

just out

Vol. 4 No. 7

May, 1987

Co-Publishers

Renee LaChance and Jay Brown

Editor

Jay Brown

Feature Editor

W. C. McRae

Advertising Coordinator

Jewel Murphy

Advertising Representatives

Julie Draper, Meg Grace, Jeff Fritz

Production Director

Renee LaChance

Creative Director

E. Ann Hinds

Production Assistants

Bev LaBelle

Graphic Inspiration

Rupert Kinnard

Contributors

Ben Merrill

Anita Quiton

Dr. Tantalus

Lee Lynch

Brady Jensen

Howie Baggadonutz

Ej Westlake

Billy Russo

Nancy R. Walseth

Steven Bailey

Karen Belsey

Meg Grace

Sandra De Helen

Eleanor Malin

Distribution

Terri Redbird

Just Out is published the first of each month. Copyright 1987. No part of *Just Out* may be reproduced without written permission of the publishers.

Written and graphic materials are welcomed for submission. All written material should be typed and double-spaced. All graphic material should be black ink on white paper. Material will be edited for spelling and grammar, with the exception of letters to the editor.

Deadline for submissions is the 15th of each month.

Out About Town is a courtesy to our readers. Performers, clubs, individuals, or groups wanting to list events in the calendar should mail notices to *Just Out* by the 15th of the month preceding publication. Listings will not be taken by telephone.

Display Advertising will be accepted up to the 20th of each month.

Classified ads must be received at the office of *Just Out* by the 20th of each month, along with payment. Ads will not be taken over the telephone.

Editorial policies allow the rejection or the editing of an article or advertisement that is offensive, demeaning or may result in legal action. *Just Out* consults the Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual on editorial decisions.

Views expressed in letters to the editor, columns, and features may not be those of the editorial staff of *Just Out*.

Subscriptions to *Just Out* are available for \$7.50 for 12 issues. A free copy of *Just Out* and/or advertising rates are available upon request.

The mailing address and telephone number for *Just Out* are:

P.O. Box 15117
Portland, OR 97215
(503) 236-1252

Steppin' Out



Esther's Pantry Shopping Cart Parade.

COMMENTARY

Precautions: Are they effective?

Are people substantially altering their lifestyles so that society itself will not feel threatened?

BY BEN MERRILL

The real issue of AIDS prevention, which was not addressed at the conference "AIDS: The legal complexities of a national crisis," but was very much in evidence, really addresses itself to those high risk communities who must ask themselves: "Given the fact that I either know that I have been exposed to the virus or that I stand a good chance of having such a confirmation if I take the test, how then shall I live?" This, of course, is the underlying question.

Many at the conference expressed a general optimism that persons in the high risk categories were substantially changing their lifestyle. Given the sociological and legal arguments that the ultimate guarantee of weakening the spread of the virus lay only in a widespread effort at educating the general population, the question became, "Are people in the high risk groups substantially altering their lifestyles so that society itself will not feel

threatened, and therefore take steps which in other circumstances would be uncalled for?" A New York magazine article of March 23, 1987 raises pessimistic statistics showing that although the incidences of rectal gonorrhea in a San Francisco study group declined from a peak of 1500 in 1980 to less than 140 in 1986, the incidence of positive AIDS virus testing in the same controlled group had gone from 35% in 1980 to more than 70% in 1985; the argument being that changing sexual practices over that period of time failed to stem the spread of exposure in San Francisco's homosexual community. If this is true, then it can be predicted that in the foreseeable near future, the use of condoms alone will not thwart the spread of positive testing for the AIDS virus in the high risk communities. But so what? The issue is not that more and more people are tested and found to be infected, but if they are infected will they be infectious? This is the real question. What is on everybody's mind, but which nobody is willing to dis-

cuss, at least in an open forum and to support with objective evidence, is what is happening in the bedrooms of the community — are people taking precautions?

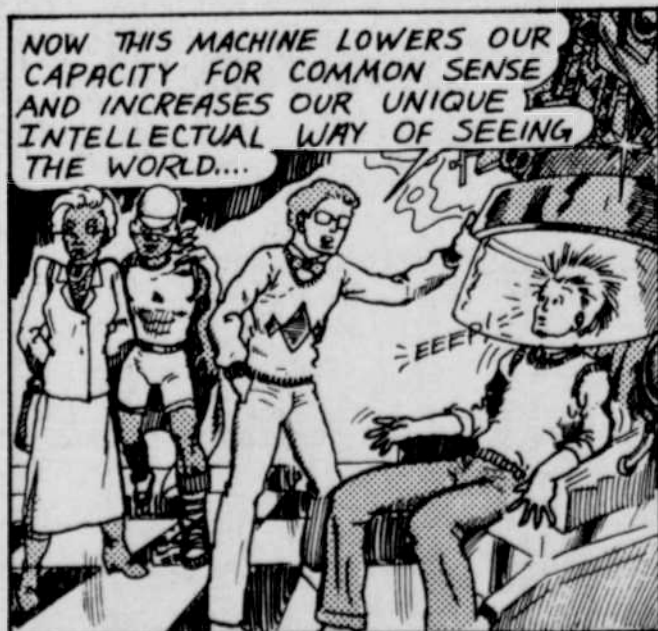
It is clear that for those exposed to the virus through intravenous drug use, society must take a new position, *vis a vis* the drug-use community. It will no longer be acceptable in a sociological and medical sense to avoid dealing with the community. Rather than simply ignoring it or threatening it as criminal, other methods are going to have to be devised. We have not made a concerted effort to use the resources of the community to educate the drug community as to the spread of the virus, and it would be safe to guess that more homosexual men know of the virus, its causes, and steps to be taken to avoid it than persons in the drug community. Consequently, major efforts must be made in that community if the window of "opportunity" is to be closed and the spread of AIDS is to be discontinued.

The final issue, of course, is what happens in front of the mirror? Do persons in a high risk group admit to themselves that even though they may never exhibit any signs of carrying the virus, even though they live a healthy lifestyle, even though they do not develop any of the symptoms of ARC such as weight loss, night sweats, general fatigue, or other debilitating signs, are they prepared to alter their lifestyles for the rest of their life so as not to take the life of a sexual partner for granted? This dictates a reorientation and a new perspective for thinking persons in high risk groups. How do they look at their sexual partner? Do they look at them in a new light, one not of instantaneous and momentary sexual gratification, but as one whose life they share and ultimately become responsible for? Until these questions are asked, and until a new definition of intimacy among high risk persons begins to take shape and is discussed in a much wider community, questions of individual responsibility versus precautionary steps taken by the state will continue to haunt us as individuals, as members of the community, and as brothers and sisters together.

Ed. note: Ben Merrill was invited to the N.Y. Bar Association Conference on AIDS to represent lawyers who represent a large gay client base. His attendance aided conference participants in understanding the everyday impact on persons with AIDS. •

CATHARTIC COMICS

Featuring
THE BROWN BOMBER & DIVA TOUCHE FLAMBÉ
BY RUPERT KINNARD



Just Out, 3, May, 1987