

AIDS paranoia invades workplace

by W.C. McRae

Availability of the AIDS antibody test is allowing AIDS hysteria, recognized by many as unwarranted, to be channeled, under the guise of public safety, into advocacy of the judicious need — or threat — of testing individuals for the AIDS antibody. Even though no evidence exists to support the fear that AIDS can be transmitted by casual contact, the antibody test has hastened the entire AIDS issue into the sphere of employment, especially in the food service industry, education, and the military.

An employee of one local restaurant claimed he had already been "taunted" twice about having to take the test by the management. "It looks like that's the way things are going," he was told. Two other employees of the same restaurant gave notice in protest when requirement of the test was rumored.

When asked of six locally-owned Portland restaurants, one restaurateur admitted that requiring the test of its employees had been a "topic of thought and discussion," and two others indicated that if other restaurants were to begin requiring the test, they would follow

suit. Other restaurants surveyed were either not considering testing, or were unaware of any reason to do so until forced by the county.

Stating that "customer safety is our first concern," one restaurant manager, who spoke on condition that he and the restaurant not be identified, said that "No paranoid response is needed," but if a connection between AIDS and the food service industry were to be found, employees would "very definitely" be required by the restaurant to take the test. For the moment, they will wait for the county to mandate testing.

But confusion still exists in many minds about what the test for HTLV-III virus antibodies (the presence of which in the blood may indicate exposure to AIDS) does and does not predict, and what use should be made of the test results. Charles Shade, Multnomah County Health Officer, says the county has no plans to institute the test as a requirement for food handlers, or for anyone else. "We try to do things that are rational, and try not to do things that are irrational," claims Shade, adding that although it would be within the power of the county to require the test, there is no reason to, since AIDS is not food-transmissible. And the HTLV-III antibody test does not test for infectiousness, but simply for the presence of the antibody, which in almost 90% of the positive tests doesn't develop into AIDS.

There are between 20,000-25,000 food

all, or just the restaurant's gay employees would be required to take the test.

But can a private employer legally require a confidential AIDS antibody test as a condition of employment? The restaurant manager questioned knew that it was illegal in Los Angeles, but thought it might be legal in Oregon. One lawyer warned, "let them go ahead and try if they want to lose a lot of money."

But along with an almost willful indifference to information about AIDS and the AIDS test, there is the darker spectre of the "Medically-warranted" discrimination and the venting of perennial homophobia. The interim Superintendent of Schools in San Francisco last month said that he planned to seek authority to mandate AIDS testing for food handlers in the schools, public school teachers, and other district employees.

According to Health Officer Shade, if the military requires the AIDS antibody test of the 2,157,456 men and women in the Armed Forces, and if, as in the general populace 10% of them are gay — 210,000 servicemen and women — then he estimates that about 40,000 of all those tested would test positive for the antibody. Of these, ten percent, or 4,000 would be likely to get AIDS. But what about the other 36,000 who do not develop AIDS? What will the military do with the information they garner? Quite apart from the money that testing will cost (and it will have to be done frequently unless the military now

requires celibacy), Shade finds the entire enterprise "mindless." "There may be a good reason for the testing, and I have an open mind, but until I have occasion to hear what purpose it serves, I can't imagine it," says Shade, who makes the comparison, "military medicine is to medicine as military music is to music."

According to Shade, AIDS is not "the great unknown anymore," even if people want to pretend so. And what is known is that it is not transmitted by casual contact.

handlers licensed in Multnomah County, according to Art Bloom, Program Manager for Multnomah County Environmental Health. The AIDS antibody test is currently free, but if the county were to require the test of any segment of the work force, then the person tested would probably be forced to pay for it, since the county "doesn't have the kind of funds necessary" to pay for mass testing. If private employers were to begin to require the test, one county epidemiologist said that the employer would first be counselled as to whether the requirement were legitimate, and secondly be told that the county wouldn't care to be responsible for funding privately required testing.

The restaurant that was considering the test did not indicate whether it would pay for the test, or whether that would be up to the individual. It was also not made clear whether

LAP cookbook seeks recipes

Between the pages of many a cookbook there must be dozens of well-worn recipes just aching to be recognized. Those favorites can now come out.

The Lesbian Aging Project (LAP) is compiling a cookbook of recipes from the community. The projected date for publication of the cookbook is International Women's Day.

"We're looking for any kind of recipe," says Jesse Jordan, LAP Board member. "We'd really like a good mix, favorite potluck dishes, ethnic dishes, whatever. And people can send us as many as they wish. The more, the better."

Recipes submitted to the LAP cookbook should include the following information: ingredients and process of preparation, time involved in preparation, number of servings and cost. And, of course, the name of the person submitting the recipe. The deadline for submissions is January 6, 1986.

"We'd also like to know the origin of the recipe," Jessie added, "Especially if there is a story behind it. I know that lots of people have good stories to go with their favorite recipes."

Recipes should be sent to LAP, Cookbook, PO Box 13074, Portland, OR 97213. Recipes may also be given to any LAP Board member.

Correction

The dates for the National Convention of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays have been changed to September 19, 20, and 21, 1986. The change was made so as not to conflict with Yom Kippur, which falls on the dates previously set for the convention.

For further information contact Thelma McDonald, Convention Coordinator, PO Box 230266, Portland, OR 97223.

Men and women athletes, "Come out, come out, whoever you are"

by Dan Pillers

Gay Games II is only 10 months away, that's still enough time to get in shape to represent the City of Roses in the greatest sports and cultural festival to be held in the gay community. Teams from Portland are organizing now for this historic event. Any interested persons should write: Portland Gay Games Team II, P.O. Box 06811, Portland, Oregon 97206 or call: Dan 777-8309, Shaun 284-7691 or Ken 227-0592.

In 1982, 700 men and 600 women came to San Francisco from around the world to participate in Gay Games I. Twenty-five men from Portland took part in the first gay athletic games, but no women were represented. Let's not let this happen again in 1986. Men and women of Portland, stand together and show the world your strength!

Our 4th monthly meeting will be held at 4 p.m., Sunday, December 8th at The Primary Domain located at 1033 N.W. 16th. All interested athletes, coaches, teams, and volunteers should attend. Let's send a fair representation of Portland's gay athletic community to Gay Games II, Triumph in '86.

The Elves are coming!

* The second annual appearance by the Elves Against AIDS will take place on Saturday, December 21. At this time Santa's gay little helpers will go around town to various

gay bars and restaurants to solicit donations for the Cascade AIDS Network.

The elves will be led by inimitable and fabulous (her words) Donita Closette, a one-time lounge singer from Scio, Oregon who hooked up with the boys back in '81. Last year they raised over 300 much-needed dollars for C.A.N.

So if you're out and about on this fateful Saturday night be sure and help out C.A.N. with a donation to the elves.

The elves are also available if you'd like to have them drop by your holiday party. For further information contact Brown McDonald at 223-5907 or Howard Beirbaum at 236-2536.

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