POZ 5TH Anniversary Issue: Year Four

May 1, 1999

APRIL 1997

For Larry Kramer, a little "Andrew Sullivan, True Believer," goes a long way.

This interview was conducted before the publication of Andrew's now-infamous article in *The New York Times Magazine*, "When Plagues End: Notes of a Twilight of an Epidemic." I truly loathed this piece. Should anyone not know, it posited that triple drug protease cocktails are going to end AIDS. Andrew, with some 600 T-cells going on, and taking 21 pills a day, presumably forever, wrote that he would be virus free for life. It is a rich white boy's fairy tale, almost racist in its total oversight of the rest if the world. I'm still aghast. How could anyone on drugs for only a couple of months, on a regimen that's also in general release for not much longer, claim as factual so much that isn't?

Kramer: Why is anger a dirty word for you?
Sullivan: It's not a dirty word for me.
Kramer: Has the Catholic Church pacified your soul?
Sullivan: I think anger can eat you up; it can consume you as a person.
Kramer: Why can't it be a tool to paint with? Why do you think it's automatically self-destructive?

MAY 1997

Joe, Greg Lugliani's "Longtime Companion," died of feline aids as this issue went to press.

In moments of worry about my health, I used to wonder which of my friends would take care of Joe if I became unable to care for him myself. I don't ask that question anymore. I know I'll be around to do that. I'm holding my viral stalker at bay. Joe has only me, the scraping of the cat-food can and the promise of fresh litter. For 12 years he's been there for me. Now it's up to me to make sure there's a warm lap for him to snuggle in as long as he wants one.

JULY 1997

Now that his wife is convinced, "Tommy Morrison Wants You to Believe."

Nine months ago, in a surprise ceremony, Morrison married his longtime girlfriend. He had pursued her for years while his reputation as a hell-raiser kept her at arms length. “She was afraid of me because of what she’d heard,” he says. “She thought all I wanted to do was get in her pants. We didn’t have sex until right before we got married.”

Now they have unprotected sex. Why use a condom, Morrison believes, when HIV can’t hurt you? “We haven’t changed one thing, and she tests negative every single time,” he says. Basically, she’s giving me her life. She’s saying, ‘Here, whatever you’re doing, I’m going.’” That’s how certain I am; there’s no way I’d ever do anything to hurt that woman. Because there is no fucking way you can get HIV from sex. It’s scientifically impossible.”

SEPTEMBER 1997

Porn star–turned–writer Scott O’Hara charges lazaruses like himself to “Get a Life.”

I have no desire to go publicly back to the life I had before AIDS. I’ve learned too much over the past 10 years about how life ought to be lived. Most of that knowledge came from spending a lot of time in close contact with death. I’ve been asking myself one question over and over: “If you knew this was the last week of your life, what would you do with it?” The answer, surprisingly, has not been “Find a better job.” Nor has it been “Go to the baths and fuck my brains out.” Awareness of mortality clarifies the senses wonderfully; it teaches how little there is in life that is truly serious: If you can laugh at AIDS, you can laugh at anything.

Let others recall the horror; I prefer to laud the heroes. Because there will come a time, and soon, when our gay sons will ask, “Daddy, what was it like, living with AIDS?” Being the curmudgeon that I am, I’ll undoubtedly say, “Read the book!” But the history will be there. If we write it.

Anna Forbes Looks “Beyond Male Condoms” and into the future of female-focused prevention.

My thinking about women’s control over HIV exposure changed in 1988 after talking with a woman with HIV. Middle-aged and middle-class, this woman had been faithful to her husband for almost 20 years, never injected drugs and was blindingly angry. “I played by the rules!” she shouted. “Condoms, monogamy or abstinence, right?” Her husband wouldn’t even discuss condoms or HIV and refused to be tested. He died of an opportunistic infection.

Prevention educators like me told this woman that monogamy would keep her safe. We lied.

For lots of women, condomless intercourse is what you do to keep your man coming home and a roof over your kids’ heads. It’s the price you pay for your next fix or to get out of a beating. It’s how you prove that you’re not a slut. “She should just make him use a condom” sounds a lot like the “she should just leave him” response to domestic violence. Not all of us can afford—financially or psychologically—to ditch a partner who violates our safety. Without an undetectable protection method, safer sex for millions of women is just one more nice thing that other people get to have.

“Gall in the Family” isn’t all we find in this peek into a child’s mind.

Michelle Lopez: [My daughter Raven] knows a lot. She knows she has to take medicine to keep HIV out of her body. She knows the times she gets her dosage. Wherever she is, she finds a digital clock. And she will tell you: “Eight-Oh-Oh! It’s time for my medicine!”

But when I got her undetectable viral-load readings and I shared them with her, she said, “Mommy, I don’t want HIV to leave my body. Nobody’s gonna love me or wanna be with me anymore.” So this is a child who’s getting all this love and attention and she thinks if HIV goes, all these things go. It’s sad in a certain way.

OCTOBER 1997

At 13, Hydeia Broadbent surveys her opportunities and shows “She’s Come A Long Way From Baby.”

For now, Hydeia is busy enough giving her generation a straight-up primer on HIV and AIDS. With her clever comic timing, surely she could become the next Whoopi Goldberg.

“Nope,” she says defiantly.

With her gift for gab and her genuine interest in other people, she could be another Oprah Winfrey.

“Not me,” Hydeia retorts again.

Well, then, what will she become?

“The next Hydeia L. Broadbent,” she states quietly, with confidence and no irony. “That’s all I want to be.”

Greg Lugliani squeezes every “Last Laugh” out of POZ*’s role-model rag.*

“*The Diseased Pariah News*’ name,” the surviving cofounder, Beowulf Thorne, says, “was a reference to a single panel cartoon in *The Advocate* about Delta Airlines refusing to fly known HIV positive people. A man at the ticket counter is asked by the agent, ‘Would you like smoking, non-smoking or the disease pariah section?’” From that darkly funny depiction of an episode of egregious injustice, *DPN* took not only its name but its raison d’etre. No more, at least in this lusty lampoon, would those with HIV be portrayed as reviled, frail, humorless eunuchs. Nor would glamorizing AIDS be stomached. “We should warn you that our editorial policy does not include the concept that AIDS is a Wonderful Learning Opportunity and Spiritual Gift From Above. Or a Punishment for our Previous Badness,” *DPN*’s editorial continues. “Nor are we much interested in

being icons of noble tragedy, brave and true, stiff upper lips gleaming under our oxygen hoses. We are not saint or devils, just a couple-o-guys who ran into a Danger Penis."

NOVEMBER 1997

Kevin Sessums' "Elizabeth Taylor Tells the Truth" isn't an apology to Debbie Reynolds or anyone else.

"I feel terrific. I can't stay up late. But it's OK. I love crawling into bed. I've got a collection of beautiful sheets. I decided that if I'm going to be sick, then I'm going to have a gorgeous bedroom.

"Something that was so funny was when they had to give me an intravenous blood transfusion, I thought the nurse had put lace around the bag and put little sequins on it to kind of camp it up and make it really kitsch. I said, 'Cathy, oh, you're too much. That's so sweet.' It made me laugh and took away my fear of the blood transfusion. Cathy just kind of smiled at me.

"Three years later, on yet another visit to the hospital, I brought it up again with her and told her how sweet that had been, and how campy it was. She said, 'Elizabeth, I have to finally tell you that I didn't do that. You were delirious. That was your imagination.' But it was a way of keeping me calm."

"A sense of camp calms your nerves?"

"Yeah."

Porn star-cum-poet Aiden Shaw writes about "Choosing HIV?"

And so I got HIV, just as I'd wanted. I laughed when I was told. It was such a relief. Everything fell into place. The future was clear; there was no need to worry about a career or old age. An HIV community materialized where the mythical gay one never had. Gay men did have something in common, after all. My death would be painful, like my life. Somehow this seemed heroic. It was a ticket to spirituality. At a time when I felt little, a virus gave me so much to feel.

In "Hope Against Hope," psychologist Walt Odets thinks outside the treatment-vs.-prevention box.

We are a shamed and stigmatized minority caught in an epidemic vectored by one of our most stigmatized activities—anal sex. While we know we do not get HIV because we are gay, it is true most of us would not have HIV had we not been gay. The confusion of these two ideas—of cause versus circumstance—is not only deliberately promoted by homophobes but, unfortunately, also supported by our own, often-unconscious feelings—not thoughts—of shame about being gay, anal sex and having HIV infection as if we were defending the very right to be gay: As one man recently signed a letter to me, "PWA and proud."

FEBRUARY 1998

Stephen Gendin pens "At the End of My Rope" in the pariah section of a post-conference plane.

They have left me to die. And not just me: Tens of thousands of us have run out of nucleoside and protease options. We're the pariahs in this time of hope; we're the bummer at the party. Worst of all, we're not much of a market. Whatever our numbers, we're nothing compared to the half-a-million-plus people with HIV who've never taken antiretrovirals. It's these fresh faces that the pharmaceutical industry wants to attract. The drugs might actually work for them. And if they do, the profits will keep rolling in. Every time we treatment-experienced folks "fail" on a drug, we've tarnished its image; those big drug makers must hate us. Anyway, why waste valuable research and development dollars on a group that's going to drop dead soon?

Richard Goldstein sees more to Nushawn "One-Man Plague" Williams than his "Criminal Body."

Not since Andrew Cunanan, whose imaginary HIV infection was blamed for his rampage, have the media had such a field day with the specter of the predatory PWA. Unlike Cunanan, Williams does have HIV, and his prior criminal record made it easy for the press to presume that this "sex sicko," as the *Post* dubbed him, had vengeance on his mind. But the fact that Williams is a black man who had sex with teenage girls put the icing on this devil's food cake. Though race went all but unspoken by the media, merely printing Williams' mug shot alongside photographs of his young "victims" was enough to evoke America's worst nightmare. As he sat in his Riker's Island cell awaiting sentencing on the drug charge, this young man who had been diagnosed as schizophrenic by a court psychiatrist was being morphed into the Willie Horton of AIDS.

HIGHLIGHTS

Gay neocons shorted out their Macs scanning the shirtless **Andrew Sullivan** pics in April's spirituality issue featuring the ex-pat's round two with **Larry Kramer**.

Treatment activist **Moisés Agosto** was the perfect poseur for the cover of May's beauty issue. **Mark Schoofs** ripped the lid off the reinfection controversy, and the Shalala Infections, a monthly count of dirty-needle transmissions, took off.

Sean Sasser earned the nickname "Shoeless Sean" when people at his new job at San Francisco's Health Initiatives for Youth saw the June issue. **Stephen Gendin** earned an unprintable name or two for "Riding Bareback."

Boxer and Rocky V actor **Tommy Morrison** celebrated Independence Day by saying that HIV is no big deal, a view not shared by the elders of Valdosta, Georgia, who ordered their Books-a-Million branch to keep this issue under the counter to "protect the children."

North Dakotan **Cyndi Potete** was charged with attempted murder for sex she couldn't even

recall. Charges were dropped, but since last August *POZ* has had to work overtime tracking the growing trend to criminalize people with HIV.

For the Money issue, **Susan Rodriguez** let *POZ* shadow her to show that living on disability is a full-time job. A sympathetic reader responded with a big check for a vacation for Rodriguez.

October ’97 illustrated the wacky diversity of AIDS when **Hydeia Broadbent**, who later sported a nose ring on Maury and Leeza, said “Cheese” under a photo of **Andrew** “AIDS-fueled serial killer” **Cunanan**.

For our British issue, guest-edited by porn star-cum-poet **Aiden Shaw** and released just after **Princess Diana**’s death, **LA LIZ** was the first-ever sans HIV *POZ* cover.

December ’97’s cover, performance artist **Ron Athey**, dished about life after NEA outlawhood and before his film-bio hit, *Hallelujah!*

Evening Shade’s **Michael Jeter** ushered in ’98. *Touched by an Angel* folks who tapped him for the syrupy drama took note.

TAG’s **Mark Harrington** brightened February, and a Gazette item on uncut guys at high risk for HIV brought loads of pro-foreskin letters.

In March ’98 Big Apple councilman **Phil Reed** was starting his tour of duty fighting mayor **Rudy Giuliani** over the city’s HIV services.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/POZ-5TH-Anniversary-Issue-Year-Four-10021-5880