

Just news

Cancelled appointment leads PWA to sue

West Hollywood resident, Paul Jaspersen, fights for his life and his rights in his discrimination suit against a nail salon.

BY DELL RICHARDS

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is the No. 1 health concern in the U.S. Yet, given the Puritan heritage of the U.S., an almost-medieval debate rages over how to handle the crisis. While the U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop fights for safe sex education, conservatives demand celibacy before marriage, monogamy after, no talk about sex at all — safe or otherwise — and the possibility of mandatory testing and quarantine.

While the rhetoric flies, the AIDS virus continues to spread. And people with AIDS — gay or straight — find themselves outcast. Although San Francisco has become a shelter for people with AIDS, it is sadly alone. Most cities — even gay enclaves like West Hollywood — are having trouble coping with the disease.

When West Hollywood resident Paul Jaspersen, 35, was refused service by Jessica's Nail Salon, it became abundantly clear that turning people with AIDS into social pariahs could happen anywhere.

Although the example may seem trivial —

Jaspersen was only refused a pedicure — for anyone with AIDS, it isn't.

"The case has far-reaching implications," Jaspersen said in a recent interview. "If they win, it could mean that I can't shop for food, can't go into restaurants, can't even walk down the street."

Gloria Allred, 45 — the attorney who is handling the civil case for Jaspersen — sees it as a case of arbitrary discrimination.

"He has the right to access to each and every business in the state," Allred said.

The City of West Hollywood also has an ordinance that specifically protects homosexuals from discrimination. After its own investigation, it filed criminal charges against Jessica's Nail Salon for violation of the ordinance. That case is being fought simultaneously.

In California as elsewhere, the courts are an important part of the political system. Although they were set up to interpret the law as written by the state and federal legislatures, liberal lawyers have used the courts to broaden those very same laws. Precedents in one type of case, for example, can often be applied in another. And in fact, using the courts are one of the few

ways the average citizen can have a direct impact on the political process.

In this instance, Allred plans to use the laws that govern the rights of minorities to protect the civil rights of persons with AIDS. To date, California courts have decided that people with AIDS cannot be fired from their jobs or turned out of houses, for instance, citing the same anti-discrimination laws that protect the handicapped.

Either way, the case will set tremendous precedents in California and the U.S.

"If Jessica's wins," said Allred, "we'll see the denial of all kinds of services to people with AIDS."

So far, Allred has not had as much success with the case. The motion asking that Jessica's be forced to give Jaspersen service was denied. According to Allred, the judge felt that California law did, in fact, permit discrimination against people with AIDS.

The AIDS issue is particularly complicated when it comes to services because at least three health workers who were exposed to AIDS-tainted blood have tested positive for the virus. It is believed that they contracted it through the skin.

"We want to educate," Allred said. "When the facts are presented, it will be shown medically that you can't get AIDS from giving someone a pedicure."

Allred is asking that manicurists don gloves, like many dental and other health workers already do.

Despite the setback on the first round, Allred is preparing to go to trial and has asked for the case to be heard immediately. Because the courts are used as a vehicle for political change — and anyone with a reasonable amount of money can take anyone else to court for almost any reason — the courts in California are completely clogged. As a result, it often takes years for a case to be tried. Jaspersen doesn't have that kind of time.

"In this case, justice delayed will be justice denied," Allred said.

Allred has also filed an appeal with the next rung of the judicial ladder — the California Court of Appeals. It will pave the way for a higher court to hear the case if the local court doesn't side with Jaspersen.

Whatever the outcome, both Jaspersen and Allred are prepared to fight as long as necessary.

"The judge is, in effect, telling people with AIDS to go underground," Allred said. "It is asking for trouble for people to hide the fact they have AIDS for fear of discovery."

"It is difficult enough to live with AIDS," Jaspersen added. "People with AIDS shouldn't have to deal with discrimination, too. I've come too far to have to go back."

The criminal case filed by West Hollywood should go to trial in January. A date for the trial in the civil case hasn't been set yet. Allred hopes the civil case will be tried in the next few months. Its outcome will help determine whether discrimination against people with AIDS will be tolerated or not.

Westsiders bring home championship

WOW! Where do they come from? The west side, of course. Lesbians are everywhere, even west of the Willamette River.

BY KATHY BAMBECK

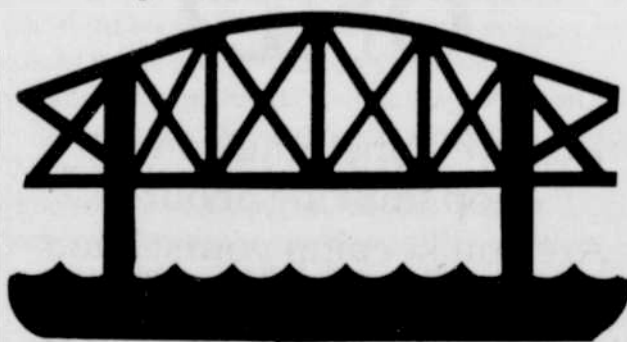
They "walked on water" as they crossed the Willamette, some observers said as they watched the Westsiders win the Championship in the LCP Softball Tournament, August 23rd.

"Incredible!" others said when it was learned this group had never before played together as a team. Entrance into the tournament was to foster group participation and exposure. Bringing the championship home to the west side proved an additional and unexpected reward.

Where did they come from? The west side, of course! Yes, ladies, there really are gay women on Portland's west side, as well as in Beaverton, Tigard, Banks, Tualatin, Hillsboro, Canby, McMinnville, Forest Grove, Lake Oswego. Lesbians are everywhere, even west of the Willamette River.

Last April a few of these women decided to organize a social group, the Westside Organization of Women. Activities would be held largely on the west side. There would be a periodic newsletter, no dues, with financing coming from fun activities such as garage sales. The group has already designed and is now selling a colorful T-shirt with its logo.

The Westsiders organized yet another team that had never before played together. This team walked in the "From All Walks of Life"



walkathon, bringing in dollars for the AIDS cause. They are remembered for their Broadway tunes and other old favorites they sang while strolling the route. Other members volunteered in registration and in video taping to help in making this event the success it became.

With Sunday brunches, afternoon barbecues, and watching videos of old movies for "cheap thrills," the women enjoy each others' company.

One night not long ago a woman with a gigantic TV screen invited the "cheap thrills" group to her home for videos. They munched on potato chips while crunched in the tiny living room and rooted and cheered for Bette Davis in one of her earlier films. A prelude to the Bette Davis film was a favorite documentary, "Word Is Out."

The game of Pictionary is usually a staple at the Westsiders' gatherings. The charade-like antics draw out the best of the crowd. Even at the softball tournament a hot game was going on.

Anyone wishing to learn more about the Westsiders may call 643-9345 or 649-3436.

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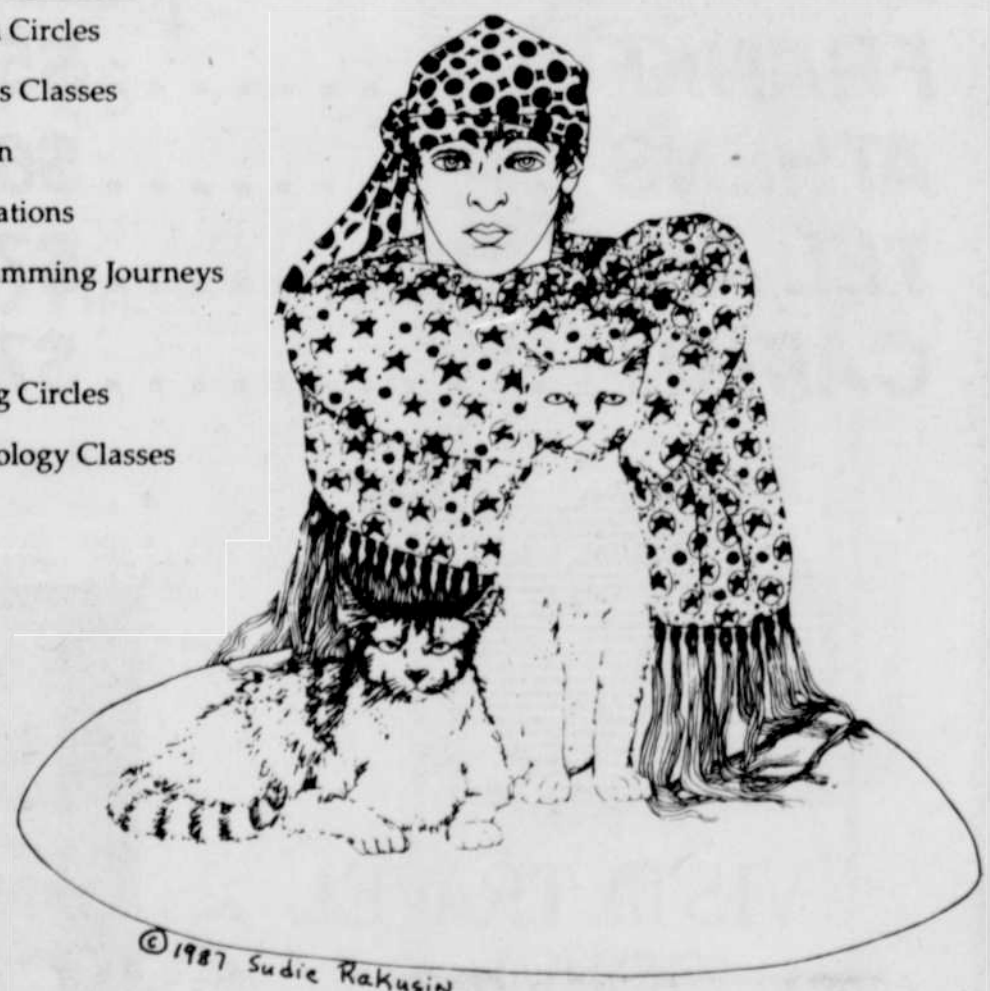
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