To the Editor

August 1, 1999

You Lift Me Higher

At last, a rebuttal to Laurie Garrett's devastating cover story on AIDS in last March's Esquire ("When Plagues Return," May 1999). The disservice done by her sensationalized article demands condemnation. Garrett may have caused many PWAs to commit suicide. I have been depressed since March, but after reading David Drake's article, I am well again. Keep up the good work. The fifth-anniversary issue was the best ever. Forgive me for not signing my name, but homophobia is still alive and well, dammit!

Unsigned
Bridgeport, Connecticut

The 411 on 911

Mike Barr provocatively critiqued the Coalition for Salvage Therapy (CST), of which the Treatment Action Group (TAG) is a member, for alleged short-sightedness or, as he put it, "chasing mindlessly after yet another me-too nuke or second-generation protease like a drugged-out hamster on its wheel," concluding that "we need to begin leading—once again" ("Success Has Made a Failure of Us," May 1999).

The CST's tactical goals are part of a necessarily broader strategy. It should be obvious that as we advocate for new drugs for those failing current regimens, we insist on the need for non-cross-resistant compounds, new antiviral targets, immune-based strategies and research on structured drug holidays and immune reconstitution. Barr—who edits TAG's newsletter, TAGline—outlined some necessary steps toward achieving the latter goals, while criticizing some who seek the former ones. Both sets of goals are critical—drugs for PWAs in the present and in the future.

TAG has established a Rescue Therapy Project to encourage scientists, drug companies, government research agencies and activists to work together to:

1. Ensure that all people with drug-resistant HIV have early expanded access to new drugs likely to work against their virus.
2. Ensure that all new drugs active against drug-resistant HIV are studied in people who aren't doing well on current drugs.
3. Develop simpler drug regimens, and delay the emergence of drug-resistant HIV.
4. Develop drugs that improve immune function and speed up immune reconstitution.
5. Develop drugs that target new stages in the virus' life cycle.

In May, TAG cosponsored a workshop in Toronto on how to accelerate research on drug failure. Those interested in more details of TAG's approach to rescue therapy and new targets can log on to www.aidsinfonyc.org/tag/rescue/.

Mark Harrington
Senior policy director, TAG
New York City

Spare the Rod

I must convey my anger at the willful senselessness that seems to have been attached to Rod Sorge's otherwise active life ("Saint Sorge," May 1999). According to Lei Chou's tribute, Sorge "had turned to heroin…to alleviate his lifelong depression and loneliness."

How desperately sad that Sorge never understood that the ephemeral euphoria that heroin offers is a mask that merely temporarily disguises the depression and loneliness of the human condition whilst wickedly exacerbating it upon the return to sobriety. Heroin is also physically debilitating and does not interact well with many antiretrovirals.

Had Sorge listened to the health care workers and friends who counseled him to get off smack and, instead of shooting up for a few fleeting moments of drug-induced escape, bravely pushed himself through the dark tunnel of self-examination, possibly with the help of a good therapist, he might still be around today to continue his good work and finish that manuscript.

Dominic Hamilton-Little
New York City

The Sullivan Factor

Thanks to Andrew Sullivan for his essay in the fifth-anniversary issue ("The Way We Live Now," May 1999). His George Orwell example helped me to express my own sentiments about having HIV. About 15 years ago I came across an Orwell quotation from 1984: "For the first time he perceived that if you want to keep a secret, you must also hide it from yourself. You must know all the while that it is there, but until it is needed you must never let it emerge into your consciousness in any shape that could be given a name."

I've gone from defining my life in increments of weeks to months to maybe a year at a time. Could decades—as Sullivan says in his article—be far behind?

Ernest M. Gonzalez
Miami

Last night on a cable-TV station, I saw openly, but not pro, gay Andrew Sullivan deploring Roe v. Wade and a woman's right to choose. As a gay man, this is one of his obsessions? Then I had the displeasure of seeing him top-billed on *POZ*'s May 1999 cover. What next? A homophobic column by openly, but anti, lesbian Camille Paglia? It's one thing to be inclusive, but it's another to court

right-wing bigots. I don't expect it from *POZ*, so I'm canceling my subscription.

Dale C. Nickens
Santa Monica, California

Andrew Sullivan, that bizarro hive o' contradictions—the right-wing positoid, the pasty Brit with musculature—declared in your May 1999 issue: "I've always wanted my husband to be loyal, loving and very hairy." Ay caramba! All one has to do is flip the page to find a likely candidate: Moisés Agosto, come on down! He would seem to fit the bill. So would I.

Joe Clark
Toronto, Canada
Clark Vent

For you to have placed the caption "Bareback Chic" next to a photo of my lover, Will Clark, was inappropriate and borderline slander ("The Bod Squad," May 1999). Will travels across the country producing and appearing at benefits and safer-sex educational forums for ASOs. He also maintains a website educating his fans about safer sex. Our life together proves that sero-different couples can have a healthy and hot relationship without unsafe behavior. Would we like to bareback? Of course. Will we? Never. We both respect and love each other too much to engage in such suicidal behavior.

Rob Bergstein
Los Angeles

***POZ* responds:** The caption should have read "Bare Back Chic," since Clark is shirtless in the photograph. We regret the error.

Double Decker

Shawn Decker made my day shine with "Varsity Blues" (April 1999). I admire his candor, courage and creativity. Decker is one of the queerest heterosexual men out there, and it was such a pleasure to hear the emotional strokes he gave to us queer gay poz men in his Positoid column. We've all been wounded by this scourge, and to hear a young, straight positoid laud his gay brothers for their community of support is a joy. Shawn, keep on writing. I truly hope you are "getting some," you super hunk, and scoring plenty of emotional touchdowns along the way.

Richard Goldman
San Francisco

Toxic Dump

How interesting to see the pullquote in *POZ*'s Countdown Y2K series, "The hope: Boost immunity, stop the drugs" ("Behind the Eight Ball," February 1999). That is what I have been saying and doing since February 1980 when I got over my last common cold in 20 minutes, by utilizing a rebounder (mini-trampoline) that exercises the lymphatic system. I haven't had a cold in the nearly two decades since, nor have I developed any AIDS-defining illness. Despite seeing dozens of

PWAs remain healthy with this technique over the past 15 years, the community at large has shown no interest in anything other than drugs. Perhaps now that some are running out of drug options, they might want to re-evaluate where their interests lie.

Edward Lieb
Planet Health
New York City

Old Is News

I am not your normal subscriber. I am nearly 70; my husband died of AIDS three years ago. It seems that when he was out of town on business, he experimented with an "alternative" lifestyle. I knew about none of this. His illness wasn't diagnosed until two months before he died. It never occurred to any physician that a man married 43 years to the same wife could get HIV. Finally the symptoms were too obvious to ignore and he agreed to be tested. When he got the results, he refused treatment and died. I was diagnosed three days after he was. Hysteria is a mild word for what I went through.

I read *POZ* for the medical information, which is wonderful, but it rarely has anything about heterosexual women over 50 who were infected by their husbands—I recall only one piece in the last three years. I wish you'd address this issue more often. I won't give my name and address—I'm not ready to come out of the closet yet.

An Older PWA

Con Artists

As an ex-con, I was surprised to read all the whining about how cons with AIDS are getting screwed over in prison. Hello! That's the nature of the beast. The prison system will never care—so, wake up, cons. You're in a war for your life, and when it comes down to it, you are all alone.

Tom Lemanski
Chicopee, Massachusetts

POZ has printed so much about prisons and their inhabitants that I wonder if you have a fetish for prisoners. I'm sure I'm not the only POZ fan who is tired of reading about prisoners. When you commit a crime, you pay the price.

Phillip Lyle
Scottsville, Kentucky

Corrections: *POZ* omitted the photo credit for "Catching Up With…Jim Howley" in the June 1999 issue. André Souroujon took the photo of triathlete Jim Howley.

In Lillian Thiemann's "Dose Encounters" (June 1999) the phrase "Since I couldn't stop using heroin without chemical support, I enrolled in a methadone maintenance program" should have been

“Since I wouldn’t stop….”

POZ regrets the errors.

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