

THE DISTRICT LINE

AIDSweek: May 31-June 5

The Vigil...The Protests... The Conference

They gathered at the river, near the Watergate. The sun was setting over Virginia. Sunday was coming to a summery close. But expectation hung in the evening air. Banners were hoisted aloft, candles passed around and lit. The dumb eyes of the TV cameras stared as reporters fretted. Mounted police blocked the way to the tent that had been set up outside the Potomac Restaurant for President Reagan's first major speech on AIDS.

The crowd had paid \$250 each to hear Reagan and attend the benefit dinner for the American Foundation for AIDS Research (AmFAR). Some of the money raised by AmFAR would go to the District's Whitman-Walker Clinic and RAP Inc.

The AIDS Candlelight Vigil was sponsored by the National Association of People With AIDS. Vigil organizer Stephen Beck, NAPWA executive director, said, "People with money, let's call them the elite, can go to dinner and they can feel comfortable thinking about AIDS as an issue. What we're trying to demonstrate is that when we're talking about AIDS, we're talking about people."

Someone began singing "Amazing Grace." Candles and banners were raised. "Fund AIDS Research, Not Star Wars," said one. Another, showing an ostrich with its head in the sand, was tagged, "Reagan's War on AIDS."

The throng marched the few blocks along K Street to the front of Washington Harbour, prevented by police lines from going further. "Americans are dying, increase AIDS funding," they chanted.

I recalled speaking earlier in the day to my friend in New York who was now blind from Cytomegalovirus (CMV) and undergoing chemotherapy to treat the Kaposi's sarcoma in his throat. I'd been wary of phoning because I was afraid I'd be told my friend had already succumbed to the diseases that had been sucking away his life since his AIDS diagnosis last September.

I thought of my friend, a medical professional, who'd just tested positive for AIDS antibodies. He now feared he might lose both his practice and the lover he'd dedicated himself to. He now humorlessly refers to himself as "damaged goods."

And I thought of how afraid I was of dying or being one of the survivors I've written about.

I yelled and sang and marched, too. Walter Lippmann had dispelled the myth of journalistic objectivity long before I arrived at journalism school. The spurts of my dead, dying, and infected friends strengthened my own spirited commitment to anti-AIDS advocacy.

REAGAN SPEAKS

Within the tent Reagan told the AmFAR guests, "America faces a disease that is fatal and spreading. This calls for urgency, not panic. It calls for compassion, not blame. And it calls for understanding, not ignorance." Like his surgeon general, Reagan stressed the importance of education in alleviating undue fear of AIDS—what some refer to as the second epidemic, "AFRAIDS."

But Surgeon General C. Everett Koop has emphasized that education should recommend specific actions, such as using condoms during intercourse. Reagan's line is that we must teach "values," not methods of preventing the spread of AIDS.

To a chorus of boos from the AmFAR crowd, Reagan also called for "routine" blood testing of immigrants, prisoners, marriage-license applicants, and those seeking treatment

for drug abuse or venereal diseases. While dodging the semantic bluntness of the word "mandatory," Reagan's recommendations fly in the face of recommendations made in an April report by the federal Centers for Disease Control that rejected mandatory testing and called for anti-discrimination measures to protect people with AIDS and those who test positive for the HIV antibody.

MONDAY-MORNING BOOS

Reagan's Sunday-night boos were echoed Monday morning at the opening of the Third International Conference on AIDS, when Vice President George Bush endorsed the president's call for expanded AIDS testing. Returning to his seat afterward and thinking he was off-mike, Bush asked Assistant Health Secretary Robert Windom of the crowd, "Who was that, some gay group?"

Bush's remark angered some conference participants by fueling the political fires surrounding AIDS—and this conference in particular. "That's a new high in insensitivity," said Dr. Michael Gottlieb, a Los Angeles immunologist. "We are here to battle a terrible plague. That is not what we need from our leaders."

The anger Bush elicited Monday morning spilled over at noon in a planned civil-disobedience demonstration at the White House. About 350 people gathered in Lafayette Park to protest a lack of funding for AIDS research and the snail's pace of federal education programs. "Reagan, Reagan, too little, too late," they chanted.

Led by former Legal Services Corporation head Dan Bradley, who has AIDS, a group of 63 protesters stepped over a concrete barrier onto Pennsylvania Avenue and blocked traffic by sitting on the street. D.C. police, wearing riot helmets and bright yellow latex gloves, escorted the protesters to waiting police buses, where they were photographed and handcuffed.

Among those arrested were Bradley; West Hollywood, California, Mayor Steve Shulze; New York Governor Mario Cuomo's gay liaison, Virginia Apuzzo; Boston City Councilor David Scondras; and Mayor Barry's representative, Jim Zass.

Jeff Koenreich, the gay community's liaison to the police department, told the *Washington Blade*, "It was everybody's understanding that gloves were not to be used." Police officials had said they would use gloves only when there was risk of exposure to bodily fluids, such as blood, that transmit the AIDS virus. As the *Blade* reported, though, the only bodily

fluid issuing from the 64 protesters was perspiration.

Koenreich noted that by allowing police to wear gloves after telling gay community leaders and protest organizers they wouldn't, D.C. Police Chief Maurice Turner Jr. and Asst. Chief Isaac Fulwood Jr. have "set a very unpleasant climate at the moment in dealing with AIDS in the gay community."

ONE IN EVERY CROWD

Back at the Washington Hilton, physicians and researchers explained the "Impact of HIV Testing on the Behavior of Homosexual Males." The speakers agreed that gay men in their representative countries of Canada, Great

Britain, France, Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United States were modifying their sexual practices as a result of learning their antibody status. Men in their studies who tested positive were especially heeding the advice to limit their number of sex partners and to use condoms during intercourse.

Charles F. Farthing, of London's St. Stephens Hospital, noted that simply "because the test was performed, [gay men] seem to pay more attention to safer sex." Presenting findings of his CDC-funded AIDS Prevention Project, David W. Lyter of the University of Pittsburgh stressed the need for sensitivity to the psychological impact of learning one's anti-

This striking detail from the World Health Organization's poster entitled "AIDS, a worldwide effort will stop it," mixing images of death, love, and blood, was a fitting memento mori for the conference.



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body status—an oft-repeated theme throughout the conference.

The scientific levelheadedness of the session was disrupted when defrocked psychologist Paul Cameron stood to ask each of the speakers the percentage of gay men in their studies who had "admitted to drinking urine and ingesting feces" as a habit. Cameron leaped to the microphone after other sessions, too, asking similar questions. Cameron was dropped several years ago from membership in the American Psychological Association for violating its preambles. His group, the Family Research Institute, had set up a booth plastered with homophobic posters and literature suggesting the AIDS epidemic could be stopped if governments "punished" and "isolated" gays. On Monday afternoon, a man with AIDS became so outraged at the booth's offerings that after arguing with Cameron's cronies he finally overturned their table.

THE POLITICS OF AIDS

The New York-based "Lavender Hill Mob," a protest group that first surfaced in February at the CDC-sponsored AIDS conference in Atlanta, assembled outside the Hilton to chant, "We're dying of red tape," a reference to the delays in the process by which the Food and Drug Administration tests and approves drugs to treat diseases such as AIDS.

Angry voices and banners filled the air. "Hey Mr. President," read one banner. "Just Say Yes to More: AIDS Funding, Education, Research, Drugs, Safe Sex, Anonymous Test-

ing." Foreign visitors seemed puzzled by the political nature of the demonstration—and how this country has made AIDS a political, rather than health, issue.

Politicians last week had their own AIDS conferences. The Senate on Tuesday voted overwhelmingly to test immigrants for the AIDS antibody, jumping at the administration's first proposal. The Social Security Administration said that despite the CDC's expanded definition of AIDS (which will include persons whose cases aren't as far along as those cases currently considered to be "full-blown AIDS"), it would continue using the earlier definition for purposes of disability grants. And Attorney General Edwin Meese told a group of Idaho police chiefs it is appropriate to wear rubber gloves when handling people at high risk for AIDS.

HITTING HOME

I took it all in as I stood talking with my ex-lover, who was also attending the conference. Hearing the angry shouts, considering all I'd heard in symposia that day about gay sexuality and seropositivity, I looked at the man who had shared my bed for a year and a half, and remembered the fear and pain we'd borne together. I realized again how personal an issue AIDS really is.

Tuesday morning began with an alarming affirmation of the nightmarish reality of AIDS. James Curran, director of CDC's AIDS program, said that in the United States alone,



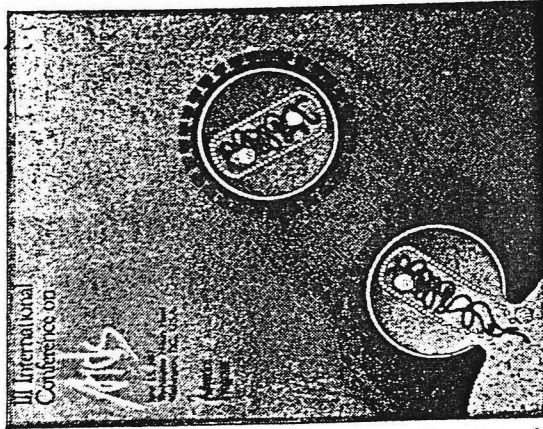
THE NEXT

more than 36,000 AIDS cases have been reported to date; 21,000 of those individuals are dead.

Curran noted that the grim predictions of the epidemic's course are proving accurate. He said, for instance, that in 1981 there was only one reported heterosexual case of AIDS in this country; as of May 11, there are 9,322 heterosexual cases, including 1,323 cases from sexual transmission. What's more, blacks and Hispanics account for a disproportionate 72 percent of those cases. Curran accepts the Public Health Service's May 1986 estimate of 1.5 million Americans infected with the HIV virus.

Curran had challenged the assembled virologists, epidemiologists, microbiologists, educators, journalists, politicians, and counselors to "remember that each number represents a person, whether living or, unfortunately, dead." Curran closed with a passage from a book that has become morbidly relevant to the AIDS epidemic, Albert Camus' *The Plague*. "Keep your eyes open for the faces," he read. "Strive to be healers."

Offering a worldwide perspective on the AIDS crisis, Jonathan Mann, director of the World Health Organization's (WHO) special program on AIDS in Geneva, Switzerland, said, "The consciousness of local AIDS has become a global conscience on AIDS which



James Curran of the CDC reminded the conference that the AIDS statistics represent human beings.

will require a global strategy." Speaking from a platform set against a background of 112 flags, representing all the nations whose reported AIDS cases make up the 51,069 worldwide total as of May 27, Mann said that indicators

point to a "precipitous" increase in the number of cases worldwide. He added that this means "potential political and economic devastation in parts of the developing world." Africa, for instance, could be set back immeasurably because of the rate at which AIDS has infected its urban populations.

THE EPIDEMIOLOGY OF STIGMA

With pointed relevance to the AIDS conference's host country, Mann noted that "In some areas, groups are still divided by 'innocent' and 'guilty.'" He added that "How our societies treat the HIV-infected will test the moral values and strengths of our societies."

"AIDS has acted as a scapegoat for stigma against groups," said Katy Taylor of the New York City Human Rights Commission, noting again the virus' seeming preference in this country for the socially disenfranchised. In a separate press briefing, Katherine Fraule, an attorney with the AIDS and Employment Project in Los Angeles, said that in the United States, the HIV test "is a litmus test for moral corruption."

"To talk about the test in value-neutral terms is to ignore what the test means to most people in the U.S.," she said.

Tom Stoddard, of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, a New York-based gay advocacy group, said there have been

"some encouraging developments" in fighting the discrimination many people with AIDS have encountered in housing, employment, and receiving professional services. Stoddard noted that all states but one have laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of handicap, and that most states now include AIDS as a protected handicap. The Supreme Court's recent *Arline vs. Nassau County School Board* ruling also is considered a boon to anti-discrimination efforts. In that case, the high court ruled that an employer is not entitled to terminate an employee because it fears she will infect others with tuberculosis. AIDS advocates saw the ruling as setting a precedent for other diseases, such as AIDS.

Stoddard observed that "the federal government has now become the major engine for discrimination against AIDS." In addition to Reagan's announced plans for AIDS testing, Stoddard noted the military's two-year-old antibody testing program for recruits; the testing programs underway in the State Department, Job Corps, and Peace Corps; and the Justice Department's decision that federal workers with AIDS or perceived as having AIDS can be dismissed from their jobs if their fellow workers are sufficiently afraid of infection (against all rational odds ever defined by public-health officials). "If the federal government says in its

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paternalistic way that it's okay to discriminate, then the private employer will, too," said Stoddard.

Barbara Lavtzenheizer, an independent insurance actuary, put another face on discrimination, one with which the District dealt a year ago. Lavtzenheizer said AIDS "is not a civil-rights issue, it's a financial issue." She said that banning insurance companies from using the AIDS antibody test to screen potential clients "threatens to destroy the industry." The District in May 1986 passed its controversial AIDS law prohibiting insurance companies from testing applicants for exposure to HIV. Several insurers in the District have protested the law by refusing to write individual life and health insurance for D.C. residents.

Countering Lavtzenheizer's argument, Ben Schatz, an attorney with the San Francisco-based National Gay Rights Advocates, agreed that "everyone is going to have to pay for AIDS in one way or another." If not through higher insurance premiums, by which the burden for higher-risk individuals would be diffused among all carriers, then as taxpayers, through Medicare and Medicaid payments. Schatz claimed the insurance industry "has had a shameful record on making contributions to AIDS service organizations," and that it has never provided the one-hour post-testing counseling recommended by CDC. Insurers, he

said, "are using the test as a weapon."

THE D.C. RESPONSE

On Wednesday, D.C. Public Health Commissioner Reed Tuckson observed that the politics of health care are "an unfortunate reality" in efforts to close the gaps in medical care for people with AIDS. Tuckson said he is "preoccupied with a health-care system that is affordable" and accessible to all.

Tuckson introduced Jim Graham, administrator of D.C.'s Whitman-Walker Clinic, which Tuckson described as the city's "primary provider of AIDS services." Graham said the clinic, which recently moved from 18th Street in Adams Morgan to the corner of 14th and S Streets, entered the war against AIDS armed with several advantages over other D.C. health providers. Whitman-Walker's access to high-risk populations through its ongoing VD clinic, its base in the hard-hit gay community, and its network of sympathetic doctors and lawyers willing to handle the special needs of AIDS patients naturally seemed to propel the clinic to center stage in the city's fight against AIDS. Since the 1984 inception of the clinic's AIDS-evaluation unit, 375 patients have been seen. Eighty-eight percent, Graham said, have been gay or bisexual men.

Unlike D.C.'s public hospital, which Graham said has not yet developed a comprehensive AIDS program, San Francisco General

Hospital in 1983 became the first hospital in this country to develop an AIDS in-patient unit. To further enhance its caregiving capacity, administrator Paul A. Volberding said the hospital would "need to adapt to the changing face of the epidemic" as it spread outside the gay community, participate in developing drugs, and continue educating health-care providers.

GOOD WORKS AND CONDOMS

To escape the crowds and esoterica inevitable at a scientific conference, I ducked into the massive exhibit hall where hundreds of researchers each day stood before display boards, offering explanations of their studies and statistics during the conference's "poster sessions." One board, captioned in German, displayed pictures of men sharing a "safe sex" embrace. Another explained "Cellular Immune Response in HIV Infection."

Before still another poster was Sandra Jacoby Klein, someone whose work I'd quoted in my AIDS articles and speeches. Klein, a Los Angeles therapist, works with gay men whose lovers have died of AIDS. We shook hands, exchanging the heartfelt greetings and respect I observed many others sharing at the conference. When we parted, I told Sandy to "keep up the good work." Cliched, but sincere.

I wanted to explore the vendor displays. Medical-supply producers, newsletter publish-

ers, and condom-makers displayed their wares. Personally, I was most curious about the condom-makers. "Are you giving free samples?" I asked the woman behind the booth. She handed me a pack of three "Prime Assorted Colors" rubbers, two green, one blue. Not exactly what I'd hoped for, but they were free, after all.

SNEAK PREVIEWS

On Thursday we previewed a number of TV spots set for release in the U.S. over the next couple of months. Carol Sussman, head of the American Red Cross' AIDS Public Education Program, said the star-studded spots the Red Cross has produced are intended to "demystify" AIDS and help slow the spread of the virus.

Glenn Close, Meryl Streep, Johnny Carson, and Sam Waterson are a few of the personalities who'll be telling us we can't contract AIDS from casual contact, insects, and swimming pools. "Rumors are spreading faster than AIDS," each spot concludes.

Other privately produced education programs include a short film targeted at teenagers. "Letter From Brian" revolves around a high-school girl who receives a letter from her former boyfriend—written from the hospital where he is suffering with AIDS. And according to Paul Kawata, executive director of the D.C.-based National AIDS Network, another planned spot will dispel all confusion about

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how to put on a condom. In the spot, First Son Ron Reagan Jr. will slip a rubber over a baseball bat with all due aplomb.

Plans for American AIDS education campaigns naturally are measured against campaigns long underway in other countries much less affected by AIDS. The British government, for example, last year distributed 23 million leaflets to every home in the United Kingdom as part of the world's most extensive and publicized campaign. Billboards and newspapers around the country featured explicit advertisements warning "AIDS: Don't Die of Ignorance."

Hillary Pickles, of the Department of Health and Social Security in London, said there was high public support for the campaign—including support from political leaders. Pickles described with obvious but restrained humor how the British Secretary of State for health had been highly visible in the public campaign—"a conservative politician talking about anal sex and condoms." British leaders, after debating the moral issues in which their American counterparts are still mired, "accepted that their prime duty was protecting the public," said Pickles.

Sweden, with only 115 diagnosed AIDS cases, has developed its own extensive and sophisticated education campaign. In 1985, the Swedish government also appointed a national

AIDS advisory panel chaired by its minister of health. Jan-Olog Morfeldt, of Sweden's National Bacteriological Laboratory, said the objective of his country's AIDS education program has been to "try to teach a warm attitude toward sex with a realistic knowledge of HIV risk." Unlike President Reagan's proposed AIDS advisory panel, on which no person with AIDS or gay spokesman has been invited to serve, Morfeldt said Sweden's panel and AIDS education program include HIV-infected people.

As for the U.S. government's AIDS education campaign? Six years, 36,000 cases, and 21,000 deaths later, we were told it's finally in the works. "Within a few weeks, CDC will have a Madison Avenue-type ad firm under contract with the U.S. government" to develop a campaign, said Paula Van Ness, recently hired from the AIDS Project in Los Angeles to head CDC's National AIDS Information/Education Program. The American campaign will stress abstinence and monogamy—and condoms for those who can't rise to those nobler callings.

SIX YEARS LATER

Friday marked the sixth anniversary of the first reported American AIDS cases. The Third International Conference on AIDS was winding down. The thousands who'd met together in Washington prepared for their trips

home, exhilarated, exhausted, armed for further battle against the encroaching enemy.

Summing up the week's hundreds of presentations, Edward N. Brandt Jr., chancellor of the University of Maryland-Baltimore, asked those at the closing plenary session to recall James Curran's words on Tuesday, that behind the numbers of AIDS cases were real people.

In the face of the rising numbers of cases and infections, Brandt asked, "What do we do?" He said "education is the best tool we have" to alter behavior and prevent the spread of AIDS. But, he added, "We need to reconcile our differences about what education programs should include so we can do the educating."

While he said AIDS could have "more impact on the world than anything else in modern times," Brandt added, to thunderous applause, "We can't let AIDS become a political toy."

June Osborn, dean of the University of Michigan's School of Public Health, contrasted the "overall tone" of each of the three international AIDS conferences. The first, in Atlanta in 1985, was "permeated with a sense of shock," she said. The second, in Paris last year, was characterized by a "sense of gloom" at the burgeoning crisis. The third conference, however, in marked contrast to the earlier ones, reflected a "sense of restrained but real optimism that the AIDS pandemic is not so awesome as to be beyond control." Osborn described "a blos-

soming sense of global involvement" in the fight against what she called "our known enemy."

Osborn acknowledged once again the inextricable link between science, ethics, and politics in discussing AIDS. "It is a wonderful and mercurial fact of the epidemic that public health and human rights are best served by the same approaches," said Osborn.

Noting the international nature of the AIDS conference and the epidemic itself, Osborn added, "We are all members of the same human family and must help each other now that we are in trouble."

ONE LAST PROTEST

The crowded International Ballroom erupted in cheers and a standing ovation when it was announced that a petition calling for cooperation between policy-makers and AIDS experts in setting AIDS policy had garnered enough signatures to become an official consensus of the conference.

After an obsequious introduction by assistant health secretary Robert Windom, Secretary of Health and Human Services Otis Bowen rose to the podium. Dozens of conferees likewise rose to their feet—to protest what a leaflet distributed earlier in the week described as the administration's and Congress' ignorant and contemptuous views of AIDS. The leaflet urged that Bowen's speech be booted. "This is

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your opportunity," it said, "to send a clear message to the world that to end the AIDS pandemic we need research, not forced testing; education, not legislation; and health care, not discrimination."

The cost of AIDS care for patients is now over \$1 billion a year, said Bowen. By 1991 it will be \$8.5 billion annually, he said, 1.4 percent of all U.S. health-care expenditures. "Who is going to pay this bill and how?" asked

Bowen.

Bowen's audience erupted in gales of derisive laughter and booing when he said, "The problem of AIDS has the president's complete attention."

"Put a gay on the commission!" yelled one man in the audience, referring, as had several others during the week, to Reagan's decision that no one would be appointed to the commission on AIDS based on his or her sexual orientation.

Union.

Bowen finally won applause when he said, "This is not a 'them' and an 'us' thing. This is truly just an 'us' thing."

"I shall not turn my back on AIDS," he continued. "We're going to see it through to final success with protection of civil rights and human dignity."

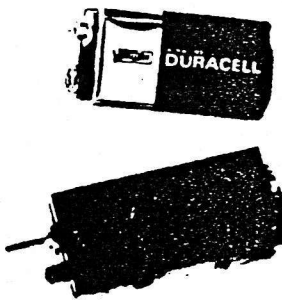
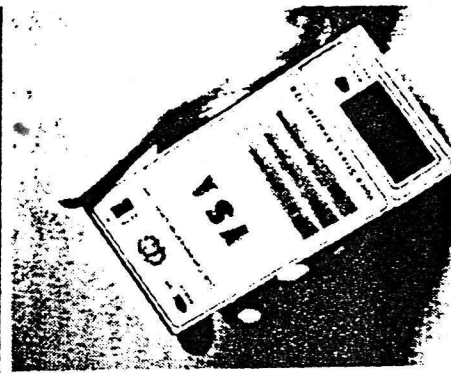
More applause.

I left the hotel feeling inspired. "Global com-

munity" had a new meaning. God was indeed in his heaven, and we were helping to make things right with the world. One thing alone troubled me. If the president couldn't even see his way to including a gay person on his AIDS commission, after gay people had taken the lead in educating themselves and caring for each other in this crisis, just whose civil rights and dignity was Otis Bowen vowing to protect?

—John-Manuel Andriote

EXECUTIVE PRIVILEGE



BUG DUSTER

This miniature handheld Bug Buster detects sneaky hidden bugs that can

FATHER'S DAY SPECIAL



Discover the Pleasure

Chacon
dunhill
American

W. O. LARSEN
WILLY

TALAMONA
Shagun

CHARTAN
JACOBEAN

Jobey
Four Dot

BARI
JAMES C. SMITH

Radice
Castella

PREBBEN HOLM
Jacopo
by Claus

PETERSONS
Discover the Pleasure



W. O. LARSEN
WILLY

TALAMONA
Shagun

CHARTAN
JACOBEAN

Chacon
dunhill
American

W. O. LARSEN
WILLY

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