

libertarian in terms of "Leave us alone to do what we do." I'm perfectly willing to make a coalition with the Democratic Party, but the party doesn't know where it's going.

*Speaking of the cleansing power of rage, is it fair to say that Dell in [the new novel] After Life represents both the good and the bad qualities of political rage?*

Absolutely.

*I'm also thinking of the wild dog that takes up residence underneath Steve's house. Is that Steve's "rage"?*

(Laughs.) Nobody's asked me that!

*The animal was animus?*

That's a very smart idea, and maybe that's so. He [the dog] was once domesticated and he isn't any more, and yet look how much he longs to be part of that. I don't know if one can ever write about a dog without being sentimental, but before it becomes sentimental, before the dog has his nose at the door, there's a way in which he has been a kind of figure of such wildness and he prefers his wildness, and maybe he is an example of that.

*And maybe you could say the dog represents Steve's sexual nature. There seems to be a direct correlation between Steve's sexual health and his acceptance of the dog under the house.*

And it's also true — though I wasn't aware of this when I was writing it — that it's clear to me now that Steven is looking for that intimacy with Mark from the minute Mark walks through the door. Steven doesn't know that yet about himself, and his dick certainly doesn't know it for quite a while, but — I have to tell you, the decision to write about sexual dysfunction was an important one.

*This is the scene where Mark and Steve try to have sex and Steve can't get it up?*

It wasn't an easy thing to write about — it's maybe ten pages long but felt like a thousand when I was writing it. Sexual dysfunction [temporary impotence] — it isn't necessarily the virus that does it at first, but it's more the psychological battering of being in the [AIDS] war that does it. To achieve intimacy with someone — that just doesn't work the way it used to. I mean, go out, have your dick sucked.

*I had a little trouble getting a handle on [the character of] Sonny —*

You don't have as much New Age here [in the Midwest] as we do in California.

*I'm not sure how tongue-in-cheek your portrayal of Sonny was meant to be. Is he a sendup of that popularized channeling?*

He is. I tried to be as sympathetic for him as I could be. I don't mean Sonny to be a bad guy. It's bad that he is so lost in sexual compulsion that he doesn't see the irony between his sexual compulsion and his New Age platitudes, because both of them are forms of denial of his part in the calamity.

*You manage time, you know how to do talk shows. Crown books sent you to this glamorous, expensive hotel. Do you think that if you had not been gay, if you had dived up straight, would you be a businessman or head of public relations for a Fortune 500 corporation? Maybe staying in this same room, traveling on business?*

What an interesting thought! I certainly was sent through an education system that wanted me to do that [Andover, Yale]. I don't know if I would have been a writer, anyway. I really think I decided to become a writer because I was so unhappy and couldn't do anything about being gay. I stubbornly stayed in the closet — I nailed shut that door.

*If I'm doing the math right, you came out in 1970 —*

Yeah. What happened in 1970 was that I finally couldn't endure being utterly by myself for the rest of my life and pretending there would be no sexuality at all.

[Before Stonewall] The only gay person would be a kind of renegade outlaw person. It

would basically be bar life and looking for sexual companionship. The difficult thing is, how do you find someone to really love unless you're just lucky in a place like that. How do you find someone in China if they're going to put the electric prods to you?

*I'm personally a little puritanical about bars. I go to bars, but the idea of passing my personal life in one just doesn't click, somehow.*

The bars, yeah. We've needed them for our freedom, but it's such an oppressor place.

*To get certain things done in our society we have to cooperate with the system to some degree. I mean, you're staying here at the Four Seasons, not at the YMCAZ and donating the rest of the money to CARE.*

Absolutely. And I could have chosen to have *After Life* published by a gay press for a \$2,000 advance instead of a \$30,000 advance, which let me stay in my house last year. If I really felt that all the publishers in New York City were part of the oppressor class, I would.

I'm not that much of a revolutionary. . . . At one time a few years ago, the early years with Roger, I really was in serious danger of going Hollywood. I doubt you'd have liked me then.

*Will you get mad at me if I ask about the Jaguar?*

No, go ahead.

*You had this Jaguar you describe in Borrowed Time that was always giving you trouble. It seems that whenever you tried to visit Roger [Horwitz, deceased lover] in the hospital, it would seize up and wouldn't work. Do you still have that car?*

No, I had to sell it in 1988. I needed the money.

*During that period did you ever say to yourself, "Maybe I should leave the Jag in the garage and rent a Buick?"*

You have to understand that I was crazy then. Roger was dying, but I was the crazy one.

*You are HIV-positive.*

True.

*You look terrific. How's your health?*

I haven't really been assaulted with an infection yet. My T-cells have been in the low normal range over the last few years. I have been lucky to be able to use the two years of AZT very well. My numbers are starting to drift down now; my percentage of T-cells now is 16 percent and it used to be 37.

Those two years are important, but the hope is that something new will happen. But I know how flat the research dollars are, and that they're not there. I know that so many of the compounds that need to be tested are not being tested, so I can't be wildly optimistic about going on and on like this.

Also, the man I've been involved with for the last year and a half has been diagnosed for the last year, and he's had a really tough time — chemotherapy.

*Tell me about him.*

We met in July of 1988. He's Stephen Kolzak, he's 37 years old, and until he left Columbia Pictures-Television two years ago, he was their president of casting. At the time he left Columbia, he had sixteen shows on television. He was a very, very powerful television executive.

Stephen left on disability when he found out his T-cells had plummeted and he went on AZT. I met him maybe a year and a half later. He became an AIDS activist, very involved with ACT-UP, was very involved with bringing the quilt to Los Angeles.

Yet, it was very very difficult for him to go from working those 20-hour days to not having anything to do. And now, his illness is a full-time job.

It took Stephen and me a few months to decide to have a relationship. We enjoyed each other a lot or whether either of us was capable of intimacy.

*This does sound like Steven and Mark [in After Life].*

A lot of it is. We went to the October 1987 March on Washington [D. C.] and were part of the FDA demonstration. We went away for a few days to the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and decided then, okay, let's be in love. We had some really happy months together, and then in March of 1989 he was diagnosed with KS [Kaposi's Sarcoma]. It was a pretty aggressive case and he went on chemotherapy. In July he was diagnosed with CMV retinitis so he's had to have a catheter in his arm and take DHBG. So the maintenance of his condition is very, very difficult.

*Since you're much involved in show business, are you going to throw caution to the wind some day and start naming names, as Armistead Maupin recently did?*

I must admit that I find it thrilling that Armistead has done that. I don't feel such an



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urgency about that, but then — get me in a certain mood and I might. I certainly feel immense rage at who we call the "dragon sisters" in Los Angeles. There are four or five men, probably each worth several hundred million dollars, who are gay and who have no connection to gay or AIDS causes.

I don't feel like I need to "out" people right now. That doesn't seem to be a big agenda issue. I need to rail about the closet and what it means and how it makes their lives small. The people Armistead speaks of and whom I know in that position are pathetically lonely in their little castles in Beverly Hills, and they tend to see their community solely through the filter of the young men they want to vampirize.

Being Rock Hudson, watching the Gay Pride Parade on TV and ridiculing it and only wanting for three young hustlers to come fuch his butt — that is not a gay consciousness. And being lost in substance abuse — that is not a gay consciousness.

I understand that people need to be closeted in their work sometimes. I accept that.

*Describe a "typical day," if you have such days. When this book tour is over and you go back to Los Angeles, what will happen?*

My best typical day is being aboe to write all day and spend the evening with my friend Steven. I happen to have had six months of that in the summer and fall of last year and it was just blissful. I'm in the middle of a novel, actually close to the end of it, called *Halfway Home*. It's a novel about a gay brother and a straight brother. The gay brother has AIDS, and they haven't spoken for ten years, and they're Catholic — I'm very happy about it. After that, I'm supposed to write a memoir of growing up gay for Harcourt Brace, which will talk a lot about gay men and straight men.

  
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