

AIDS Response Encouraging for Gays

It's My Opinion

By Richard Epson-Nelms

Special to Q-Notes

The beginning of this new year has brought recognition that the gay and lesbian community has dealt with the AIDS epidemic in the most responsible manner while other segments of our society have yet to acknowledge the problem.

On January 10, an editorial appeared the Charlotte Observer, saying:

Good News About AIDS Results Show Aggressive Education Can Reduce Spread

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) says the spread of AIDS has slowed among homosexual men, and the agency has lowered its projection of AIDS cases among all Americans this year from 65,000 to under 57,000.

That's encouraging. But the good news is tempered by an increase in AIDS among intravenous drug users, heterosexuals and newborns — and by data showing the prognosis for AIDS patients without treatment as being worse than medical experts had thought. And some health officials say a General Accounting Office report shows there has been a substantial undercounting of AIDS cases, perhaps by as much as 33%. CDC disputes that, saying 80% to 90% of all AIDS cases are being reported to health officials.

Either way, it is clear that the need for AIDS awareness and research is as important

as ever. Credit for the slowing of AIDS among gay men must be given to the aggressive education programs about AIDS that gay men have instituted in their communities.

AIDS is still a battle that has to be fought by the entire community. And the new CDC statistics suggest that the best weapon against the disease today is aggressive education.

While this recognition was and is needed, it is not enough. It is not enough to tell a group that their work is "well done" when that society refuses to acknowledge the very existence of that group in all other respects.

Likewise, it is not enough for our community to be concerned only in our existence — or a threat to that existence without at least equal concern for full and equal treatment in all aspects of society. When we internalize and act out the homophobia that is cast upon us, we become willing participants in our own destruction. When we let go unchallenged expressions of homophobia, we are in essence giving tacit approval of those expressions.

Equal rights come with a price — responsibility. It is up to each of us to be responsible and part of that responsibility is to demand recognition from each other and the larger society.

We have done well in the area of AIDS and there is more — much more to be done. Yet, let us not stop and rest on our laurels. Let us stop at nothing less than full recognition as the caring, loving people that we are. Let us be recognized as a people who stand up — even when that standing up might cause personal pain or difficulty.

Without fulfilling that goal, there really is a threat to our existence — OURSELVES!

ACT UP — Too Much?

Letter To The Editor

It is regrettable that at a time when a few in our community are struggling to gain acceptance for us all that there are those whose misguided actions might actually be harming the cause they so zealously support.

An example is the recent disruption of a worship service at St. Patrick's Cathedral by the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT

UP). *Time* magazine reported that "Churchgoers who dodged the chaos in the aisles and made it to the altar to take communion saw one protester take a wafer from a priest and throw it to the ground."

As a gay Christian I was incensed that such disrespect would be shown. Perhaps it is time for us in the silent gay and lesbian crowd to counter such excesses by mass involvement in responsible gay and lesbian religious, political and human rights organizations.

Through this "constructive activism" can't our goals be reached while showing the same degree of dignity and respect we are demanding for ourselves?

— Dan Perkins

Rock Hudson: A Review

Movie Review

By Steve Madison
Special to Q-Notes

Rock Hudson, the man, was a synthetic creation of a Hollywood studio intent on presenting a glossy shell of heterosexual American masculinity to a gullible public too eagerly willing to swallow the fabrication whole.

The same, unfortunately, could also be said about "Rock Hudson," the made-for-TV movie airing recently on ABC-TV. Purporting to be a tell-all exposé on the "scandalous" lifestyle that led one of the most popular movie stars of the last quarter century to die a miserable AIDS-related death, the telefilm was actually a flat, all-too-superficial treatment of a man who must have been far more interesting than the lifeless human storied here.


The movie got off to a terrible start in its credits sequence as actual studio pose shots of the real Rock Hudson were used. We segued from those real pictures to Thomas Ian Griffith playing Roy Fitzgerald (aka Rock Hudson), and the illusion for the evening was forever shattered. He neither looked nor sounded like the real Hudson, and the movie compounded this by continually using actual photographs of Hudson during the entire film. Newsreel footage of Hudson's accepting Golden Globes and Modern Screen awards heightened the problem.

The screenplay was likewise lackluster, covering the most obvious stereotypes of the movie star-hiding-in-the-closet syndrome. And because the life was squeezed into two hours, whole chunks of Hudson's life went by without any information concerning why his movie career went stale and how a man whose reputation was so promiscuous had a total of three boyfriends during the course of the film.

From a gay viewpoint, it's quite distressing to observe that the portrayal of homosexuality on American television hasn't matured significantly since "That Certain Summer" was broadcast 18 years ago. A cool touch on the shoulder or a clapped arm around the waist is about as daring as we're going to see on the national networks. One male hug in a swimming pool here was about as erotic as the romantic episodes in "Pee-wee's Big Adventure." Suffice it to say the scenes between Hudson and his wife Phyllis were considerably more graphically sensual.

In addition to the cheesy production values of the film (the premiere of "Giant" looked like the opening of a convenience store on a nearby corner), one other aspect of the production was bothersome.

Much was made before the movie's showing about the heterosexuality of actors Griffith and William Moses, who played Hudson's last acknowledged lover Marc Christian, in real life. That's standard operational procedure in today's still-sanitized movie business, but why all the fear and fuss? With the lack of real physical contact between the two actors here, they had nothing at all about their reputations to worry about, at least as heterosexuals. Their acting abilities, particularly Griffith's, though, may be seriously in question after this feeble effort.



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