

# letters

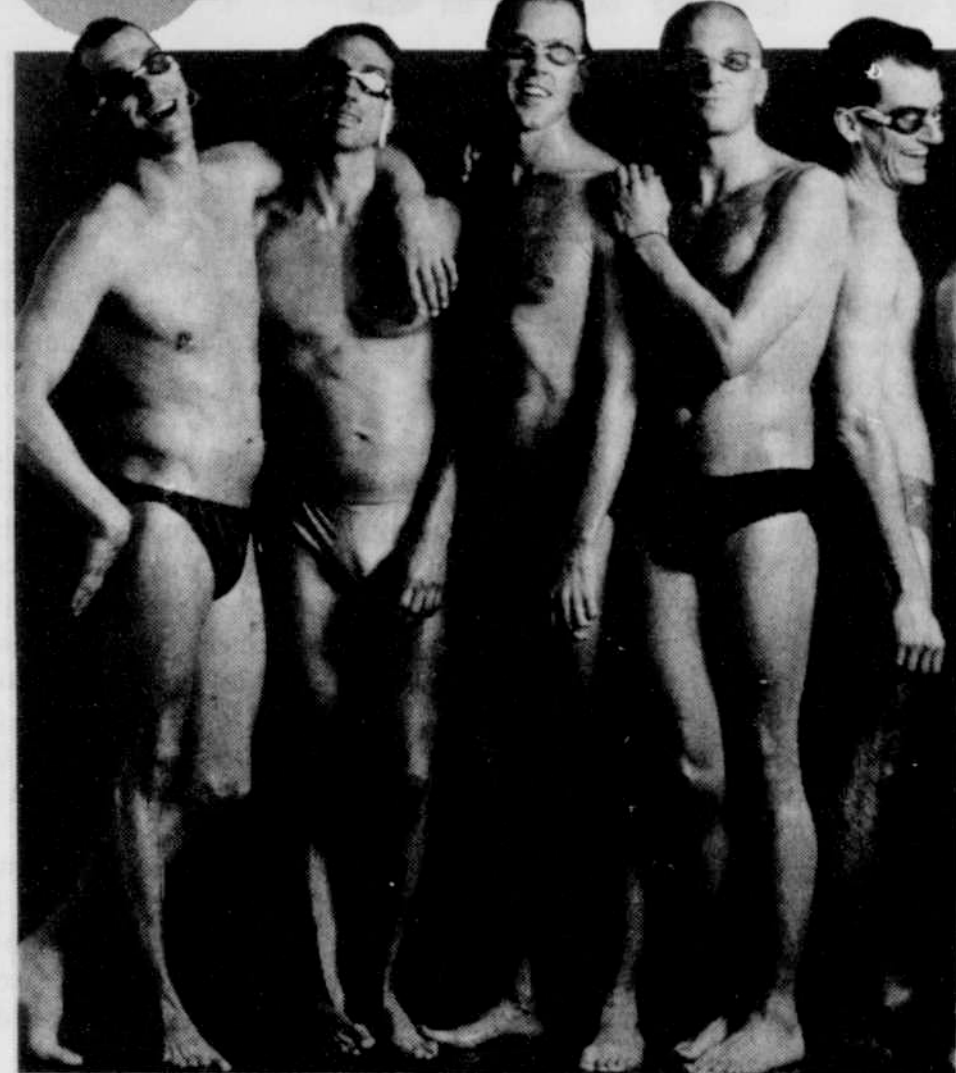


PHOTO BY CAROLYN JONES

Living Proof

## Small dose of healthy denial

To the Editor:

The film *Living Proof* [shown recently at Cinema 21] was very well done. The perfect blend of humor and reality. I noticed that so many of the subjects seemed to be using what they called "healthy denial" to work themselves into a positive state of mind. For some it was a "we don't have to die from this disease" attitude, which takes a kind of rebellious stance towards a media and society that says we will all die—those of us infected with the virus. It becomes an angry response to a death sentence. The narrator tells us, "There are more people living with HIV than there are people who have died of AIDS." The film then focuses on the living and gives the viewer a chance to witness the beautiful, life-affirming face of AIDS.

All in all, the film strives to balance the effect of so much death, doom and gloom that is already out there. I, too, am tired of doom and gloom. After I got out of the hospital, I was convinced the end was near. Family, and people I hadn't been very close to, reached out to me. I surrounded myself with those who would be willing to face the horror of death that I was experiencing so dramatically. I needed that, and so did they, at the time.

Now I am over the shock, and I need to recover some kind of normalcy in my life. I feel like cutting myself off from the people I reached out to because I don't want to be seen as "the dying one" anymore.

I'm enjoying the time I spend with my friends who are HIV positive because there is an easy acknowledgment of the situation, along with a desire to get on with the living. To the others, I am "the friend who has AIDS." They will ask me, "How are you doing...physically? How are you dealing with not working? Do you need anything?" These are all very kind and thoughtful, but they drain me. They drain the desire to move on and live. To live freely

and positively with a small dose of "healthy denial."

William M. Trayfors  
Portland

## Unions can protect you

To the Editor:

In response to the letter by Pat Mohr [*Just Out*, April 1, 1994] regarding her concern about employment discrimination against lesbian and gay state employees at Oregon State University: Those employees who are represented by Oregon Public Employees Union do have legal protection from employment discrimination.

Mohr is right that until we have a state civil rights bill all state employees will not be protected unless their union contract specifies "no discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."

In the meantime, if you do not have a union—get one. If you have a union which does not protect you—you need to get it into your contract.

Ann Montague, co-chair  
Service Employees International Union  
Lavender Caucus  
Salem

## TRANSITIONS

### Youth advocate and teacher will be missed

Richard S. Gurney passed away in his home May 28 from complications of AIDS. He had been battling the disease for over 10 years when he succumbed to Kaposi's sarcoma at age 55.

Born in Chicago in 1939, Gurney was schooled in Madison, Wis. He graduated from West High School in 1957. He attended Arizona State University and received his teaching degree in 1961.

Gurney taught for 31 years before having to retire, due to HIV/AIDS-related disability. He taught for two years in Grandview, Wash., followed by five years at Jefferson High School in Portland. The last 24 years of his teaching career were at Aloha High School in Beaverton.

Gurney became an activist for equal rights for all sexual minority teens in his last years as a teacher. After his retirement, he worked on sensitizing schools and staffs on providing safe havens for gay, lesbian and bisexual students. He also became a big brother to youth needing a role model.



PHOTO BY THE DUCHESS

Richard S. Gurney a.k.a. Agnes Gooch

He was a member of Educators for Equity, the National Education Association Gay and Lesbian Caucus, Project 10 in Los Angeles, BANGLE in San Francisco, and AMFAR.

Gurney is survived by his mother, Agnes A. Gurney, of Madison, Wis., his son, Alex, and his wife, Karla, of Anchorage, Alaska, his grandson, Erik, and his companion and lover, Daniel.

Upon his request, no services were held. Gurney's ashes were spread over the ocean.

All remembrances should go to the Brinker Fund of the Cascade AIDS Project, 620 SW 5th Ave., Portland, OR 97204.



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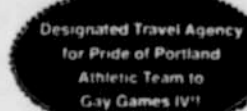
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