Who Say’s There’s No Glamour?

Leading woman’s magazine profiles straight PWAs

May 12, 1995 By Bruce Edward Hall

Ah, *Glamour.* The magazine to which eight million women turn for tips on reigniting stale sex lives and that oh-so-perfect pedicure. February’s edition also devotes six pages to “Living and Loving with AIDS,” a profile of eight heterosexual couples dealing with HIV. What? No gays? Author Jennifer Wolff didn’t want to allow her readers to dismiss AIDS as “just” a homosexual issue. “Denial makes us [heterosexuals] feel safe,” she says in her intro. “These couples prove we’re not.” Kristine Larsen’s exquisite black-and-white photos show some beautiful people, while the text tells the story in the subjects’ own words. OK, so there are plenty of pulls at the heartstrings—“Never in my life have I felt so loved for who I am as opposed to what I look like,” says one woman. But hey, if sentiment’s the hook that makes *Glamour*’s readers think more seriously about AIDS, then bring on the blubbering.

The daughter of an AIDS doctor, Wolff wisely fought to avoid saying how her subjects caught HIV, not wanting to “feed into the prejudice,” although she was ultimately unable to thwart a somewhat unnecessary editorial remark about “former lovers [and] IV drug use.” And while she frets about not mentioning safer sex practices, something she refers to only in passing should come through loud and clear to *Glamour*’s female readers—seven of the eight women profiled were HIV positive, while only four of the eight men were. AIDS is spreading fastest among straight women, and this piece is a warning of what could be at stake.

Big Bully

Ed Bradley’s piece in the February 5 *60 Minutes* praised Camp Birch, a retreat for inner-city families dealing with HI. I’ll bet Birch in New York City is getting lots of donations.

But Ed, Ed, Ed. Bradley introduces us to the bucolic country setting by calling it “a place where *special* kids are allowed to feel ordinary again” (how I hate the word “special”). Then he rams a microphone into the face of an adorable, jug-eared little boy to ask in a voice dripping with pity and doom, “Are any of the kids in school afraid of you because you have AIDS? Do you feel like you have a *secret*?”

As the child answered in monosyllables I wanted to shout, well actually I *did* shout, “Leave him alone! He’s there to forget his problems for a few lousy days! Drip on someone your own size, Ed!” On balance, some coverage about AIDS remains better than no coverage about AIDS.

Carson City

Everyone seems to have known unknown Mark Carson. He is profiled in both *Entertainment Weekly* and *Premiere* as part of their now-annual tributes to those in the entertainment industry lost to AIDS. So maybe Mark was peripheral (at best) to the movies, but Jesse Green writes a sweet, sweet memorial to his friend in February's *Premiere*, trying to make the reader aware that Hollywood is more than just stars, and even the loss of a seemingly tiny cog causes ripples that can be felt far and wide. Accompanying the tribute is a simple list of 86 people from the film industry who have died of AIDS in the past year; their number, more than their fame, dramatizes the impact of their passing.

As sweet as Green's essay is, a similar tribute in the December 2, 1994 *Entertainment Weekly* makes clearer, stronger point. Edited by Maggie Murphy and (POZ Entertainment Editor) Casey Davidson, their eight pages is hard to skip, especially when it's eight pages of faces: 137 handsome, smiling faces from all phases of the industry, from Randy Shilts to Pedro Zamora to, yes, Mark Carson. Mark is given an extra-long bio, partially because he was an associate editor at EW, but mostly because his "Real vocation was making friends." Just one more person I wish I had known. "They say that until it hits home, people think of AIDS as someone else's problem," EW muses. The magazine's firm stance has helped bring AIDS home for more than two million readers.

Negative Reinforcement

Michelangelo Signorile once again stomps all over gay sexual taboos in the March 1995 issue of *Out*. This time, he exposes the hypocrisy and conflicts every gay man has regarding safer sex. He makes two good points. With all the attention given to HIV positive people, he says gays should develop a support system for HIV negative people to make sure they stay that way. Signorile writes: "Having repeatedly tested negative through the late '80s and early '90s, I began to feel falsely confident—as if I were somehow immune to HIV." Then he quite rightly points out that HIV positive people can be too often coddled and not often enough held accountable for irresponsible sexual behavior. This is definitely a message we need to hear more often.

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