

## On the warfront

*Hunger strike ends. Midnight Caller thoughtful. Hochman's "Death Among Friends." And more.*

BY HAROLD MOORE

It felt like I was sitting on the front porch waiting to die. The comings and goings of people and events passed in front of me, yet I was somehow separated from the impact and energy; but alas, won't the outcome be the same? Well then, if the parade is passing, how can I keep from being passed by?

World AIDS Day was observed around the world on December 1. Organized by the World Health Organization (WHO), this global effort to put the AIDS issue in the forefront of public conscience took on special meaning through the action of Richard Carper in Oregon.

Carper, a 36-year-old AIDS activist from Eugene began a hunger strike on World AIDS Day, announcing that he would fast to death, if necessary, in an attempt to persuade President-elect George Bush to commit his administration to the fight against AIDS.

A recovering drug addict, Carper was diagnosed with AIDS two years ago. As his hunger strike began, his doctors predicted that without food, Carper would die within two weeks.

The hunger strike ended when Carper received a letter from the Bush transition team in Washington which assured Carper that the Bush administration would be committed to the AIDS issue. The letter, signed by James Pinkerton, said in part, "He [Bush] regards it as a crucial issue facing our country. The President-elect believes we must commit resources and the will to find a cure for AIDS. And as he has said, we must develop solutions that are sensitive to people with AIDS."

We know from past experience with politicians that one letter does not a breakthrough make. But Carper's action makes a difference; it serves as an inspiration to us all. If Silence Equals Death, we hear Richard Carper loud and clear.

*Midnight Caller*, NBC's late prime-time offering on December 12 had a storyline dealing with a bisexual man who was knowingly transmitting the HIV virus. In both heterosexual and homosexual contexts, the plotline and dialogue exhibited sensitivity and understanding of the roles both lifestyles play in our society, as well as the interactive nature of all our behavior regardless of sexual orientation.

In the show credit for the gay community's behavioral change in reducing transmission of the virus was clear and to the point. Depiction of homosexuality and people affected by AIDS was not stereotypical.

But there were missed opportunities. The glaring absence of the word 'condom' can probably be linked directly to the commercial networks prohibition of condom ads. And the Jack Killian speech, "sleeping alone . . ." which made obvious reference to abstinence as a means of protection, only heightened my disappointment. Isn't protection, by any means, advisable? *Night Caller's* failure to recognize barrier methods of protection seems shortsighted.

*Night Caller* did not offend me. It did make me think.

Anndee Hochman's "Death Among Friends," *Northwest Magazine*, December 11, 1988, an account of the loving, caring efforts of six people bound together by the approaching death of Lee Marvin made me cry. Hochman, whose work regularly appears in *Just Out*, captured the essence of caring. Adding to the impact of the piece were wonderful photographs by Claudia J. Howell.

The life and death of Lee Marvin continues to touch us all.

Our first *Won't They Ever Learn Award*, however, goes to that same publication. The impact of the captivating cover was diluted by the use of the word "victim" in reference to Hochman's article.

"Use of the word 'victim' is wrong. It denotes an attitude on the part of the person affected by HIV. And we are now learning that a passive-negative attitude does nothing to create a positive impact," says Paul Starr, client services coordinator at CAP. I agree.

Lee Marvin was not a victim. It is unfair to label him as such.

The battlecry "Silence Equals Death" should become more familiar in Portland. ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power) meets weekly at the Central Branch of the Multnomah County Library, downtown. Meetings are every Wednesday at 7 pm.

ACT UP started in New York City about two years ago and has gained a reputation for creative, direct and immediate actions against persons, groups and institutions whose words and deeds oppose rational, humane and informed response to the AIDS Crisis.

Patty Ladd at Cascade AIDS Project needs a pal. Be a PAL. CAP is looking for volunteers to provide one-on-one emotional support to people and their loved ones living with HIV disease. The deadline for the next PAL training is January 6. Are you looking for a way to make a difference? Call Patty at CAP at 223-5907. •



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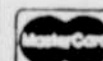
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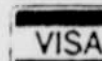
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