# Mailbox

March 1, 1997

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**Red-Handed**

Your latest issue on blood and corporate greed is long-awaited (December 1996/January 1997). Unfortunately, the mainstream media still doesn't get it. An article in *The Wall Street Journal* addressed Japan's AIDS scandal, but the American blood scandal was not even mentioned. Recently, *60 Minutes* interviewed a lawyer for the pharmaceutical companies who argued that no one is to blame, and that people with hemophilia are just looking for someone to blame. We want accountability. The HIV infection of 10,000 *was* preventable.

*Barry Huff*
*via the Internet*

Degen Pener did an outstanding job of bringing to light the suffering of people with hemophilia, especially in the United States, by putting a face on the issue ("Cheese and Crackers," December 1996/January 1997). Shawn Decker could be any boy from Anytown, U.S.A.

People continue to be ignorant of the drug companies' greed and inhumanity, and our government's inaction. I am ashamed to admit the resemblance between the monstrous Nazi atrocities and what has happened here at home.

Your work is greatly needed and appreciated by those who care.

*P. Taylor Kirsch*
*Frankfort, Missouri*

**Positive Celebrity**

Michael Anketell does a service to the entire AIDS community by calling attention to the potential costs-both fiscal and ethical-of involving high-profile celebrities in fundraising ("Tarnished Sequins," November 1996). It would be unfortunate, however, if his book obscured the fact that well-known personalities have an important role to play in raising public awareness and encouraging friends and colleagues to write the checks we all depend on.

At the Momentum AIDS Project, our annual gala is a major fundraiser for our nutrition and

counseling programs, and celebrities like RuPaul, Ivana Trump, Betty Comden, A.J. Hammer, Fred Schneider and David Marshall Grant graciously contribute their time, at no cost. The role these individuals play in attracting ticket-buyers, press coverage and the much-coveted “buzz” that all event managers seek is inestimable.

*Dawn Bryan*
*Executive Director*
*The Momentum AIDS Project*
*via the Internet*

**Teens and AIDS**

You article about the frightening predicament of teens with HIV and AIDS was overdue (“The Age of Innocence,” October 1996). Because of the stigmas associated with AIDS in the Latino and African-American communities, HIV prevention is not promoted nearly enough. This is particularly difficult for me as a physician, knowing what may lie ahead for many of the teens in my community and around the country. I am therefore pleased to report that Roche Laboratories is providing AIDS service organizations with an HIV-prevention education program for teenagers called *In Our Own Words; Teens and AIDS.*

*Sandra Palleja, MD*
*Medical Director*
*Roche Laboratories*

**Sick and Tired?**

I have recently been diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Due to the similarities between this disease and HIV disease, it would be helpful and inspiring to read in your magazine about others who are battling this monster. As people with what is described as HIV negative AIDS, we face many of the same problems: Swollen lymph nodes, chronic yeast infections and recurrent infections due to B-cell and T-cell abnormalities. Although it is rare, there are those whose T-cell counts drop to the level where a diagnosis of AIDS would be given, were they to carry the virus.

*Eve M. Young, RN, BSN*
*via the Internet*

**Wood Cut**

*POZ* alludes to a 1993 study at the University of Wisconsin that found wooden cutting boards to be more hygenic than plastic ones (“Scary Food,” November 1996). However, efforts by the National Sanitation Foundation International and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to replicate these findings have failed, instead indicating just the opposite. Because this subject received so much

attention in the popular press, it was also studied by the Institute for Science in the Public Interest. They were finally able to replicate the Wisconsin findings only when using brand-new wooden cutting boards whose fibers were so porous that liquid containing the bacteria was whisked away from the surface to the interior of the board. However, once a wooden cutting board has been used a few times, it's pores become clogged, and it loses its porousness. And, in fact, it is this very porousness that makes wooden cutting boards dangerous; bacteria can live within the board, protected, for months, only to be re-exposed when the wood is later cut into. In some states, the use of wooden cutting boards is illegal in commercial food-preparation settings, inlcuding those handling only strictly vegetarian food matter.

*Robert H. Lehmann*
*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

**He Has Issues**

I'm really getting sick of Sean Strub's tirades against Bill Clinton. Will they continue for the next four years? Believe it or not, Sean, there are other issues besides AIDS for which I support Bill Clinton.

Your magazine is silly. "We're all happy little good-attitude people who don't want to read about the illnesses and death associated with AIDS. We're all asymptomatic and healthy, right?" Well, I'm not.

*David Armstrong*
*Dallas, Texas*

**Friends Remembered**

Thank you for the wonderful memorial tribute to Connie Norman, my wife ("Legacy," November 1996). One of my last conversations with Connie was about who will continue the fight. Many a morning in the last three years, I would see her rise above the fever and run to nail some councilmember. Now, if I can just figure out how to get some of her ashes into the Rose Garden at the White House, she'd be thrilled. Any ideas?

*Bruce Norman*
*via the Internet*

**Editors**: *Bruce Norman was part of the ACT UP demonstration at the White House on October 13, 1996, where ashes of PWAs, including Connie Norman's, were thrown over the White House fence.*

**Hits, Myths**

Dominic Hamilton-Little's "Sense of a Woman" (June/July 1996) was a rare/beautiful piece of

writing. It is one of the happiest things I have read in a long time.

*Sarah Jacobs*
*Gambier, Ohio*

Thank you for the exceptional interview with Brian Grillo ("It's a Goddamn Beautiful World," October 1996). He is my inspiration and I appreciate your coverage of him. Keep up the good work.

*W. McElhinny*
*via the Internet*

We love you. There is not a week when I do not quote something to our support group from a current issue or a past issue. *POZ* has probably made our group of affected people some of the most knowledgeable patients in the area.

*Jeff Dupre*
*President, HIV Network*
*Johnson City, Tennessee*

Congratulations on your splendid editorial "AIDS Mythology" (August/September 1996) reminding us all that hope is renewable.

My children belong to the first generation to grow up in the shadow of AIDS. They know this is a part of their lives, just as Vietnam was a part of my generation's. They were as impressed as I was and passed the magazine on to their friends.

*Judith Harris*
*Rome, Italy*

**Mason Redux**

I have only read through one issue of *POZ*, and I was very impressed. I am 16 years old, and AIDS and HIV are things that I really have to think about. I have a cousin who has AIDS and another who died from it. I am not like a lot of other teens who think that AIDS or HIV can't harm them. I have gone through dealing with death a few too many times for someone my age.

There were two articles that caught my attention: "Independence Day," abotu Kiki Mason, and "Toward Rome" (October 1996). These articles made me decide to contact an AIDS organization in Concord, New Hampshire to see if I could volunteer time.

*Meghan Lynn Hanna*
*via the Internet*

Thank you for sharing the final celebrations of Kiki Mason's life.

His articles enabled me to go that one extra step forward in dealing with my own issues of HIV and keep a positive attitude in a not-so-positive society.

*Joseph Littlejohn*
*Clearwater, Florida*

I would like to thank you and Carol Cox-Nickles so much for the "Independence Day" article about Kiki Mason. As a PWA who cared day and night for my lover/partner/"husband" of nearly nine years during the last months of his life, I found this article to be the most moving and honest account of the situation too many of us have experienced. The love and caring were undeniable and brought tears to my eyes.

*Russ Power*
*Harleysville, Pennsylvania*

**Firefighter**

I am writing to correct an error in "Pill-Stopping" (October 1996). There should not have been *I* and *my* in the statement "I get to a point where I'm just overwhelmed by the mindfulness that's required to take all my meds." I would no more take a drug holiday than shut off the water to a burning fire.

*Chuck Flaherty*
*via the Internet*

**Correction**

*In the December 1996/January 1997 issue, an article on credit-card insurance ("Play Your Cards Right") included an incorrect phone number for the nonprofit advisory center Affording Care. The correct number is 212.243.0571.*

*In the February 1997 issue, we incorrectly stated that Chicago cabaret drag performer Honey West is HIV positive. She is not.* POZ *sincerely regrets the error.*

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