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# letters

## CBC's woes its own fault

To the Editor:  
 I'm surprised that *Just Out* would quote a single source about the activities of the old cannabis buyers club ["Up in smoke," *Just Out*, Jan. 3, 1997] as completely credible. David Olstein is not and never was an officer of [the Portland] CBC. He is only accurately described as Marc Brown's partner. Diane Densmore's descriptions of mismanagement, unethical activity, vindictiveness and hoarding for a select few have been echoed by many people many times in phone calls to Portland NORML [National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws].

The facts about Marc Brown's relationship with Portland NORML are these:

1) Marc attended one or two NORML meetings where he spoke once about Portland CBC.

2) He made application to Portland NORML for membership. His check for \$5 bounced. He had no further involvement.

CBC's history under Marc Brown (and a host of other interchanging officers) includes the first two newsletters containing Marc's negative statements about individuals associated with CBC. It was at that point, about 18 months ago, that their problems with suppliers began. From that point, CBC began to erode as a viable group supplying medical marijuana to those that need it.

David Olstein narking on Phil Smith is unforgivable. Phil Smith is kind, generous to a fault, unrefuted in his Portland NORML releases, and an activist for medical marijuana reform also. Geez, I wonder how many suppliers looked at the newsletters and Phil's bust and wondered when their names would appear somewhere because they displeased someone in a very small group of people.

The only mistrust and infighting I see going on is Marc Brown/David Olstein and...

T.D. Miller, director  
 Portland NORML

## Challenges just beginning

To the Editor:  
 My best Christmas present came several weeks early this year. My doctor at OHSU called with the results of my most recent blood work. After over 10 years of being HIV positive and two near-fatal illnesses—undetected!

Needless to say, I was floored. If this could happen to me, it could happen to anybody. Why me, anyway? Why not my friends who had died? And what does this really mean?

That last question has occupied my days and nights ever since, and having been in conversation with friends across the country I am coming to understand that I am not alone. I honestly never thought I would see this day. I vacillate between cautious optimism and wild jubilation, even as I see there are many new issues before us. I realize that while I am incredibly fortunate to be linked with programs that make the new drug "cocktails" available to me, countless thousands are not. Even as I am feeling better, I cannot think of returning to work unless I can find employment with insurance that will cover the benefits that I now enjoy. My partner and I are thinking about long-term goals together for the first time in our relationship. It is amazing, exciting, challenging, wonderful.

It occurs to me that there are many ideas to share, and much that we can learn from each other and develop together at this time. Consequently, I am working to develop retreats here at the beach for others who are also in the process of restructuring their lives and outlooks. These retreats will be very affordable and in a delightful setting, with plenty of free time built in to enjoy nature and each other. [For more information about the beach retreats, see "Get a life!" in the Bulletin Board of the Out About Town section.]

The challenges are not over yet—in fact, they

are just beginning. How wonderful!

Eric C. Simpson  
 Lincoln City

## Not the whole picture

To the Editor:  
 In response to The Boston AIDS Writers Group article ["The great debate," *Just Out*, Dec. 20, 1996], it should be pointed out that two recently published articles in leading scientific journals disprove Dr. David Ho's hypothesis of rapidly reproducing CD4+ T cells being destroyed by huge amounts of virus from the time of infection—the so-called "sink theory" of AIDS. One article states the following conclusion "[O]ur data do not support the idea of high rates of production and destruction of CD4+ T cells as depicted in the 'sink model'...our data indicate that the bulk of CD4+ T cells in HIV-infected men is turning over at the same rate as in healthy persons," (source: Wolthers, *Science*, Nov. 29, 1996). The second article includes this conclusion: "Our data show no huge daily turnover in these cells in individuals infected with HIV-1, and do not support the idea of high rates of production and destruction as depicted in the 'sink model' of HIV-1 infection," (source: Miedema, *Lancet*, 1996, 348: 1574).

Once again the AIDS establishment has accepted a hypothesis as proven fact without confirmatory studies. How long will it be before the media report these new findings or until AIDS physicians learn of these studies? We are left with the previous theory of a virus that is very hard to find and is found in very small quantities even in people very ill with AIDS diseases.

Bill Wells  
 Portland

## A hard, hard blow

To the Editor:  
 About a week ago my daughter called me at work. She's 18, in her first year of college and living on her own in Eugene, so phone calls at work usually mean she needs a loan. This time was different; she was crying. "Dad, Cheri died yesterday," she said, "I just read it in the newspaper." Well, like lots of gay men I've grown accustomed to death, but this one was a hard, hard blow.

I met Cheri Snell at Dorris Ranch, the oldest filbert farm in Oregon. It's run by a local park district as a living history farm, and Cheri was the education coordinator there. When I moved into the farmhouse as a site manager, it took us about five minutes to drop our pearls and become pals. And my daughter, 14 at the time, took to her like a big sister. She was one of those amazing adults who can engage a whole flock of kids at once—a regular kid-magnet. One of my strongest visual memories of her will always be Cheri's lanky form bending over a sea of little heads to show them some bug, or flower, or leaf.

Cheri was irrepressible. I never had a chance to see her again after she learned she had breast cancer, but mutual friends have told me she didn't let it keep her down for long. I imagine her getting up now, somewhere else, and dusting herself off for a new start as a goddess. She was out and willing to say so, but she wore it more like a big red baseball cap than like armor. She was a mom and a partner and a sister and a daughter, and a mentor to my child. She was a first-class citizen not just another taxpayer, if you know what I mean. Her behavior in itself put the lie to so many of the mean things that are said and believed about lesbians and gay men.

I [want to] honor Cheri by emulating her, and let the community out there know that there's a great example to follow.

Dave Skilton  
 Salem