Accentuate the Positive

June 24, 2013 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

I like giving credit where credit is due. So let me acknowledge that the idea for this special issue came from former POZ deputy editor Bob Ickes many years ago. I suppose, like a fine wine (if I may be so bold), it just needed some air.

The contributions of HIV-negative people to the fight against the virus cannot be overstated. We couldn't have come this far without them. People living with HIV who became self-empowered began the fight, but people not living with the virus quickly joined and have been here ever since.

We owe a great deal to our HIV-negative activists, researchers, lawmakers, officials, family and friends. Of course, this special issue can't possibly name them all. Instead, our goals for this issue are to applaud their efforts and to explore the various meanings of "negative" for people with HIV.

Some of the people highlighted in this issue not living with the virus have been at our side for a very long time: Ernest Hopkins of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation, Paul Kawata of the National Minority AIDS Council and Iris Long of ACT UP.

Helen Cornman also has been in the fight a long time. In the past 20 years, she has developed AIDS programs and policies for governmental and nonprofit groups. In her essay, she shares her own health struggles and how they've informed her belief that HIV providers must transcend empathy.

Serodiscordant (a.k.a. "magnetic") couples—where one person is positive and one is negative—are perhaps the best examples of how both sides can coexist. As the positive half of such a couple, I'm amazed there are still so many people who are baffled when I tell them. It confronts their preconceptions.

Gwenn Barringer and Shawn Decker, our cover couple (more on them below), share the challenges and joys of being in a mixed-status relationship. Click here to read more about them and two other couples, Randy Neece and Joe Timko, and Angus and Charlotte Carter.

Being negative is one thing. Staying that way is another. Safer sex is almost as old as the epidemic. Condomless sex (a.k.a. "barebacking") obviously predates it—and never went away. Can barebacking be safer sex? Before you answer, read this and keep an open mind. Enjoy the

summer!

P.S. Having deja vu after seeing the cover of this issue? You're not alone. It's an homage to our September 2006 cover, with Gwenn now taking center stage!

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/EdLetter-HIVNegative-24122-1681