

# 17 Years of Service to Our Community



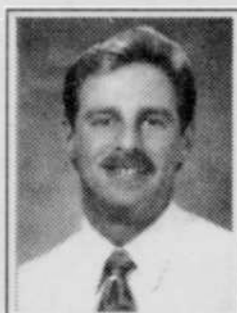
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# Letters

## Speaking from experience

To the editor:

I heartily welcome the discussions I have seen in your pages about using the "female condom" for man-to-man anal sex. I wanted to reply to Christopher Cuttone's letter offering his opinion that this condom "seem[s] a bit impractical." The wording of his letter suggests to me that he is not speaking from experience. I can.

I have used the Reality condom numerous times, and I will not choose a "regular" condom ever again, given the choice. This condom is a bit strange to put in the first time (as is a regular condom) but it has the definite advantage that it can be put in with or without an erection. It can also be put in ahead of time.

Slippage seems to be the main concern of Mr. Cuttone. I am also concerned, but more for vaginal than the tighter anal use. There is plenty of anatomy to hold the inner ring inside. Having the outer ring slip in is a more real concern in practice, mainly on initial penetration. Holding this ring in place for a few seconds until it settles in takes care of this problem for me.

The best part of using this condom is how great it feels for both partners. The friction (not the feel) is practically eliminated for the receptive partner, while the insertive partner gets all the friction where he wants it most. I believe this may also reduce tissue damage for the receptive partner.

Information on the male-male use of these "female" condoms is indeed scarce. Why should we depend on hearsay and anecdotal evidence? I have talked to many men who have had similar pleasant results. Who is to say these opinions I have been getting are not biased? To this end, I am surveying men who have used the Reality condom for male anal sex. Any men with such experiences, good, bad or indifferent, may write to me to request a survey.

Jeff Richard  
535 SE 16th Ave.  
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## Reality should be immediate priority

To the Editor:

Many thanks to Bob Roehr for raising some insightful questions in his recent guest editorial "Time for Reality" [Just Out, May 3, 1996], addressing the many roadblocks and benefits to the use of the Reality Female Condom as a method of HIV prevention.

As Roehr points out, Reality offers substantial benefits over latex condoms for anal sex: The polyurethane's strength and durability offer greater security than latex, and its natural conductivity of body heat provides increased sensation—something heat-insulating latex condoms tend to inhibit. Of equal importance, the "female condom" provides empowerment to the receptive partner in anal sex, allowing both participants to take personal responsibility.

In fact, Wisconsin Pharmaceutical Company—the manufacturer of Reality—has done extensive investigational research on the use of the Reality (called Aegis Barrier Pouch when used for anal sex) for male-to-male sex. Whereas the Food and Drug Administration has made it virtually impossible for WPC to market the Aegis for anal sex, the manufacturer has been very forthcoming and supportive in providing this retailer with informational materials for educational purposes, including a very useful instructional manual.

Unfortunately, as Roehr points out in his editorial, no information has yet come from the local organizations which were established to educate the public and help stop the spread of AIDS. While Seattle's, San Francisco's and Los Angeles' AIDS groups all provide seminars on the proper use of the Reality/Aegis for man-to-man sex, nothing has been offered locally.

We feel so strongly about the benefits of the Reality/Aegis (and conversely frustrated by the lack of response by local AIDS organizations) that we in turn have been providing this information directly to our customers and have gone so far as to provide the Reality/Aegis to customers at our cost.

We can only hope the community will heed Roehr's exhortation that "Reality must become an immediate priority of HIV prevention in the gay men's community."

Gary Hopping  
Ron Pitt  
Owners, Condom Capers

## The cat's patootie

To the Editor:

Notwithstanding all the "cool-headed rhetoric" about voting for [Bill] Clinton to avoid another conservative appointment to the Supreme Court, and about Clinton doing more than any other president for gay issues, I wonder if the so-called gay vote—left and right—might be better served by staying home or voting third party in 1996, for the better message it would send politicians about family values and individual values and human dignity. If the president has evidence that gay marriage is a real threat to our families, then he is obligated to present it, instead of pandering to the bigotry of the right.

However, if you believe the so-called gay community should be made the Sister Soldier of 1996 by Clinton Inc. over the issue of same-sex marriages, then perhaps you will find William Jefferson Clinton the cat's patootie in 1996. Clinton will win without the gay vote, so why not take the opportunity to tell politicians that family values and human dignity are not political chips to be toyed with in America. Hum?

Rand Knox  
San Rafael, Calif.

## Core supporters left out in the cold

To the Editor:

Seattle City Councilwoman Tina Podlodowski's recent resignation as state co-chair of the Clinton re-election campaign was an outcome of the continuing evolution of the Democratic Party into something indistinguishable from the Republican Party. By stepping down because of Clinton's announcement that he would sign a bill limiting same-sex marriages, Podlodowski called attention to the latest example of the way the Democratic Party turns its back on its core supporters, because it is secure in its belief that they have nowhere else to go. Democratic politicians cynically use Dole as a specter to keep voters in line, while they pursue pro-corporate, anti-labor, anti-environment, anti-gay, anti-poor policies that liberal Republicans of 20 years ago would never have dared suggest. Every time we elect a Democrat the victory is used as a mandate for a move further to the right, rather than an obligation to implement campaign promises. As a result, frustrated voters stop going to the polls and elections commonly are decided by about 20 percent of eligible voters.

It is no wonder that more and more people are turning to third-party candidates. For disaffected Democrats, the presidential candidacy of Ralph Nader provides a serious alternative. When Nader was approached by the California Green Party about running for president, he accepted their invitation because, he said, "The Democrats and Republicans are both under the control of corporate America and no one is representing the average American." His summary of our present elections as "a choice between the bad and the worse," is getting harder to deny, even for party members.

Even those Democrats who feel strongly that Clinton must win may well end up hoping that Nader will be a visible candidate. This is especially