# Mailbox

November 1, 1999

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**Aiden Shaw Pan Club**

I don't understand *POZ*'s fascination with Aiden Shaw ("Shagalicious Shaw," August 1999). You would think that a magazine with your popularity could interview someone who is a more positive (no pun intended) person than an ex–porn star. In my opinion, Shaw's views about AIDS are not worthy of print and his lifestyle is not one to brag about. The "I don't give a shit" attitude is a very negative one to portray. If *POZ* can't find better people to interview or better topics than "Is there life after porn?" then I suggest printing a blank page.

*Trace Baxter*
*Wilmington, Delaware*

**A Thorny Issue**

The cover of your August 1999 issue featuring a construction by Barton Benes was haunting, artistic and moving. The "Crown of Thorns" was very dramatic in a way that cuts right through you. I loved it.

*Kim Jackson*
*Alexandria, Virginia*

**Adult Entertainment**

Because we'd been hoping that *POZ* would broaden its attention to include a more diverse representation of those living with HIV, we appreciated both the July and August 1999 issues.

Quite honestly, our first reaction to your August issue was one of complete surprise. We both sensed an increase in the level of maturity represented by much of the writing. Donald Suggs' realistic "Net Serve," River Huston's refreshing celebration of Dawn Averitt's life in "Trailblazer," Chandler Burr's informative "The AIDS-Friendly HMO" and David Groff's magnificent "The Curious Closets of Barton Benes" represent an examination of the overlooked and less glamorous aspects of HIV's impact on our society. The July Africa issue directed our attention to the needs of others affected by the virus around the world that aren't being met.

We want to express our gratitude for your recent efforts. We hope *POZ* continues to be influenced by this maturity.

*Roger Banks*
*Richard Dumas*
*Via the Internet*

**Group Therapy**
"Bug Bugaboo" (August 1999) was a very good article, up to a point. It disturbed me that only some of the treatments for parasites were discussed. There are more drugs out there than we Americans are led to believe—just because a drug has not been approved by the FDA doesn't mean that it's been *dis*-approved by the FDA.

I'm a big proponent of using nontoxic natural alternative substances before resorting to pharmaceuticals, but when it comes to parasites, one day on the antiparasite Fasigyn (tinidazole) to treat giardia sure beats six to eight weeks on an herb remedy that may or may not work. Surely nothing is guaranteed, but we deserve to at least know all the options. Many drugs available overseas are pharmaceutical grade and have been approved by local government regulators and/or drug administrators. U.S. citizens are free to travel abroad and bring into this country up to a three-month supply of any treatment that we and our doctors deem necessary for our health. Trips abroad might be extravagant for a $15 box of pills, but that's why there are buyers clubs that allow for cheap and easy access.

To find out about other antiparasite drugs and how they work, call the Network at 800.734.7104.

*Mark Miedzokowlski*
*PWA Health Group*
*New York City*

**Obit Crit**
My congrats to you on the fine obit regarding my late partner, John Horn (August 1999). One minor correction: He was 56 when he died, not 64.

*Rich Magilli*
*New Orleans*

**Mind Your Behind**
I want to reiterate how important it is to have check-ups for anal lesions ("Smear Campaign," August 1999). I was having anal problems for almost a year before my doctors took me seriously. Finally I got an anal Pap smear and the results came back as suspicious. When I was sent to a surgeon for a consultation, he said that almost all smears come back as suspicious because of bacteria and such.

I then had a colonoscopy, and my biopsy results came back as dysplasia (pre-cancerous). I was advised that a follow-up would be scheduled in six months as there was no need to put me through the discomfort of surgery at that time. I told the surgeon that I was already in discomfort and if surgery would benefit, I'd like to take care of the problem immediately. So I had surgery, and two weeks later the pathology results of the removed tissue came back as cancer. My next

step was radiation therapy to my anus and the lymph nodes of my groin.

I was fortunate that my persistence caught the cancer before it spread. I have been lesion free for about eight months, and I strongly urge anyone at risk to get a check-up because surgery and radiation are a pain in the ass.

*Tony Austin*
*Treasure Island, Florida*

**Let Him Eat Cake**
Boy, did I feel stupid as I tried Florent Morellet's recipe for orange cake in your August 1999 issue ("Someone's in the Kitchen With…"). Before I throw out the mess in this bowl, maybe you can tell me how much flour, baking powder and baking soda go into the cake. It smells wonderful.

*Marc F.*
*Via the Internet*

Florent Morellet Responds:
*You may have been confused because the recipe is for "orange cake," and when most of us hear* cake, *an instinct from some deep, collective primeval kitchen overcomes us—and we can't help but reach for the flour, baking powder and baking soda. I understand your panic, but if you had taken a deep breath and followed the recipe, you would have poured that big mess—sans flour, baking powder and soda—into the dish, put it in the oven—and voilà! You could have had your cake and eaten it, too*.

**Small World, Big Hug**
I am very thankful for *POZ*'s Africa issue (July 1999). It looks beautiful, and it has something on Kenya in particular. I am very happy and proud about it.

*Esther M. Oloo*
*Kenyan Ministry of Health*
*Nairobi*

Congratulations on your coverage of AIDS in Africa. It rates among the best I've read thus far about health crises on the continent.

*Barbara Gomes-Beach*
*Executive director,*
*The Multicultural AIDS Coalition*
*Boston*

Everyone at my work has a copy of the July issue. The special articles on Africa are very informative. It is so nice to hear that there's something positive happening in other countries on

the continent.

*Sandile Walter Ntshakala*
*Family Life Association*
*Mbabane, Swaziland*

The Africa issue was a marvel—filled with information most of us in America don't typically get.

*Larry Cross*
*Via the Internet*

I applaud you for the Africa issue. *POZ* successfully highlighted the enormous contrast between our world and the Third World. And the photographs were great, too! I was slow to respond because I read every page and every word.

*Bob Hergenroeder*
*Houston*

Thank you so much for the Africa issue. The most important aspect was the attention given to ensure that the voices of Africans were heard. Too often, reports fail to reflect the point of view of the person about whom the information is provided. It is especially painful when this happens in the HIV community.

*Steve Wakefield*
*AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition*
*Chicago*

**Thanks for the Memory**

On the occasion of your fifth anniversary (May 1999), I'd like to take the opportunity to say well done, congratulations and thank you.

I especially want to thank you for articles by Andrew Sullivan and Larry Kramer. They are, to me, the voices of reason and outrage—two qualities needed to meet this pandemic head-on. Both writers assure me that we are still fighting and moving forward in our struggle.

As someone who's been dealing with this disease for 19 years, I've also found comfort in the lab reports that Sean Strub so selflessly shares. Thanks to your publication of the reports and the lucid commentary by doctors, I've had a relatively easy time reading my own reports and having informative and compassionate discussions with my doctor about treatment options.

And finally, thank you for the nostalgia of remembering those who have left us. Though I cried when I saw David Feinberg's name in the May issue, I was pleasantly reminded of the times my lover, Jim Lewis (author and former *Body Positive* editor), and I would go to AIDS fundraisers or be walking on the boardwalk on Fire Island and hear David call out, "Look, it's the blond WASP boys!" Jim died six months before David, and I'm sure that wherever they are they're arguing about

literature.

Thanks for an issue that brought back the days of joy, love and struggle. Keep up the good work of keeping us focused on what's going on so we can resist this pandemic.

*Anson Hedges*
*New York City*

**Ain't Too Proud to Neg**

While I'm HIV negative, I am an older gay man who works with PWAs. Your magazine helps me to do a better job because it is very educational and enlightening. I read many HIV publications, but yours is the best by far. And though I may not always agree with what I read, I find *POZ* challenging and stimulating. Please never hesitate to take on controversial issues.

*Edward J. Shields*
*Seattle*

I'm a newcomer to *POZ*. It's one of the best magazines I've ever read. I am not HIV positive, but I have a friend who is and I've been reading up on the virus to understand it better. *POZ* mesmerized me, and I want to turn others on to it.

*Terri Davis*
*Texas Department of Corrections*
*Houston*

**The Hills Are Alive**

My applause to *POZ* for giving voice to a population that would otherwise be forgotten. Your publication is the only source of updated medical information for many men and women who are incarcerated. Thank God people do care!

*Veronica Flournoy*
*Bedford Hills*
*Correctional Facility*
*Bedford Hills, New York*

I have been HIV positive for more than 15 years and in prison for five and a half. The stigma in here is so high that it's disgusting. I picked up *POZ* last year and I've learned so much from it. I read *POZ* to lift my spirits, and then I send each issue home to my family and friends to show them that this disease is no joke.

*Josie Joey*
*Bedford Hills*
*Correctional Facility*
*Bedford Hills, New York*

**Wayne's World**

I’ve been receiving *POZ* for about three years, and I find it to be very informative and helpful. As a man living quite successfully with AIDS, I look forward to each issue. *POZ* always has interesting articles on the current state of AIDS, with the Gazette news section being my favorite.

*Wayne Mancuso*
*New Orleans*

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