

You Cannot Get AIDS by Donating Blood

The common misconception of contracting AIDS by donating blood is one that we must continually denounce, and one that has had a tremendously negative effect on the availability of the blood donors. Furthermore, every unit of donated blood is tested for the AIDS virus antibody; which has made the blood supply virtually AIDS-free," according to Frans Peetoom, MD. PhD., Medical Director, Pacific Northwest Regional Blood Services, American Red Cross.

"These are the facts: each donor is given their own blood donation bag with its attached disposable needle. These sets come in sterile wrapping from the factory and can be used only once. The needle is used for that donor and, then, is discarded. There is no transfer of blood between donors, nor between donor and the person collecting the blood. The strictest of safety standards are adhered to in the blood donation and testing process. In the entire world nobody has been identified as contracting AIDS from donating blood, and many millions of donations are made each year," Dr. Peetoom went on to say.

In March of 1985, the AIDS antibody screening test was implemented by the American Red Cross. Since that time, the risk of AIDS infection from blood transfusions has been greatly reduced and currently is estimated to be one in a million transfusions.

Of the approximately 350,000 blood donations collected in the Pacific Northwest Blood Services Region (Western Oregon and Southwestern Washington) since initial implementation of the AIDS antibody test, 23 HIV-positive blood donations, or less than 0.01 percent, have been identified. Presence of the HIV antibody indicates exposure to the AIDS virus. Donors of these units have been notified and permanently removed from the blood donor rolls and their blood donations destroyed. Practically all recipients of blood from these HIV antibody positive donors, which was given before March of 1985, were notified and investigated in the Red Cross Look Back Program.

Four transfusion-associated AIDS cases were reported in our blood services region; additional cases may continue to occur in some patients who were transfused and exposed to AIDS before 1985. Although there will be a low incidence in the Pacific Northwest Region, it may be several years before cases of transfusion-associated AIDS among pre-1985 blood recipients will cease completely.

"Given the accuracy of the antibody test, we are now more in control of the safety of the blood supply than ever before. The rare exceptions of individuals who do not defer themselves from donating blood and may



Phlebotomist David Vangrusven (L) attends Aleem Shabaaz, Minority Outreach Specialist (R) as Aleem donates blood at the Oregon Trail Chapter Blood Drive.

carry AIDS antibodies are now recognized by the test, and exposure to patients is avoided," said Dr. Peetoom.

Considerable progress has been made in educating the public, specifically those in high-risk groups, to refrain from donating blood.

High-Risk Groups Include:

- Any male who has had sex with another male since 1977;
- People from Haiti, Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zaire who came to the US after 1977;
- Present and past users of illicit intravenous drugs;
- Sexual partner of the above persons at increased risk of AIDS;
- Male and female prostitutes (active since 1977) and sexual partners (within the last six months) of prostitutes

Since the discovery that AIDS is a blood-borne disease the Red Cross has made every effort to reduce the likelihood of transmission by relying on healthy volunteer blood donors, implementing screening guidelines and putting AIDS antibody tests in place as soon as they have become licensed and available.

Autologous Donations

"One option available to certain qualifying individuals requiring a blood transfusion for an elective surgery is an autologous donation — one that uses the patient's own blood. Using your own blood virtually eliminates the risks associated with blood transfusions; AIDS, hepatitis, antibodies, immunologic reactions," said Dr. Peetoom.

With a physician's approval and foresight, a patient can usually store up to one pint per week for four to six weeks prior to surgery. The six-week limitation arises because of the restriction on how long blood can be stored fresh. Although, in some instances, the more expensive frozen blood storage may overcome this limitation. Patients should contact their physician for more information about this option. Autologous blood donations are not recommended to be stored for speculative blood banking "just in case."

Currently, an estimated 50 autologous donors are scheduled per week in the Portland area to donate their blood for upcoming elective surgeries. Additional Red Cross autologous donation sites have been established in Medford, Roseburg and Coos Bay.

The Blood Supply

Now, more than ever, healthy volunteer blood donors are needed to combat the fear about AIDS. **There is absolutely no risk of getting AIDS from donating blood.** We depend on their generosity through blood donations. And we certainly need everyone to be informed and educated with the facts about this disease; how AIDS is spread, how it is not spread and what precautions to follow to avoid getting or spreading the disease," concluded Dr. Peetoom.

Red Cross Resources

The American Red Cross would like to help spread facts, not fear, about AIDS to the community. A Red Cross AIDS Response Line has been established to confidentially and honestly answer questions about AIDS. An AIDS Worksite Training Program is available through Red Cross to businesses in the Portland area. An AIDS Prevention Program for Youth is being introduced by Red Cross throughout the country. An AIDS Education for Minorities Program focuses primarily of Black and Hispanic audiences (materials available in Spanish). A comprehensive offering of brochures, videos and materials is available at minimal cost. For more information, call the American Red Cross, Oregon Trail Chapter, at (503) 284-1234 x179.



Avel Gordly, Associate Executive Secretary (Portland); Asia Bennett, National Executive Secretary (Philadelphia); and Ann Stever, Regional Executive Secretary (Seattle) pause during a reception and open house attended by over 100 people Sunday, October 18, 1987.

Photo by Richard J. Brown

Lincoln High School Classes of '47

The January and June, 1947, graduating classes of Lincoln High School, Portland, OR, will have a 40-year reunion Saturday, October 31, with cocktails, dinner and dancing at the River Queen Restaurant on the Portland waterfront. Class members who have not been contacted are asked to mail their names, addresses, telephone numbers and, if applicable, maiden names to Lincoln Hi - Class of '47, P.O. Box 06247, Portland, OR 97206.

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PSU Cabaret — Darcelle

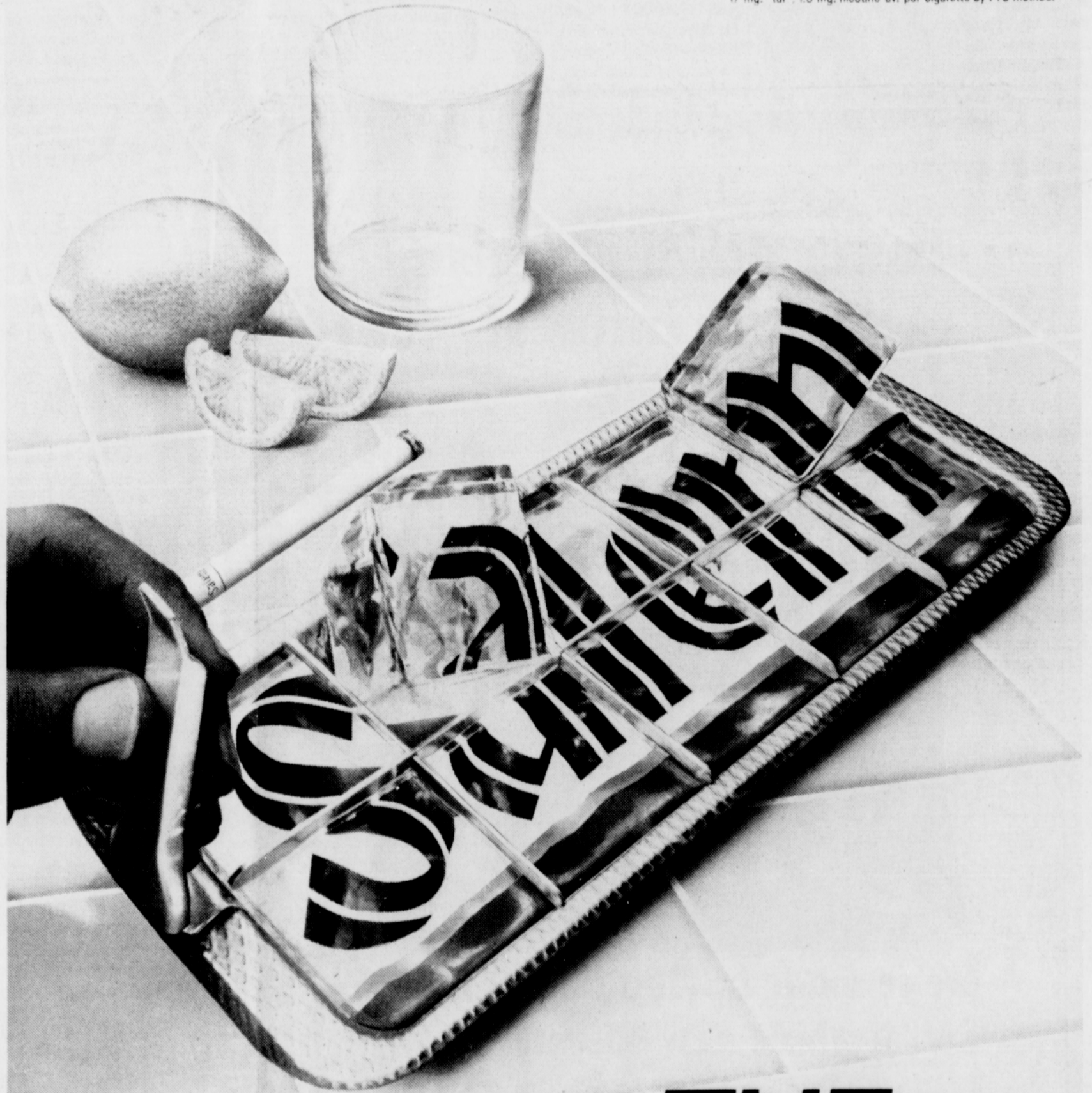
Darcelle XV will present an hour of free entertainment on Wednesday, October 28, at Noon in Portland State University's Parkway Commons (first floor Smith Center, 1825 SW Broadway).

Experience the charm, artifice and humor of Portland's own female impersonator in a performance just right for a pre-Halloween celebration.

For information on this and other Cabaret performances, call 464-4452.

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