To the Editor

November 1, 1998

August Praise

Congratulations on the “Summer Fiction Reader” (August 1998). It’s superb. If anyone wonders whether gay/lesbian fiction is alive and well today, all they need to do is look at this issue of *POZ*. Carter, Schulman, Gaitskill, Kramer, Holleran, White and Linmark—I haven’t seen a lineup like that in one issue of a magazine since the heyday of *Christopher Street* some 15 years ago. I’ve been worried that there isn’t a forum in the gay community for serious, provocative and stimulating fiction, and then *POZ* comes to the rescue.

Michael Denneny
Senior Editor, St. Martin’s Press
New York City

I enjoy the design of *POZ*, and the “Summer Fiction Reader” section was very nicely done. Beautiful layout! Type and colors are perfect! The art is always way cool. It has a great, gentle summer feel—you can almost feel the warm breeze across the pages. The look inspired me to relax right into it!

Garrett Paulus
Via the Internet

Virus? What Virus?

Sean Strub describes a new gay-oriented magazine that purportedly plans to avoid HIV-related subject matter (S.O.S., August 1998). I do not know how that is possible and, frankly, I find the concept insulting to all gay men and lesbians, regardless of serostatus. It’s one thing to wallow in HIV-related subject matter and quite another to pretend that the virus just doesn’t exist.

Peter de Vries
St. Louis Park, Minnesota

When my August issue arrived, true to form, I tore right into it. I couldn’t believe what I was reading in S.O.S. Isn’t it wonderful that someone has the brilliant idea of a magazine for the gay community that avoids any mention of the biggest part of our heritage?

Like it or not, after almost 20 years of AIDS, that's what it is. And for those who ignore this fact, it is a slap in the face for every single one of us who has lost loved ones or dealt with, on a daily basis, the effects of HIV. I understand the feeling of wishing it would all go away, but unfortunately, that doesn't seem to be a possibility in the near future. HIV prevention and information should still be one of the biggest priorities for the gay community. Life is not, after all, one big circuit party.

Eric S. Connine
Johnstown, New York

Sean Strub hit the nail on the head! The gay community has turned its pretty little nose up at the issues that surround HIV. What Mr. Strub found in his mail stack upon returning from Thailand is happening all throughout America. The bottom line is revenues and subscriptions, staying afloat in the business community and a myriad of other noncompassionate objectives.

Andrew Buleza
Via the Internet

The King and Sigh

So much for subtlety. When the *Southern Voice* printed my 800-word column on the gay male "body culture," satirizing the gym experience of poz guys, I was making the point that all poz men are not testosterone-injected studs in Lycra. In fact, as the column related, a close friend of mine felt isolated the last several months of his life because he didn't recognize himself, or find other men without muscles, in any of the AIDS magazines—including *POZ*.

Imagine my surprise when *POZ* ran a heavily condensed sentence from that column in which I compared AIDS to a "Club Med vacation" (Say What, August 1998). The context and the sarcasm of the original piece were nowhere to be found. The quote leaves a crude, misleading impression and has nothing to do with the actual column.

I'll be more careful the next time I try to bite the hand that exploits us.

Mark King
Executive Director, AID Atlanta

POZ *responds: Mark King's words were indeed taken out of context. We received several letters to the editor pointing out this mistake. POZ regrets the mistake.*

Mad About Dad

The Gazette item about the "Deadly Dad" was horrid (August 1998). This man committed a crime that is unacceptable. There was no excuse for what he did, all the more because it gives those

who are HIV positive another black eye. When are people going to grow up and accept responsibility for themselves? I fear the day when we lose everything because of a fool like this man.

Jeremiah Andrews
Miami

Summer Rash

A long time ago, I threw away all my Donna Summer recordings and vowed never to listen to her again. Now, I am overwhelmed that she is appearing in magazines such as *POZ* (*POZ*arazzi, August 1998) for performing at an AIDS benefit. Isn't this the same disco diva who was quoted saying, "God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve"? Did she apologize to the gay and lesbian community and I just missed it?

Paul Grant
Brooklyn, New York

Blast from the Past

I enjoyed "Aunt Evelyn's Letters" on Pier 48 (August 1998). As a person who can remember when New York City's docks were happening in the '70s, that column really hit home.

Kevin Carter
Philadelphia

Brotherly Love

The profile of Sandra Franklin made me feel great, as a black man, to see my sisters speaking out and helping others ("Have a Ball," August 1998). I've been waiting for *POZ* to print something about how blacks are taking a stand with this deadly disease. Sandra, I love you sister, for opening my eyes to what I must do. As a brother who's in prison, I feel it's time for me to take that same stand.

Steve Adams
Corcoran State Prison
Corcoran, California

Prison Blues

I'm a 53-year-old male who tested positive for HIV in 1997. I am doing two years in one of California's medical facilities that houses most of the prison system's HIV inmates.

When I walked into my cell, I found a July 1998 issue of *POZ*. I started reading it and was completely amazed. It is the most informative magazine I've ever read. I showed it to a couple of other HIV positive inmates and they also found it to be a great magazine. In fact, we now have a list of 38 inmates waiting to read this issue of *POZ*.

On behalf of all the guys at California Men's Colony, thank you for your time and consideration.

Calvin Bennett
California Men's Colony
San Luis Obispo, California

I've been in prison for 10 years. About four years ago, I was infected with HIV, but I didn't find out until last year. I have no family to help me through this and I receive no mail besides my monthly *POZ*. I always read it the first day I get it, and then all I have to look forward to is my next *POZ*. I don't know what's worse, having HIV or being alone.

Raymond Tillman
Lieber Correctional Inst.
Ridgeville, South Carolina

We'll Always Have Paris

I was delighted that the "International Dream Team" included Doctors Without Borders volunteers Paul Cawthorne and David Wilson, who are providing home-based care for PWAs in Bangkok ("Two for the Road," July 1998).

However, your description of Doctors Without Borders as a "French nonprofit" is inaccurate. Doctors Without Borders—internationally known by its French name, Medecins Sans Frontières—is the world's largest independent international medical relief organization, sending more than 2,000 volunteers a year to deliver medical aid to populations. Founded in France in 1971, the organization now has projects in more than 80 countries, with AIDS projects in 22.

Stephanie Davies
Doctors Without Borders
New York City

A *Playboy* Turnoff

I was impressed with the thorough reporting in Helen Eisenbach's cover story on *Playboy* Playmate Rebekka Armstrong ("Some Like It Hot," June 1998). I was especially pleased with the article's acknowledgement of *Playboy*'s activism in the fight against AIDS, both in the pages of *Playboy* and on the corporate front.

I was, however, disturbed by Eisenbach's uninformed comment that in Armstrong's 1986 Playmate pictorial, the text that accompanied the picture "in quintessential *Playboy* fashion, conveyed little of Armstrong's actual personality." Although I did not write or edit the Armstrong text, I have worked on enough Playmate features over the years to assure you that it is indeed *Playboy*'s fashion—quintessential and otherwise—to depict the women who appear in our magazine in the most accurate light possible. In fact, we depend on the Playmates themselves for the majority of input in shaping their published profiles.

Bruce Kluger
Senior Editor, *Playboy*
New York City

Below the Belt

Your magazine is very informative and has kept me up to date on the ever-changing world of the AIDS epidemic. However, here in the Bible Belt, I have found that it has been offensive to some people. I rely on your publication when doing educational presentations and working directly with PWAs. Do you think you can tone it down so it can reach all people and not just one group?

Alfonso DeLaBarrera
Via the Internet

Clarification: In last month's Do Tell, three details about Sustiva (efavirenz) demand clarification. Sustiva causes a false positive test on only one of many screening tests for THC, the active ingredient in marijuana. As reported, the drug's maker, DuPont Pharma, has plans to introduce a 300 mg pill, but says that a full 600 mg once-a-day-two 300 mg pills taken together-remains the standard dose. And DuPont has just announced that 23 percent of people in clinical trials reported "mental status changes," usually quite mild.

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