, *The Gods Must Be Crazy*. They assign

gender at birth according to tribal needs twelve years from the child's birth. They look around, and because there are so few people and so few resources, everything has to be economically planned, and the gender roles are the most rigid of almost any culture. Once you're a man, that's it, you do man things. If you're a woman, you do woman things. But they look around, and they [say], "in twelve years that hunter's going to be dead, this child is a boy." It has nothing to do with genitals. Nothing. So you've got all these — to our western eyes — female fathers and male

daughters running around which is kind of interesting, but to them it's just men and women, and genitals are totally secondary to any other consideration.

There's a culture in the south Pacific that has six genders. And those genders are based on sexual orientation as well as [on] identity and roles and there are different permutations of those. In Bali, hermaphrodites are acknowledged as a third gender [whereas] in our western culture, our doctors have taken it upon themselves to "cure" hermaphrodites at birth with surgery.

Diseased Pariah News



Beowulf Thorne, editor. \$7/year (4 issues; \$10/Canada; \$18/international) from DPN, P. O. Box 31431, San Francisco, CA 94131; 510/891-0455.

"*Diseased Pariah News* is a quarterly publication of, by, and for people with HIV disease. We are a forum for infected people to share their thoughts, feelings, art, writing, and brownie recipes in an atmosphere free of teddy bears, magic rocks and seronegative guilt." It's also one of the most beautifully produced zines around. *DPN* dishes up copious amounts of black humor, safe-sex info, and very personal features on "How I Got AIDS" and being busted at ACT-UP rallies. Whether you're gay, straight or bi, this is a zine you shouldn't miss.

• Now, let's get real here, folks. Dental dams were originally designed for oral surgery, not oral sex. The latex is thick and clunky, and our fearless bubble-butt surfboy slaves have complained of rubber

burn and tongue fatigue. Never fear, gentle readers, help is at hand. Simply take a rubber, preferably thin and lube-free (try Gold Coin, Saxon Ultra Thin, Crown, or Beyond) and snip off the tip with a pair of scissors. Then cut through one side of the rolled condom and unroll. Voila, a sheet of latex much thinner than any industrial dam!

Still tastes like thousand year old balloons? Try smearing a little Astroglide on it. The high glycerin content will cancel out that fatal flavor.

• Can one be spiritual at the memorial service of an atheist and not appear hypocritical? We at DPN answer a yearty YES. Take all of the teddy bears that your loved one ever received and burn them! Let the smoke from those good wishes float heavenward, or at least into the next-door neighbor's window. Louise Hay literature makes the best kindling, but in the absence of that, charcoal lighter fluid works in a jiffy. (Beware: burning teddies can give off noxious fumes.)

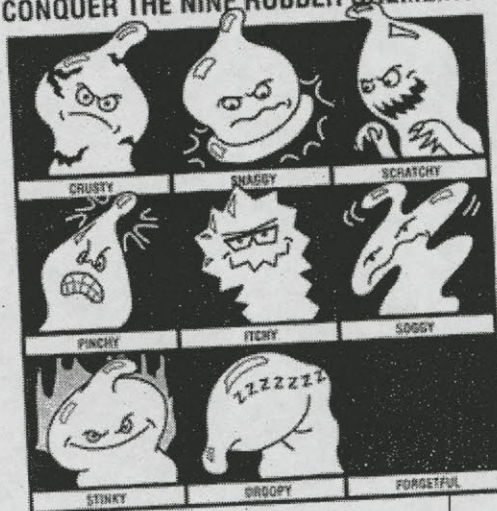
Black Lace

Alycee J. Lane, editor. \$20/year (4 issues) from BLK Publishing Co., P. O. Box 83912, Los Angeles, CA 90083; 213/410-0808; fax 213/410-9250.

This relatively new zine by and for African-American lesbians has a simple and clean layout, hot fiction, and attractive graphics, along with humor pieces, poetry and "Bad-Ass Black Women On File" — a section focusing on gay and straight African-American women "who are making a positive difference in our communities." One of *BL*'s standout features is a "we-can-do-that-too" Penthouse-style letters column that's equal parts hilarious and erotic.

• Of course shopping for dildos with the "race question" in mind is quite a learning experience. Immediately one particular dildo caught my attention: "flesh colored." I looked it over, pressed it against my arm. It wasn't my flesh color; in fact, it looked more like the color of the white woman who was standing next to me. What does it mean, exactly, when white hegemony extends to the production of dildos? The dildo was at once humanized, racialized. It seemed to come to life in my hands. Pulsating. Dangerous. I dropped it quickly and, when it fell, I noticed that it was just like the others. They were all one size, rigidly cut to the six-inch mark. Their thickness was average (I guess). And none had the classic beer can circumference.

CONQUER THE NINE RUBBER GREMLINS!



P.A. native tries to find lighter side

RUTHANN RICHTER / STAFF

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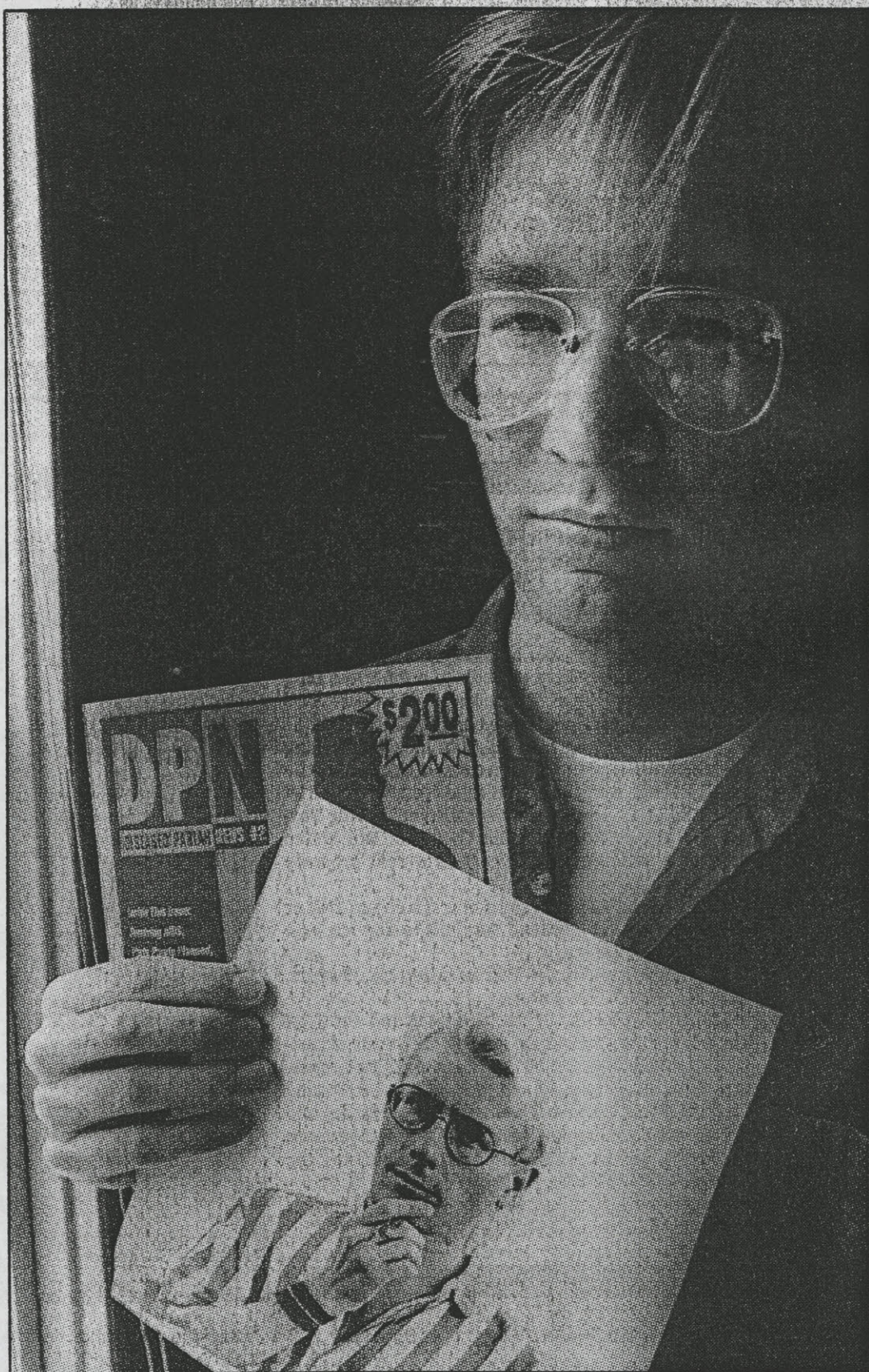
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The 32-page magazine can be deliberately provocative and very hard-edged, throwing darts at such figures as U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms and President Bush.

The cover of the first issue which came out in September shows a bejeweled hand resting on another hand in a manicur-

Please see AIDS, B-3



TIM BERGER / STAFF

Wulf Thorne is one of the originators of the "Diseased Pariah News," which he began last year with a friend, Tom Shearer, who died in April of AIDS. DPN may be the only magazine that pokes fun at AIDS.

The Point

by Kennedy Smith

Kevin Mischka is the archetypal boy next door: blond hair, blue eyes, boyishly cute, clean-shaven, soft-spoken. You've probably walked right by him a dozen times, having brunch at Kramerbooks, biking through Rock Creek Park, walking his Jack Russell terrier, Spike. He's the kind of guy your mom and dad would think would be a good influence on you, a good date for the senior prom. He's also *Diseased Pariah News's* latest centerfold.

Centerboy, Mischka says.

Centerfold, centerboy, whatever. What it means is Mischka took off his clothes and posed for a San Francisco AIDS 'zine that's known for humor as dark as Mischka's hair is fair. What's a nice D.C. boy doing in something called *Diseased Pariah News*? He's proving that living with AIDS doesn't mean living without pride or playfulness.

"The point of *Diseased Pariah News*, and me being in *Diseased Pariah News*, is to raise some questions, I think, of HIV disclosure — of not being in the closet, of not being ashamed, of, you know, trying to get past that," Mischka explains.

"It's obviously a horrible thing to deal with, and if you add to it feeling guilty and bad and ashamed, it's harder. Someone I knew died before anyone officially knew he had AIDS, and no one was able to support him. The issues are very similar to being in the closet about sexuality. I think you spend more time worrying about who knows and who doesn't than about taking care of yourself."

"I'm not a writer or an artist, he said, "but to me [appearing in *DPN*] was a way to come out about this in a more public way, obviously."

Obviously.

Portrait of a Centerfold

What's a nice boy like Kevin Mischka doing posing nude in a 'zine like *Diseased Pariah News*?

So, how did an administrator for Metro TeenAIDS find his way between the sheets of *DPN*?

"I volunteered," he explains simply. "I wasn't recruited."

Mischka had been familiar with the 'zine since before he found out he was HIV-positive. It's an unusual publication, to put it mildly. The back cover of Mischka's issue, for instance, sports a lesbian-covered Barbie in a hospital bed.

"It's not *POZ*," he says, referring to the slick, glossy magazine for people with AIDS. "*POZ* is great, but *POZ* is very different than this. *POZ* has its sense of humor, but it's not this dark sense of humor." And *DPN's* black humor, Mischka says, appealed to him.

"I think the magazine, for its contributors, is a wonderful, creative outlet," Mischka says.

chka says. "People who want to write something about dealing with your social worker, for example, that is funny and biting, *DPN* gives them a forum. It's not like a tree falling in the woods, with their ideas not being heard. It's a place where all your ideas about AIDS can be expressed. I think that, for the people who read it, it challenges them to laugh a little bit. I think it challenges people to not take this so deadly seriously."

So Mischka called the editors up, told them he'd like to volunteer, and asked them how they select their centerboys. One of the editors wrote back and asked him to send some photos. He sent a few pictures (in shorts and bathing suits), and they wrote again and asked him to

spread. It doesn't mention that he's from D.C.; Mischka thinks that's because the 'zine wants readers to think they might run into him at any airport, any time.

"It's a takeoff on *Penthouse* and *Playboy* centerfolds, where they have Bambi or Bridget, who's 27 and a freshman at UCLA," Mischka jokes. "They have my name, my height, my weight. They didn't list my T4s because it's been so damned long that they figure they've probably changed drastically, I guess. They ask you about your likes and dislikes and T4s and any opportunistic infections you have and what medications you're taking. They choose what information to use."

He fretted a little about his underwear, which he knew from

two of them. His brother didn't mind.

"Well, he didn't say, 'That's the best thing in the world,'" Mischka says. "I don't think he's going to call me up and say, 'You've got nice buns.'"

The rest of Mischka's family doesn't know — yet. But most of his friends do, plus some coworkers. And as the 'zine has hit the shelves over the past few weeks, the list is getting longer. Is it embarrassing for people in everyday life to see him *au naturel*?

"We all have penises — all boys do, anyway," he hastens to add. A lot of my friends have seen my penis already, so it's not like it's something new. Although I sent a copy of it to an ex-lover who said it looks smaller than he remembers it."

Mischka is quick to get the conversation back on track, though. To him, the whole point of being a centerboy is to demonstrate that being HIV-positive doesn't mean you can't feel good about yourself. And that letting people know you're HIV-positive — whether in the centerfold of a magazine or in a group of friends — is essential to feeling good.

"When I first became positive, or learned I was positive, which is four-and-a-half years ago now, I told 10 people," he explained. "I kept it to a very small circle and I thought I was doing very well and that I was very brave. And I envisioned that this group of really close friends would protect me."

"But as time went on, I told a lot of other people, too. To keep track of

who knew and who didn't, since I have absolutely no memory for these sorts of things, I put a little 'H' on the Rolodex card next to people as I told them. Now there are only about two people in my life who I just haven't had a chance to tell yet. And that is so much easier."

"Life has been so much simpler since for about the last two years; almost everybody I've known has known. When I orient new volunteers at Metro TeenAIDS, I tell them I'm HIV-positive. I make sure it works its way into the conversation; I don't have a heart-felt confession. It's so much easier if people know. It's so much simpler."

"Sometimes people — me included — will scream at people for using the term AIDS victim. We'll say it's 'people living with AIDS' or 'people with AIDS,' whatever. And I think the way that you actually change people's perception, it's not just the political correctness of the speech, but show them that I'm not a vic-

Continued on page 57



earlier issues would be part of the photo spread. And he admits to a little narcissism.

"You have to be a little bit narcissistic to do this," he confesses. "I think I look okay. I worked out a lot to get ready for it; it's not how I look every day."

Do You Tell Your Friends?

Before he agreed to be a *Diseased Pariah News* centerboy, Mischka ran the idea past his brother, a fashion designer. After all, Mischka is a kind of unusual last name, and Mischka figured someone might make the connection between the

The Point

Out in Print

Recent Men's Releases

The Eagle Kite (Orchard/Richard Jackson Books, \$14.95) Paula Fox's new young adult novel should be a shoo-in for a Lambda Literary Award next year. It's an immensely affecting tale about an adolescent confronted with the reality of his father's homosexuality — and the fact of AIDS. Fox carefully outlines the tangled emotional issues involved, speaking evocatively of bleak despair, bitter anger, and the lightness of spirit that comes with the release of long-held grievances.

Jack of Hearts (Dutton, \$19.95) In Joseph Hansen's prequel to *Living Upstairs*, hero Nathan Reed is 17, living at home and longing to write — for his school paper, for a local theater group he becomes involved with. As he comes ever closer to realizing his dreams, he grapples with his burgeoning sexuality and with intrigues that threaten to tear apart both his family and his circle of friends. Hansen's writing is as lyrical as ever, his storytelling abilities as keen.

Out at the Old Ball Game (Bridge Works, \$21.95) The idea be-

hind Bernie Bookbinder's whimsical baseball fable is a clever one: A star first baseman comes out, accidentally assists in the outing of a dozen or two other Gay players, and finds himself on the first-ever all-Gay major league team. But if there are moments when Bookbinder's narrative demonstrates a certain flair, it never quite rings with the sort of conviction that makes readers believe it could actually happen.

The Unofficial Gay Manual (Doubleday, \$12.50) If you still think *The Official Preppy Handbook* is funny and you already own a copy of *Bob and Rod*, by all means rush right out and pick up this handy new guide to being a prosperous, one-dimensional Urban Gay White Male. Authors Kevin DiLallo and Jack Krumholtz have assembled all sorts of helpful hints for the aspiring bar clone: fashion tips, decorating advice, and even a section that might as well be titled "How to Speak Homo." This last is the only part of the book to evidence the least bit of wit — but then the authors, both local, are also both lawyers.

— Trey Graham



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Portrait of a Centerfold

Continued from page 55

tim. Or, if I choose to be a victim, you know, that's my label to use.

"But in my life, and in my work, I'm not a victim. I'm not allowing this to ruin my life."

The tattoo

About two years ago, Mischka got a tattoo on his arm: an atom, complete with rotating electrons. He's a little disappointed that the tattoo doesn't show up in the *Diseased Pariah News* photo spread because getting the tattoo, like being a centerboy, is part of his positive attitude.

"When I got the tattoo, I thought about energy," he explains. "To me, it was all about thinking positively about being positive. People who disclose their HIV status do it in different ways. The tattoo is one way. I've seen T-shirts that say, 'Nobody knows I'm HIV-positive, which I think is just great. There's other ways people do this in a very public way, and I think it's good. It makes you confront your own demons and your own shame and guilt."

"And I can't say that I'm totally happy that I'm positive; it's not a happy thing. Doing this is part of the process for me. It's a personal choice. I just hope that this challenges people and that it helps in some ways."

His other seropositive friends are at the top of the list of those Mischka is challenging — to appear as centerboys

in future issues of *DPN*.

"Come on, guys, this is an opportunity that only HIV brings!" Mischka jokes. "We have a few people in mind, he warns, "but everybody should think about it. They've never [published centerfold photos of] a woman yet. And they'd like someone with visible lesions."

Ah, yes. That dark sense of humor. Mischka laments that *DPN* isn't better known in Washington, in spite of the 'zine's sporadic (at best) publication schedule (one sales clerk at Lambda Rising told the *Blade* that the publication had folded years ago).

"It's much more of a New York/San Francisco thing," Mischka explained. "It kind of has that underground edge that we don't see much of here in Washington."

On reflection, Mischka is glad he posed for the centerfold shot.

"Centerboy," he emphasizes.

"I thought it was kind of quirky, and I'm kind of quirky and strange. People sometimes are taken a little aback by things that I do and I thought this was an opportunity to catch people off guard. And, of course, to make a very public statement about the importance of feeling good if you're seropositive. It's the kind of statement you can't take back. You can never take it back." ▼

Issue #9 of *Diseased Pariah News* is available locally at the WPA Bookworks at 7th and D Streets, N.W.

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facial expressions, posture or tone of voice.
"A person is feeling something and showing it lots of different ways, and you

It can also be insidious.
Whenever she was around a particularly esteemed and intelligent colleague, Hat-

I have an aunt who is positively sour," says Suzie, wrinkling her nose at the recollection of Aunt Elaine. "At every family get-together, people would avoid

tion with her relatives, resolving to remain cheerful and immune to the turbulence surrounding Aunt Elaine.

Please see MOOD, E2

FIRST PERSON
MELODY HYLAND-HUBBARD

Crash Lasts Split Second; the Pain Goes On and On

A year and a half ago, our car was rear-ended as I drove my two children to the pediatrician. I learned later that the woman who plowed into us was driving 60 m.p.h. on a surface street. She never braked. We are still living with the results. I wrote her a letter that I never mailed.

A split second, that's all it took. In that fleeting instant when you failed to look, you could have killed my children. What were you doing that could possibly have been worth jeopardizing my children's lives—putting on makeup, adjusting the radio?

Because of your negligence, your excessive speed, our lives were altered. My daughter, Phoebe, was horribly injured, and you never even got out of your car. You never said you were sorry. What kind of a person are you?

The officer said you were sobbing uncontrollably. He seemed sympathetic toward you because of that. I wish I'd had the luxury of sobbing, or more accurately, screaming at the time. But my precious daughter was screaming, trapped in the car, and I needed to hold myself together in order to free her.

My son was a day short of 8 months when you hit us. Though he was not injured, the impact was so severe it cracked his car seat. You could have killed him, but you never said you were sorry.

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Do you have any idea what it's like to watch your 3-year-old daughter have her broken ankle set twice (the first time the doctors could not realign the bones properly) without anesthetic—screaming and growling, the noises unrecognizable as human, or as coming from your beloved child?

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For three days Phoebe relived the trauma in her sleep. From her screams and what she said, we knew she was reliving



CHUCK STALLARD

Kirk Wilson, from left, Ron Mesa and John Ellis in a scene from "AIDS: The Musical," a play about an AIDS game show.

Healing Laughter

By BETH ANN KRIER
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Nearly a decade ago, when AIDS awareness was in its infancy, the disease was believed to be confined to the four Hs: homosexuals, hemophiliacs, Haitians and hypodermic needle users. It wasn't long before two more Hs—homophobic humor—joined the misinformation show.

One of the first, big-time AIDS jokes, an attack on gays, was chronicled in a behavioral science journal by Alan Dundes, a UC Berkeley anthropology and folklore professor:

Q: Do you know what "gay" means?
A: "Got AIDS yet?"

Meanwhile, as increasing numbers of people died of and learned to live with the disease, a second type of AIDS humor emerged. It didn't trash the gay lifestyle or turn patients into punch lines. With jokes on the effectiveness of AIDS diet plans and the do's and don'ts of condom etiquette, this more positive humor was gentle and supportive.

In some cases, it helped AIDS patients and their families to focus on something other than fear and pain, to reconcile the irreconcilable and to reaffirm the human spirit.

In the last year, however, AIDS humor has taken a new, darker turn. By nature, observers say, it has always tended to be on the black side. But this recent crop of

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Some of it is so tasteless it might have been inspired by one of John Waters' early films.

It offends many who claim that such material dishonors the dying and the dead. But the new breed of beyond-the-edge comedy is not coming from homophobes. It's chiefly the work of young gay men, some of whom are gleefully living with AIDS.

Indeed, the creators of this over-the-top approach claim their work empowers those dealing with AIDS to fully accept the grim reality of the disease and then transcend it.

Consider:

■ *Diseased Pariah News (DPN)*, the San Francisco-based quarterly described by editor Wulf Thorne as "somewhere between *Spy* magazine and *Good Housekeeping* for the HIV set." When the magazine began publishing late last year, its first 10 subscribers were offered an eventual bonus of paperweights containing the ashes of DPN co-founder Tom Shearer. He died last spring and is

now affectionately known among staffers as "the dead-tor."

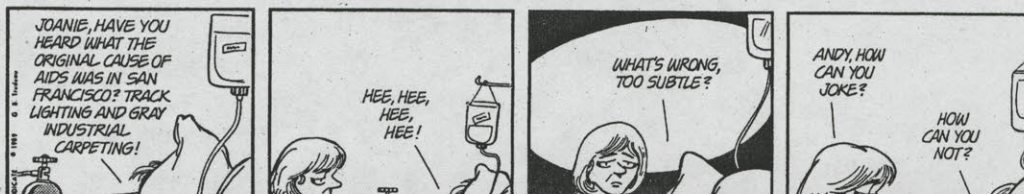
The magazine has a circulation of 2,500 and regularly features a nutrition column, "Get Fat, Don't Die," a "Meat Market" personals section and a comic strip starring "Capt. Condom." Says Thorne, who is HIV-positive: "We think that if you're going to croak sooner than you'd like, at least you can live while you're alive."

■ The emergence of musical comedies such as "Heart String" and "AIDS: The Musical." "Heart String," which has played throughout the country and is scheduled to open at the Shrine Auditorium in February, features singer-dancers dressed as Trojan women performing the show's safe-sex anthem, "Take a Trojan to Bed Tonight."

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■ The appearances at local AIDS benefits of registered nurse Debbie Trent-Johnson, who plays a drag queen-style character named Tra-La-La. "Tra-La-La's a blowzy, frowzy type who wears wigs, tight clothes and trashes it up all

Please see HUMOR, E6



spokesman. "But her national and international exposure changed the whole concept of the spot." But Hill is not complaining. Commented another university spokesman: "We're still getting two or three floral displays a day" for her.

■ **Cruel and Unusual Punishment:** The crime was playing reggae too loudly. The punishment: elevator music. **Zachary Brown**, who violated a noise ordinance in Key West, Fla., must subject himself to two hours of easy-listening music as punishment for blaring his "Jamaican Jam" tape on a downtown corner during the wee hours. Judge **Wayne Miller** settled on 101 Strings, an orchestra known for its all-strings instrumentals, and gave Brown 30 days to complete his sentence at a library.



Quayle

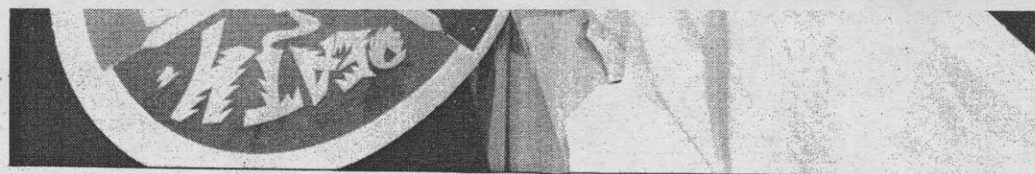
■ **Quitting Time:** A World War II hero has dropped out of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society because the group is giving Vice President **Dan Quayle** its Patriot Award. **Richard McCool** cited news reports—since discredited—that Quayle relied on family influence to avoid active duty during the Vietnam War. McCool won his medal for heroism after a Japanese kamikaze plane crashed into his ship. The Indiana National Guard said in 1988 it was actively trying to fill openings at the time Quayle joined.

■ **Shock:** Relatives of a murder victim were horrified when they filed past his open casket recently to see the body of his alleged killer. The corpse was even dressed in the victim's suit. **Bovey Sheng Chang**, 38, was shot to death at a Vancouver, B.C., home in October. It seems the morgue at a hospital released the body of the suspect, not the victim. A crematorium spokesman said: "We're very sorry this happened and we're in the process of getting to the bottom of it."

—Compiled by YEMI TOURE

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Kirk Wilson, from left, Ron Mesa and John Ellis in a scene from "AIDS: The Musical," a play about an AIDS game show.

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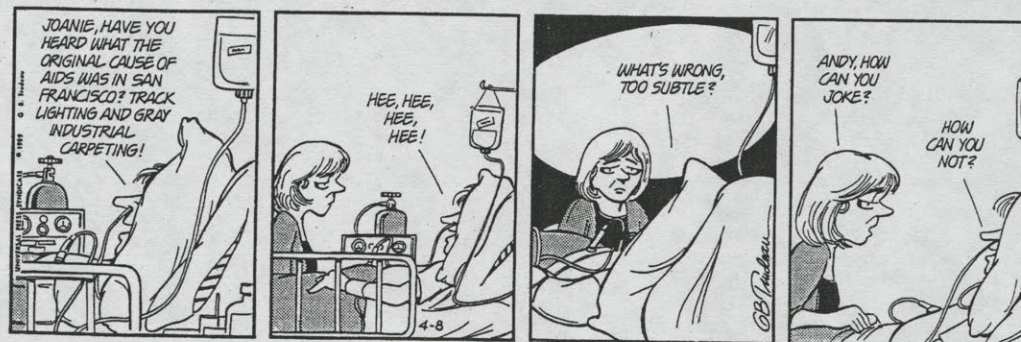
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Please see HUMOR, E6



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lives—putting on makeup, adjusting the radio?

Because of your negligence, your excessive speed, our lives were altered. My daughter, Phoebe, was horribly injured, and you never even got out of your car. You never said you were sorry. What kind of a person are you?

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For three days Phoebe relived the trauma in her sleep. From her screams and what she said, we knew she was reliving moments at the crash site or in the hospital. When my husband tried to comfort her, she did not recognize him. She thought he was the paramedic or the doctor—he looks nothing like either one of them—and screamed hysterically.

The night these episodes started was my mother's birthday and the whole family

Please see CRASH, E6

HUMOR

Continued from E1

over town," says Trent-Johnson, who is married and a mom.

On the job at Sherman Oaks Community Hospital's Immune Suppressed Unit, she ditches the Tra-La-La costume but incorporates the character's attitude in her bedside manner.

"The sense of dread and doom here is relentless, but this helps," Trent-Johnson explains. "Some of my patients are very clear-eyed. I had this patient who said to me, 'Debbie, they're sending me get-well cards! Don't they know I've got AIDS and I'm gonna die?'"

"We laugh about all kinds of things. Incontinence is really not very funny, but there are times when we find ourselves just laughing our heads off about it."

"We also have pet names and running gags for people here. There's a doctor I call Cleopatra, because I think he's the Queen of Denial. He can never admit his patients are dying. He always pushes for tests that dying people don't need. When he does that, we just say, 'Cleopatra's on his barge again.'"

■ Increasing lightheartedness in the reporting of AIDS-related matters by the gay press. In his "HIV Watch" column for the San Francisco-based Bay Area Reporter, Michael Botkin occasionally refers to people with AIDS as "dead meat specials." The column also goes "obituary cruising."

"I go through the papers and pick out the closeted AIDS obituaries," says HIV-positive Botkin. "For instance, a man who dies of lymphoma who's under the age of 50 or 60—it's pretty obvious that's somebody who died of AIDS."

"You can't be serious about this. That's not much fun. In this case, humor serves to give you some relief for a situation that's too difficult to grapple with all the time."

Not everyone agrees. Many people maintain that joking about death and disease is offensive and disrespectful. One critic is Larry Kramer, the celebrated playwright whose own works have contained

'It's hard for anybody to create AIDS humor, sick or healthy. AIDS is terribly hard to write about for anyone. . . . It's too painful.'



KEN LUBAS / Los Angeles Times

Debbie Trent-Johnson works with AIDS patients at Sherman Oaks Community Hospital. "We laugh about all kinds of things," she says.

laugh at a joke we're really saying. 'Yes. That's true. This is my story.' Humor is about solidarity with humanity."

That communion is also therapeutic, says Wendell Jones, co-creator of "AIDS: The Musical." Though some people who didn't see the show told him that its title ridiculed people with AIDS, he says that those who attended the show felt uplifted.

Jones remembers meeting one audience member:

"He stopped me on the street. He was very young, very thin and had very clear Kaposi's sarcoma lesions. He cried. We hugged each other and talked about the show. He said he hadn't had a good time like that in a really long time. I think that when you have humor and weirdness, it sort of liberates

The upswing may also be a response to continuing homophobic humor, says Richard Jennings, executive director of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), Los Angeles.

In 1989, GLAAD, along with other gay rights organizations, got Warner Bros. Records to include information on AIDS transmission with recordings by comedian Sam Kinison. The records contained AIDS jokes that the organization considered to be anti-gay and inaccurate on how AIDS is spread.

Jennings says the material violated a guideline that can help determine whether comedic material is offensive to homosexuals: "Is it making fun of homophobia or is it making fun of gays and lesbians?"

Jennings acknowledges that gays and lesbians may take greater

oppressed group can say about itself, whereas if the same terms come from the outside, it's continuing the oppression," he contends.

When it's done sensitively, Jennings has applauded AIDS humor created by heterosexuals. He sent a congratulatory note to "Doonesbury" cartoonist Garry Trudeau last year when Andy Lippincott, a character in the strip, died of AIDS after a 10-month struggle.

According to Lee Salem, editorial director of Universal Press Syndicate, which distributes Doonesbury, reaction was strong: "The positive ranged from private individuals to AmFAR [American Foundation for AIDS Research]. The negative response was pretty much by private individuals, generally in two groups. One group thought the subject should not be on the comic pages at all. The second group misconstrued the strips and thought Garry was making fun of the disease. Of course, that was not the case."

Is it possible to laugh in the face of death and disease without offending people?

The Rev. Doug Adams, who often tells the favorite jokes of the departed when he preaches at their funerals, thinks he's found a way to satisfy most of the critics. He points out that it's important to cry and to laugh when dealing with death and life-threatening issues.

"The crying is the recognition that a person is dying or dead. Let's not pretend. The person is dead. It's a way of saying yes, that's true," says Adams, who teaches Christianity and the arts at Berkeley's Pacific School of Religion. "The laughing is a way of saying that's not the whole story. That's not the end. It's not the final word."

"The bottom line is this. If you and I can't laugh about a subject, we stop talking about it, because we can't sustain solemnity on any subject for very long. If it's solemn, it's just not real."

Editorial library researcher Peter Johnson contributed to this article.

CRASH

Continued from E1

gathered round. My mother seemed to age five years as she watched Phoebe suffer so. My sister cried.

All of this—a family's agony—resulted from your one second of carelessness and you never even apologized. You didn't even get out of your car.

How could you just sit there and watch me try to force open the damaged back car door, then climb in the front and over the seat to reach my trapped, screaming child. How could you sit there and not try to help? Cowardly. That's what I thought at the scene. You're either a coward or a monster.

And it doesn't matter which, really, because the damage has been done, my family traumatized. I wonder, have you agonized over this crash anywhere near the number of times I have? Have you wished that you could redo that moment before the collision? Do you have any trouble driving?

I have realized what my parameters are. Driving anywhere within 10 minutes of my home is relatively comfortable.

Anything beyond that is threatening.

I keep driving because I do not want to be limited by this forever, but right now only those narrowly defined boundaries feel safe. I resent you for that. When I drive now, it is without the comfortable assurance that when I stop, the driver behind me will too.

Phoebe has started asking me if we have brake lights on our car and if people will see them when we stop.

Recently she told me that she knew an accident like that would never happen again. Do you know why? She said that she knew you were not in our world anymore and you could not hit us again. She has dealt with her fear by removing you from this planet. Does that

give you any indication of the extent of her psychological injuries?

Nothing will undo the damage you've caused and unless you have suffered remorse because of all this (which I will never know, not knowing what is in your heart), you will not have paid for this in any way.

You are under-insured and according to the lawyers we've talked to, you're going to get away with that as well, because it's not worth their while to take this case—you have too few assets.

So, the members of my family have suffered tremendously and you . . . have not?

Nothing I write, nothing I could do, no lawyer's actions, legal judgments, nothing, could ever compare with the damage you inflicted in that split second when you failed to look.

And knowing that, knowing that you will never suffer from this accident as we have suffered, is very difficult to accept.

Nothing will ever remove the images of my Phoebe's agony at the scene, in the hospital, and at home in the first five days following the accident.

There is no way that you could ever suffer enough to compensate for one of those moments of agony my daughter endured. No way. Ever.

Hyland-Hubbard is a Long Beach free-lance writer.

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AIDS humor. One New York reviewer called Kramer's "The Normal Heart" the "saddest" play about AIDS and his farce "Just Say No" (about the Reagan Administration's lack of response to the epidemic) the "funniest" play about AIDS.

"I love [the editors at *Diseased Pariah News*] and I love them for doing it, but I don't see it touching a nerve that people are responding to at all," says Kramer, who is HIV-positive. "I find it heart-breaking to read because I know that the people who are putting it out are dying. It's hard for anybody to create AIDS humor, sick or healthy. AIDS is terribly hard to write about for anyone. . . . It's too heavy. It's too painful."

"I want to write more humor, but I just can't do it. . . . All I do is think of all the people who have died and I say this does not honor them by poking fun at them or satirizing them. It's the hardest thing to do."

The difficulty level hasn't stopped the staff at *The Advocate*, however.

In the view of Richard Rouillard, who edits the nation's largest magazine for gays and lesbians, both the lighter and serious sides of the AIDS movement merit coverage. For instance, when *The Advocate* reported on *Diseased Pariah News*, DPN co-founder Shearer was photographed "trussed up like a Hoover vacuum cleaner."

This more relaxed approach toward AIDS is a signal that "the gay community has finally gotten its sensibilities back," Rouillard insists. "The dark ages of the epidemic are clearly not over. But the dark ages for the gay personality are beginning to be over."

Perhaps because the new, increasingly irreverent brand of AIDS humor has been circulated chiefly within the gay community, its practitioners say they have received little or no flack.

DPN's Thorne reports he's still waiting for a backlash to appear and "wouldn't mind some well-written hate mail." He suspects those who are offended by AIDS humor are more concerned for themselves than for those with the disease.

"It reminds them of their own mortality. To laugh in the face of death and debilitating disease is to reject everything that people have been ingrained with," he says.

The Rev. Doug Adams, a college professor, expert on humor and author of "Humor in the American Pulpit," agrees. "The humorless people are in major forms of denial about the fact that they're dying, too. Humor makes things real. It's identification. When you and I

though, suggests Judy Carter, a comic who taught a workshop on stand-up comedy for anyone—patients, relatives, care-givers—dealing with the disease. "AIDS is a very difficult thing to joke about," she says, recalling the three-month workshop offered last year through AIDS Project Los Angeles.

"The first three weeks, nobody wanted to talk about it. [But] one woman, whose husband died during the workshop, told me she would have killed herself if she didn't have the release that the humor gave her."

The 11 participants who completed the workshop performed their routines for paying audiences at comedy clubs in Encino and Pasadena. They were videotaped, delivering such lines as "The hard part about having AIDS is having people coming over to your house and going, 'Ooooh, ooh, what a beautiful television set!'"

Some of those videotapes have been played at recent funerals of workshop participants. The videos were warmly received because they allowed those present to laugh with the deceased, Carter says. "They're suddenly bigger than a person with AIDS. They're a person."

Why does AIDS humor seem to be on the increase? Why is even the city of Los Angeles seeing enough value in it to subsidize it?

(The Los Angeles City Cultural Affairs Department recently awarded a \$3,500 grant to writer Rondo Mieczkowski, to create humorous stories about dealing with AIDS and to read those stories at bookstores and HIV support group meetings.)

"I think the human condition is inherently hilarious," says Mieczkowski. "When people find out that I'm HIV-positive and they go, 'Well, what are you going to do,' I say, 'Well, be glamorous.' . . . People say 'How can you laugh at people who have AIDS?' . . . I'm not laughing at people who have AIDS. I'm laughing at my own life."

Some observers attribute the increase in non-homophobic AIDS humor to the fact that a growing number of people believe laughter is healing. Others note that people may be more willing to joke because many AIDS patients are now living far longer than was expected.

"The emergence of the drug AZT in 1985 was a turning point. Before that you were seen as being dead in 18 months, if that long," says HIV Watch columnist Botkin. "People who were friends of HIV-ers didn't feel like making jokes about it. Now that the prospects of living or living longer are much better, it's easier for people with HIV and their friends to see the humor in the situation."

humor could be considered unacceptable.

"There are certain things an

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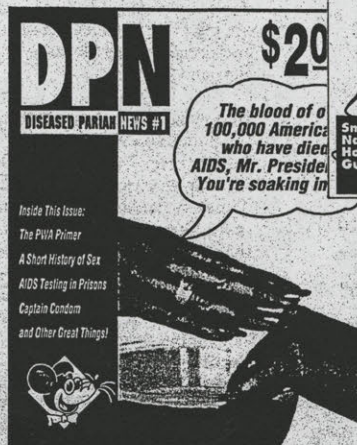
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APRIL 1991 THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY GUARDIAN / lit. 3

'ZINE SCENE

'Homozine' Nation

BY SUSAN GERHARD

"ZINES ARE to publishing what vibrators are to the world of relationships: When you can't find the right connection, plug in and do it yourself. Many writers and publishers are doing just that. The upstart gay publications (referred to here as "homozines") found in free-thinking bookstores (like San Francisco's A Different Light) or mailed through personal networks across the country use a do-it-yourself spirit to express themselves and, in the process, spit in the face of both the gay and straight publishing worlds.

With punk attitudes, intellectual sex, or just plain humor, the 'zines rush in where advertising-driven entities fear to tread. Since 'zines are often produced on tattered shoestring budgets by labor-of-love writers/editors/publishers/cut-and-paste artists, things like production values, deadlines and, of course, profits can slip through the cracks.

Editorial intent, however, comes across as strongly as the sentiments in an eighth-grade love note. The generally straightforward nature of the 'zines draws audiences in with sincerity rather than underhanded marketing tactics, cartoons and rough collage rather than subliminal seduction. There's no time for the sublime when you've got revolutions to start on your own Macintosh (or IBM Selectric).

In a survey of homozines mostly produced here in Fogtown (of which only a fraction are mentioned in this

article), I found more variation than commonality: some trash, some eloquence, and plenty of rebellion.

The best of the lot was far and away DPN (*Diseased Parnian News*), a 'zine that takes on the colossal task of creating "AIDS humor." It's a proposition that puzzles editors Tom Shearer and Beowulf Thorne as much as any new reader, but somehow the writer-artist team assembles a collection of works that bite hard at institutions (hospitals, the government) and the AIDS-phobic while poking gentle fun at PWAs themselves. DPN indulges in neither sanctimonious anger nor mind-numbing "warm fuzzies."

In addition to Captain Condom's adventures in snotty nightclubs, the "Porn Potato's" inspired video reviews, and Shearer's wry prose, DPN offers plenty of informational pieces on services for PWAs, news, Biffy Mae's "Get Fat, Don't Die!" recipes, and tips on condoms. With the cover's Palmolive detergent parody — "The blood of over 100,000 Americans who have died of AIDS, Mr. President? You're soaking in it!" — this 'zine is one step ahead of its rage.

If any trend characterizes the homozine world, it's insider humor that turns unsavory stereotypes into sexy new lifestyles. *Brains*, "The Journal of Egghead Sexuality" (soon to come out with *IQ*, a sister publication on its backside), promises "horny, smart, naked guys" and delivers plenty of egg-chasing tips, including the "How To Tell If Your Trick Is Really Smart" quiz, a sex-in-the-library

photo-fiction essay, and "the personal is political" personals.

Girlflock, "for the athletic lesbian with a political consciousness," delivers neither heavy athletics nor political tirades, but self-effacing humor — like cartoon quips about the simultaneously indecisive and incestuous nature of women's softball teams. It's a magazine for women who like to get muddy, sweaty, and to bed early.

The real humor in both of these 'zines is not only the introduction of a new generation of stereotypes (the era of the butch, leather-clad dyke and the high-heeled drag queen has been on its way out for a long time), but the realization that the 'zine-makers can't quite live up to their own hyperbolic expectations. They're just "normal people." *Brains* admits the possibility of spelling errors and unashamedly offers a "bonus question" to its quiz — "Do you give head?" — then advises the reader to skip scoring the test and move ahead if the answer is yes. *Girlflock* includes plenty of stories by Sunah Cherwin, self-described unathletic "Girl-Jell(o)," and cartoons about not really making it as a jock. These 'zines are the publishing equivalent of a Queer Nation "mall action" — parading stereotypes so outrageously that the notion of stereotype itself dissolves.

And it's not just these "single-issue" 'zines that are transforming their chunk of the world. While these homozines on AIDS, athletics, and intellectuals careen through stereotypes with humor and anger, punk homozines (*J.D.s*, *Homocore*, *Bimbox*) trash attempts at "gay ideology" — the reliance of mainstream gay glossies on political correctness. Sex homozines (*Taste of Latex*, *Shut Mag*, *My Comrade/Sister*) present multiple variations on simpleminded photo-filled mainstream gay and straight porn. Other 'zines like *Fogtown Rag*, *Whispering Campaign*, *Frighten the Horses*, and *Homoture* fill odd gaps in written discourse with works that range from purposefully humble to aggressively highbrow.

Obviously, it's a world of many minds and many Macintosh computers, so if you don't like the browsing selection, make your own.

Susan Gerhard is an editor at the Bay Guardian. She has written on gay events and issues of sexuality.

lit.

'zine Scene/3
Conjure Man/4

Reviews:
Sailor's Holiday/9
How Could You?/9
Confessions of an Eco Warrior/10

Editor: Miriam Wolf
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Sales Manager: Bethann Seide



Breaking barriers

IT'S A STRESSFUL time at the *Diseased Pariah News*. Not only is the staff of the San Francisco-based quarterly facing deadline pressure to complete issue number three, co-founder and co-editor Tom Shearer just died from AIDS.

The magazine, known as *DPN*, is a sobering humor magazine. "Of, by, and for people with HIV disease," reads the masthead statement of purpose. "We are a forum for infected people to share their thoughts, feelings, art, writing, and brownie recipes in an atmosphere free of teddy bears, magic rocks, and sero-negative guilt. We encourage infected people to submit material."

Inside is a bizarre potpourri of black humor and constructive advice.

DPN features contests: "Congratulations to Mike Cannon. Mike entered, and thereby won, the Guess Tommy's T-Cell Count contest. Also, thanks to Mike for guessing optimistically high."

There are health care innovations: "Having trouble holding those little Dixie cups and snaring the stool sample before it hits the water in the toilet bowl? Put a sheet of Saran Wrap loosely across the bowl, underneath the seat, to catch that puppy..."

DPN also includes sophomoric quasi-pornographic stories and verse, high-calorie cooking ideas to help keep weight on and serious resource material for people with AIDS.

The idea for *DPN* was Shearer's, who became convinced last year that there was a need for an HIV humor magazine. Co-editor and graphic artist Wulf Thorne agreed that the time was right and the first issue rolled off the presses last September, selling out its first printing of a couple of hundred and going into a second press run of over a thousand.

"He wanted to create a community for those who did not feel comfortable with existing support groups," says Thorne of his partner, who died

just a few weeks ago at 33.

The magazine has a broader appeal than the two thought it would. Subscription orders are coming in from across the country and not just from AIDS sufferers. Thorne says people who are HIV-negative read *DPN* because "they want to learn what others are experiencing. We take on serious subjects with humor and irony and that just transforms it."

Right now Thorne is looking for a new business partner to keep *DPN* going and for volunteer proofreaders and office staff. Or as the ad for help in the second issue puts it, "Your Diligent Editors could always use a few more bubble-butt surfboy slaves to help us fold, staple, stuff envelopes, lick stamps, and otherwise satisfy our depraved whims."

THE NEW YORK TIMES is stumbling around trying to recover from the disgust so many readers feel for the newspaper's profile of Patty Bowman, the woman accusing William Kennedy Smith of raping her. The *Times* is suffering on two counts. First for its competitive decision to print Bowman's name, a move sharply criticized by many rape counselors and journalism professionals. But even harsher criticism is aimed at the one-sided and innuendo-ridden nature of the profile. Not only was there no equivalent profile of Smith, but Bowman's character was assaulted repeatedly in the piece by unnamed sources and irrelevant information.

Late last week the *Times* responded to the prestige-damaging controversy with a page three box that apologized for nothing. Instead, under the headline "Editor's Note," the paper expresses "regret" if readers concluded from the article that the *Times* questioned Bowman's character.

In a silly attempt to explain away the *Times*' gleeful public announcement of Bowman's name in the embarrassing profile just the week before, the regret piece claims, "It

remains The *Times*'s practice to guard the identities of sex crime complainants so long as that is possible and conforms to fair journalistic standards." What makes that statement silly, and what makes it clear that the *Times* isn't sure what to do about the mess it's created, is that Bowman's name has suddenly disappeared from the *Times*' vocabulary. In this "Editor's Note" she is again referred to as "the woman," even though the offending profile from the week before had printed her name 12 times.

Another follow-up piece in the *Times* last week summarizes the debate the initial profile started and acknowledges that the *Times* decision to use Bowman's name was influenced by "competitive pressures."

The *Chronicle* — which reprinted the original *Times* profile — dealt with the problem in an editorial, saying that in the best of all possible worlds rape would not be a crime with a stigma. It also "regrets" using Bowman's name. "Our basic policy," concludes the *Chronicle* editorial, "will remain, as it has been for many years, not to name the victims in such cases." What the editorial fails to explain is why that policy was violated in the first place.

IMPRESSIVE WORK was done over the weekend by one of the Bay Area's Spanish-language broadcasters, radio station KIQI, *La Grande Diez Diez*. The station's fast-talking DJs pre-empted the usual music mix and instead did a grand job of raising money and supplies from listeners for victims of the recent earthquake in Costa Rica and Panama.

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ERIC BLOMANSON

Section

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Palo Alto Weekly • Nov. 25, 1992

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Worth a Look

A day for AIDS

A day without art is a sobering thought, much like the thought of a day without animals or trees.

But Dec. 1 is World AIDS Day, when communities throughout the world commemorate artists who have died from AIDS with a Day Without Art. Joining with museums and cultural centers throughout the world, the Palo Alto Cultural Center will sponsor a series of events throughout the day, beginning with draping all the city's public sculptures in black. Red ribbons, to be worn in sympathy with those who have died, will be distributed to the public for free at the PACC. "Common Threads: Stories of the AIDS Quilt" will be shown at various times throughout the day. Produced by the NAMES Project in San Francisco, the film tells the stories of people named on the quilt who have died of AIDS. A benefit auction, sponsored by the PACC and the Palo Alto Art Gallery Association, takes place through Dec. 1. Interested individuals can place silent bids on works donated by Joseph Zinker, Adam Schnitzer, Marguerite Saegesser, Valentin Popov and Susan Wexler. All the money bid for the works goes to a local AIDS organization. The PACC is located at 1313 Newell Road. For information, call 329-2366.

The body politic

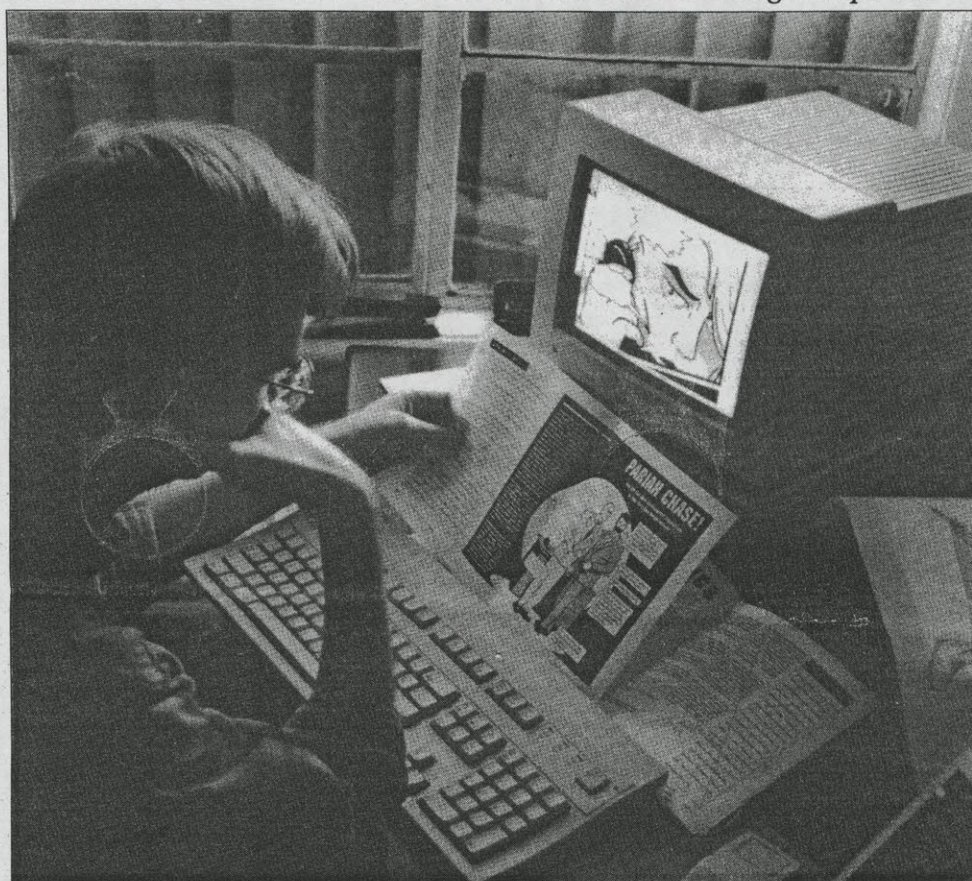
On Dec. 2-5, the Women's Theater Collective at Stanford University presents "Total Exposure," an original play that examines images of women's bodies vis-a-vis sexuality and eating disorders. The collective came together in spring of 1992 as an artistic forum for women to explore issues that concerned them. "Total Exposure" plays Dec. 2-4 at noon and 8 p.m. and Dec. 3-5 at 8 p.m. in the Nitery Theater, Old Union, Stanford. A discussion led by Dr. Regina Casper follows the performance. A \$1 donation is requested at the door.

Blood-sucking leech

By now, you've probably seen Francis Ford Coppola's version of the thirsty, hungry Count who made Transylvania a household word. On Nov. 27 you can see "Nosferatu," the silent film classic directed by F.W. Murnau, at the Stanford Theater and compare which one is creepier. "Nosferatu" plays at 7:30 p.m. with Dennis James playing the Mighty Wurlitzer. Admission is \$5.

GRINNING at the GRIM REAPER

Diseased Pariah News takes a seriocomic look at being seropositive



Renee Fadman

by Diane Sussman

There's not much about AIDS, with its realities of impending death, long hospital stays and possible social ostracism, that could be called the proper subject for humor. Even comedians who used to think their caricatures of lisping, limp-wristed gay men were funny seem to consider AIDS jokes in bad taste.

Enter Diseased Pariah News, an irreverent desk-top humor 'zine for gay men with AIDS that, literally, laughs in the face of death. Headlines such as "Darn, our centerfold is sick" impart the gallows humor tone.

Founded in September 1990 by Tom Shearer and Beowulf Thorne, Diseased Pariah News comes out "quarterly, or tri-annually, or whenever we get it out," said Thorne.

Above, Thorne designs the Diseased Pariah News on his Macintosh computer at home.

Readers know better than to expect tight deadlines. "We have this problem," said Thorne. "We never know when one of our editors might die." Thorne, a Palo Alto resident, is HIV-positive.

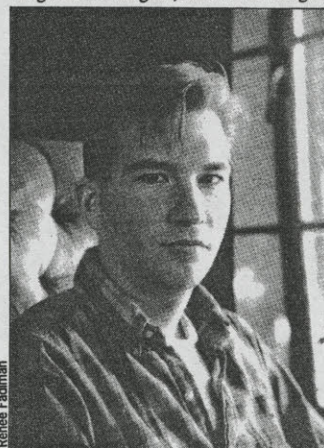
The magazine already lost founding editor Shearer, who died in April 1991. Shearer's death left Thorne, formerly the magazine's designer, heir to the maga-

zine's editorship.

The magazine's cheeky name comes from a cartoon Shearer saw that satirized an incident in which an airline refused a seat to a man with AIDS. The cartoon showed a ticket clerk asking the customer, "And would you like a seat in the smoking, non-smoking or the diseased pariah section?"

Three people produce DPN: Thorne, listed as Your Cranky Editor, Art Director, Illustrator, & Irresistible Force; Tom Ace, Your Happy Editor and International Liaison; and Bob Smith, Your Slumming Photographer. The rest of the work is done by a retinue of "bubble-butt surf boy slaves," Thorne said. Although it sounds sexy, Thorne admits their pre-eminent bubble-butt surf boy

(continued on next page)



Renee Fadman

Left, Beowulf Thorne is listed in the masthead of the Diseased Pariah News as Your Cranky Editor, Art Director, Illustrator, & Irresistible Force.



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Diseased Pariah News

(continued from previous page)

slave is 65 and has a tendency to bake cookies for DPN staffers.

Each issue offers a mix of submissions by newcomers plus continuing features such as recipes for gaining weight (Danny Mac's Fat Boy Shake is a favorite), HIV-positive personal ads and the Captain Condo comic series, in which a gay "safer sex superhero" gives condoms to the needy. "We're a cross between Spy and Good Housekeeping," said Thorne.

The magazine derides people who offer reassuring platitudes like "you need to look for the deeper meaning in all this." As the opening statement of DPN declares, "Our editorial policy does not include the concept that AIDS is a Wonderful Learning Opportunity. And we hate teddy bears."

Teddy bears, as emblems of babyish care and treatment, are such an anathema that DPN issue No. 3 features the story "Zen and the Art of Teddy Bear Burning." "Take all of the teddy bears your loved one every received and burn them," it reads. It concludes with a warning that could only be seen as ironic to someone with a lethal disease:

"We welcome discourse as long as it's well-written."

—Beowulf Thorne

"Beware: burning teddies can give off noxious fumes."

As grim as the subject matter is, 1,000 people subscribe to DPN and 4,000 copies are distributed to bookstores around the country, suggesting that the magazine is filling a niche among people with AIDS.

Recently, DPN was granted a Library of Congress International Standard Serial Number (ISSN). "That means if anyone wants to do scholarly research on DPN, they can," jokes Thorne. "We now have a thin veneer of respectability."

An ISSN isn't DPN's only entree into polite society. Several university professors, including MIT's David Halperin, use excerpts from DPN to teach students about activist journalism. "Young people respond to the undercurrent of humor," said Thorne. "Even young people who would never read a gay magazine." In addition, magazines and newspapers around the country, including Newsweek, have written stories about DPN.

But make no mistake. DPN will never adorn coffee tables or make a great gift for a dear aunt. It is an unapologetically graphic, in-your-face, politically hard-hitting magazine with lots of nudity and sex talk. A "sanitary seal" around DPN warns, "DPN is intended for the education, entertainment, enlightenment, and yes, prurient interests of individuals who are

at least 18 years of age and who promise not to cut up the pages of DPN and make little images of the American flag with them." There is simply no way to whitewash this magazine.

Despite the sex and centerfolds, DPN has only received one piece of hate mail so far. "I really thought all the politically correct Stalinist vegetarians would say something," said Thorne. "When we got the letter our response was, 'Oh boy, hate mail!' We welcome discourse as long as it's well-written."

Before DPN, Shearer and Thorne worked together on GAWK (Gay Artists and Writers Collective) a highbrow poetry and literary magazine. The experience highlighted the difference between the two men's approach. "I wanted everything to be beautiful at the expense of content and Tom was design-blind," Thorne said.

"Personally, I think he reveled in ugliness. He would have been happy to squeeze as many words on the page in four over four Helvetica condensed," Thorne added, involuntarily shivering at the thought of such horrendously squeezed type.

The short-lived GAWK had bigger problems than editorial and design conflict. "It was full of artistic angst," said Thorne. "Bad artistic angst."

The two men were not, as some news stories have suggested, lovers. "Newsweek kept referring to Tom as my 'companion' and 'partner,' which is their talk for lovers," said Thorne. "He was my friend. If he was my lover, I would have said lover."

Until his "untimely and unglamorous death," Thorne plans to continue producing DPN, being treated for symptoms of HIV infection, working as a "production slave" for a publishing company and surrounding himself with good company, including, one would assume, a few "bubble-butt surf boy slaves." "For a while I wasn't making long-range plans," he said. "When I realized I wasn't going to croak the next day, I started making intermediate-range plans. Next spring is the White Trash Summer Getaway in an RV across the country. In spring of 1994, I go to New York. I've never been there. After that, well, I don't know what happens after that."

In the mean time, Thorne relishes talking about a new trick he learned from nurses who took care of him on his last hospital admission: grinding up Vicodin and sprinkling it on ice cream. "It makes a nice topping," he says. ■

Diseased Pariah News

Info: Write Diseased Pariah News, care of Men's Support Center, P.O. Box 30564, Oakland, CA 94604 or call (510) 891-0455

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BEST OF THE BAY



GUARDIAN PHOTO BY JUDI PARKS

I'll tumble for ya: Loi Dinhvo and Caan Luong contemplate the free dryers, just one of the reasons why Laundreland is the Best 24-Hour Self-Service Laundromat.

URBAN LIVING from page 61

Best political quote

"You guys are bizarre!"

Mayoral candidate Willie Brown, during a Bay Guardian endorsement interview, leaning forward in incredulity in response to the suggestion that taxes on downtown corporations be raised to better fund the city's social services.

Best air quality

If you want to get away from the smog, move to **Sonoma**. According to Bay Area Air Quality Management District readings, Sonoma had the area's lowest levels of ozone—the main component of smog—in 1995. However, urban dwellers can take heart. Ozone levels in San Francisco, Oakland, Richmond, and San Rafael never exceeded the stringent state standard last year.

Best political hack

This is a close call between agent provocateur **Jack Davis** and crabby troublemaker Bob Barnes, but we give the nod to Davis for his combination of sheer audacity and electoral success. Davis got Frank Jordan elected mayor as an act of retaliation against incumbent Art Agnos, helped Willie Brown defeat Jordan just for fun, and advised Terence Hallinan in his victorious campaign for district attorney. Though he allegedly seeks spiritual enlightenment in Arizona from

time to time, Jack ain't going anywhere—his fingerprints are all over both the Giants ballpark deal and the 49ers' new stadium proposal. We love Jack because he livens things up whenever he barges into the latest political fiasco.

Best 24-hour self-service Laundromat

Outer Sunset residents may have it pretty bad when it comes to nightlife. But when it comes to clean clothes 24 hours a day you can't beat **Laundreland**. Admittedly, laundry is a task no one wants to do, but when the party's over, before your hangover hits, why not do a bit of cleaning? Though the washing is on the pricey side (\$1.25 for the average wash), patrons get free dryer use. That's right, *free*. This is perfect for that stubborn pair of jeans you've dubbed "the sponge," which seem to take five cycles to dry. There's a 7-Eleven next door, so you can boost your alertness with a Slurpee fix. No more missed parties and wasted nights. 2222 32nd Ave., S.F.

Best bad-attitude 'zine

The antidote to red-ribbon fever, **Diseased Pariah News** is the most refreshingly negative 'zine for HIV-positives. Unrepentant in its disgust for all things euphemistic, *DPN* has managed to make the scatological purely poetic in the 10 issues of its existence. In these pages the horny and or cranky inner lives of (mostly) HIV-

positive men roam free. No good-doing icon, not even Liz T., is safe from *DPN*'s elegantly sarcasm-soaked pages. The 'zine is a handbook for survival, full of not-so-subtle tips for dealing with the patronizing public, recipes (in the "Get Fat Don't Die" section), movie reviews (by Porn Potato), and wicked self-promotional satire. What the world needs now is not love, it's *DPN*. Send \$3 (check or money order) to *DPN*, c/o Men's Support Center, P.O. Box 30564, Oakland, CA 94604.

Best bathroom reading material

In the northern California world of wine snootiness, one voice rings true, unapologetic, and full of bad puns: Randall Graham's wine quarterly, the **Bonny Doon Vineyard Newsletter**. A UC Santa Cruz philosophy professor turned wine maker, Graham turns his steely and eclectic intellect to the development of some of the most aromatic wines available. You'll cry over a bottle of the Cigare Volante; you'll hyperventilate sniffing the Muscat Vin de Glaciere; and you'll no longer pooh-pooh pink wine once you've tried the dry, continental Vin Gris de Cigare. What you may not have known is that Graham is funny, and he writes funny too. Whether he's describing one of his wines ("The heart has its Rieslings" or "Pour some cassis into Big House White and show someone you kir") or describing the adventures of Don Quijones, the Man for Garnacha, Graham's *Bonny Doon Vineyard Newsletter* is a must read. Best of all, it's free. To get a copy,

Continued on page 65

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Puck

The Unofficial Journal
of the Irrepressible

Heart in Throat: Who

Really Won in November

Snake in Throat:

Kundalini Fiction by

Stan Henry

Samurai Biz Lords

Brazen Raves and

Beaucoup Reviews

Starring Abdel-Ishara,

Arroyo, Jaffe, Luzzaro,

Sheldon, Subraman, and

a turgid cast of graphics.

Diseased Pariah News #6 is edited by Beowulf Throne, "your cranky editor and irresistible force". This honey comes with a sealed wrapper for your protection: Be aware that this is "one sex obsessed issue." You must be at least 18 years of age to break the seal on this exquisitely produced-in-Spring ("that exalted time of rutting, sprouting, issuing, ejaculating, enlarging...") time. Let's *slip* the wrapper off, this is precious. You must understand the premise of "diseased pariah" here in San Francisco (or New York, etc., but I hear it here most and loudest). We're talking plague, HIV+, AIDS. That didn't seep into my skull until I had already bought it at Rainbow and was reading the inside cover on the bus to Sapphire's. I was merely attracted by the dramatic, cartoony homoerotic design of the cover. My jaw dropped. I proceeded to read every word and stare protractedly at many of the photos and graphics. I feel like drooling adjectives, but I won't, at least not too much.

The thing that grabs me most is the sensitive handling of really funny, risqué material. I mean, we're talking the dead and dying here, but we don't give up hope and we dream of bringing back our dead. Head up and grinning wryly, *Diseased Pariah* marches on. "Don't die, get fat!" Followed by the most chocolate-infused recipes you'll ever read. The table of contents is called "The Sickness Within." Are you with me here?

AIDS is not funny. The death of friends, family, lovers, not funny. To mock death, and to critique the society which in part condones and cheers on this disease, is brave, that's funny.

Puck!

The centerspread is beautiful. "Letter from an Innocent Victim" features Kevin and his female lover in some charmingly candid photos. Well, charm is a mixed bag the truth hits when you see the hypos full "a steady course of 330 CD4s on a constant diet of AZT, ddc, Bactrim®, and Ben & Jerry's ice cream..." Token breeder no more, indeed.

The lead story is Lou Ceci's "Part of the Solution." "It's Rodney King's fault." Ceci finds himself on the streets of San Francisco during the riots here, manipulated through a media coincidence, and becoming a Gay Republican activist.

Get *Diseased Pariah News* for \$3 a throw from DPN c/o Men's Support Center P.O.Box 30564; Oakland, CA 94604. Accept no substitutes.

Anthology #9

Winter 92-93 \$5.55

New magazine speaks to the HIV-infected

BY WILLIAM F. POWERS
Washington Post

IT'S depressing to think that there are now enough people with HIV — the virus that causes AIDS — to support a glossy new national magazine.

The good news is the magazine itself, *Plus Voice*, a bimonthly created to bring optimism and information to the infected.

"Don't expect poems or sermons or medical abstracts," writes editor Brett Grodeck, who tested positive for the virus seven years ago. "Rather, look for encouragement, honesty and a little fun."

The debut issue features an interview with Clinton administration AIDS czar Kristine Gebbie, who talks tough on health insurance companies, calling insurers' current policies toward HIV-positive clients "a travesty."

Ordinary people

Blessedly few celebrities appear in the pages of *Plus Voice*, which opts instead for stories of unfamous, upbeat people doing their best to live with the disease.

For instance, there's Ann Copeland, a Los Angeles woman who contracted HIV about six years ago and now is an activist for women with the disease. "The perception is that we're all sluts and druggies," she says. One of her goals is to have the public view HIV with more calm, much as it sees diabetes.

What strikes you is the focused, appreciative sense of life these people seem to have. One woman who has been a heroin addict, a prostitute and homeless says she wasn't happy with herself or her life until she learned she had the disease.

And William Franklin delivers an impish squib on the joys of using one's infection as an excuse for avoiding mundane social chores: "Suddenly you see Aunt Sophie — and that entire species of relatives/co-workers/old acquaintances from high school — in a new, refreshingly distant light. Very distant. Like from another galaxy. The word 'no,' as in 'No thanks, I won't be attending your brain-dead gathering this year,' now trips off the tongue like never before."

Diseased Pariah News

This is not the first magazine for people with HIV. Already into its eighth issue, for example, is *Diseased Pariah News*, a much less glossy, much less mainstream publication with a slant toward infected gay men. Here you will find recipes under the heading "GET FAT, don't die!" and black-humor pieces with titles such as "Dead Boyfriends Society."

It's raunchy, camp and occasionally angry, as in Collin Chace's piece on all those celebrities who sport red ribbons to show their AIDS awareness: "If I'm gonna die, I don't intend to die pitied. I'll gather up my last bits of strength to pull myself up from that hospital bed, tear the (expletive) ribbon from your body and tear up as much of you as I can before relaxing into my last dying gasp."

The subscription box says, "Please don't subscribe for more than one year at a time, for the future is mysterious."

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED

A year's subscription (six issues) to *Plus Voice* costs \$30. Write to the magazine at 29 S. LaSalle St., Suite 1150, Chicago, Ill. 60603, or call (312) 929-9761. The publisher writes in this issue that the magazine, a non-profit, will be available free through AIDS organizations and also will be mailed directly to anyone who cannot afford a subscription.

A year (four issues) subscription to *Diseased Pariah News* costs \$10. Write to DPN, c/o Men's Support Center, Box 30564, Oakland, Calif. 94604.

James Cary Parkes takes a look at a magazine for the truly sick, twisted and perverted, *Diseased Pariah News*

Barbed Barbies

Take your pick: there's Tropical Barbie, Black Barbie or the very special Magic Moves Barbie. But just when you thought that the Barbie barmy could buy the pert plastic personality in every conceivable shape and form along comes... AIDS Barbie, complete with her own elegant Estée Lauder "European Mystique" oxygen lung, gynaecological complications and Kaposi's sarcoma lesions.

AIDS Barbie is, of course, nothing to do with Mattel, Inc. but instead hails from the irrepressibly irreverent minds behind *Diseased Pariah News*.

Produced in Los Angeles for the past two years, DPN is a 'zine with a sting. Devised by PWAs and HIV-positive activists, it is a forum for frustration with contemporary attitudes (both gay and straight)

to the AIDS epidemic.

Wholly outrageous, truly and literally sick and perverted, DPN is also one of the most vibrant and positive responses to AIDS. Meeting absolute crisis with absolute satire, it's guaranteed, in a single read, to dry up any of the many crocodile tears shed by the HIV-negative during the entire epidemic.

Comedy runs a precarious line in any culture in crisis. Blistering satire can come across as anger run riot and, ultimately, self-defeating whilst sit-com style humour risks inducing a pale response verging on apathy. Any approach is bound to offend but then AIDS, and mainstream responses to it, is already an offensive state of play to begin with.

With cover headlines that promote inside stories such as

"How to Tell if Your Loved One is Dead", advertising PWA pin-ups (nude, naturally), and mocking the consumerist intervention (sic) into AIDS care, DPN is a peculiar and acquired taste.

Bitter, twisted and gravely funny, it leaves no hostages and delights in slapping down the broad liberal posture on AIDS issues: the emphasis on fund-raising and a condescending consensus of care and awareness through charity.

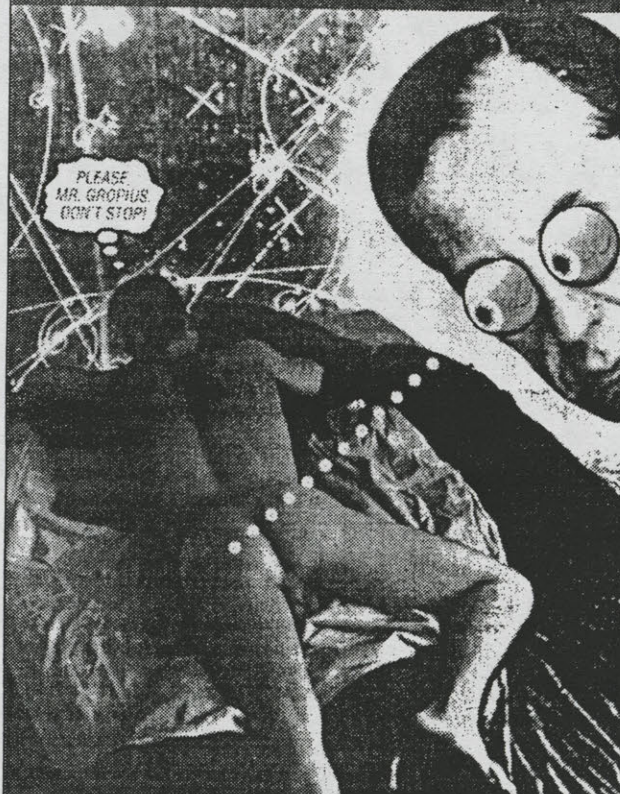
Pity poor Debbie Gibson, for instance. Interviewed about the boycott of Colorado State, the one time princess of pop said: "I think it's stupid... I went and did a radio promotion recently and I whipped out my jacket with the big red ribbon on the back. For me, that says a lot more than not going at all."

DPN interrupts with a suggestion: "Yeah, Debbie, I'm sure the radio listeners of Colorado heard that big red ribbon blaring over the air waves", pausing briefly to ask what the ribbon had to do with the Colorado boycott anyway, before asking Debbie to consider "getting your fucking red ribbon out of my face".

Perhaps the most refreshing thing about DPN, so to speak, is that it is really asking for nothing, simply demanding respect and rights for PWAs. Certain of the true implications of having AIDS, it is not looking for mercy - or dishing it out.

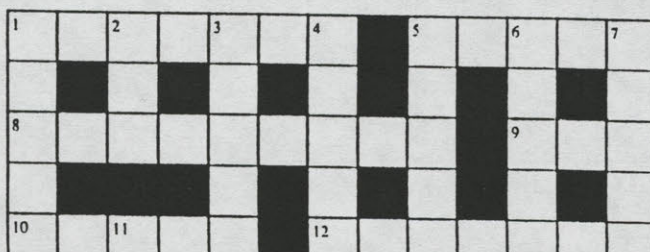
● *Diseased Pariah News* can be contacted c/o Men's Support Centre, PO Box 30564, Oakland, California CA 94604, USA.

But we are mere voyeurs in this land of Brian's, this land of the imagination, gather a few drops from his fount of wisdom and press them to our parched must leave. What grand insights are we missing? What noble endeavors are one? We may never know for sure...we can only watch from afar and speculate.



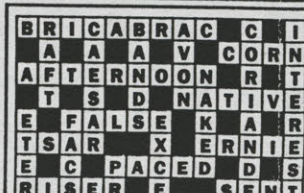
DPN: Outrageous, sick and perverted? Or a vibrant and positive response to AIDS? Absolute crisis meets absolute satire

Crossword 305 compiled by Gill Robinson



- 6 Given Reagan, I'd pull out and rob Edwin of success (9)
7 One rests and takes a fresh position (7)
11 To be there, a worker must be one who serves (9)
13 Up the mountain, then, half lost, about turn for a good finish (7)
15 A source of music depends on a good card and French unity (7)

304 CONCISE SOLUTION



PINK Stars by Jonathan Dee

Aries

The dark days of winter may be drawing on, but you are feeling invigorated. While everyone around you is suffering from cold and flu symptoms, most Arians will be leaping around with more energy and enthusiasm than you know what to do with! Some excellent developments in your love life has a bearing on this.

there's that one special person coming into your life now.

Virgo

Virgos have the reputation of being ready to serve others. Sometimes you can turn this laudable trait into a severe fault since you take away all independence from the person you're helping. This week you'll get the chance to find