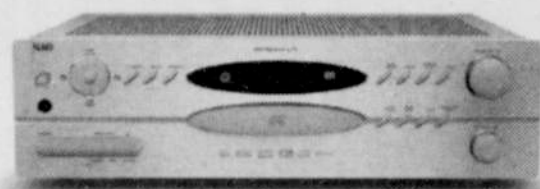


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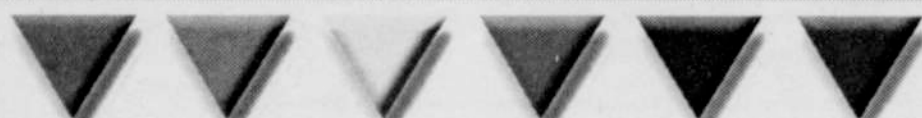
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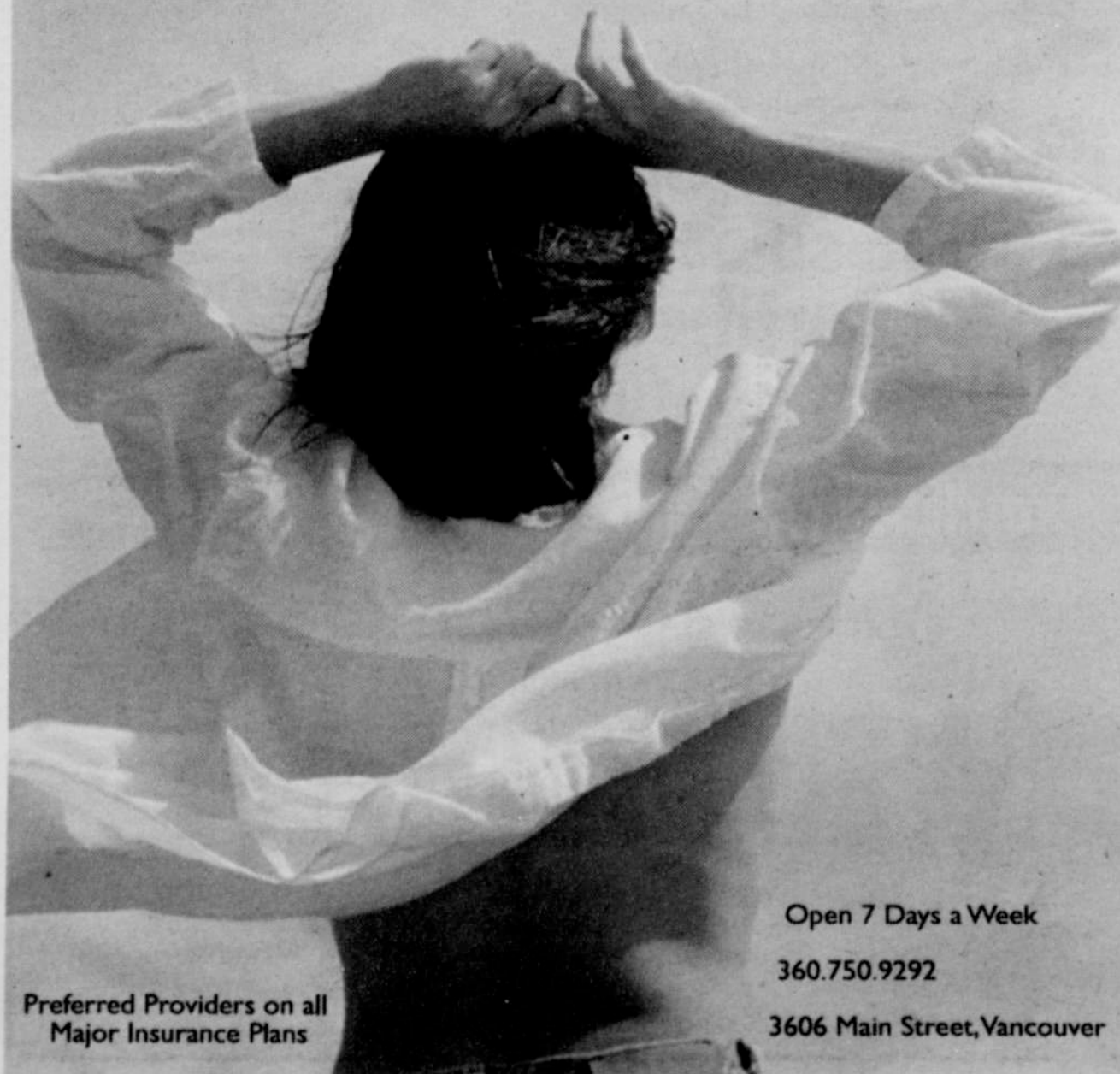
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WORLDnews**MIDEAST/AFRICA****REPORT: YASSER ARAFAT
WAS HIV-POSITIVE**

Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat was HIV-positive when he died in a Paris hospital last year, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* reported Sept. 8.

"An analysis of the confidential medical report on Yasser Arafat's death reveals three main possibilities as to the cause: poisoning, AIDS or an infection," the newspaper said.



The report says the immediate cause of death was a massive brain hemorrhage but adds that doctors were unable to explain his underlying illness. The findings are published in a new edition of the book *The Seventh War* by journalists Amos Harel and Avi Isacharoff.

Dr. Ashraf al-Kurdi, Arafat's personal physician, told the reporters that French doctors found HIV in Arafat's blood. He claimed Arafat had been injected with the virus to blur traces of poisoning by Israeli agents.

Meanwhile, *The New York Times* did its own analysis of the records and concluded Arafat died "from a stroke that resulted from a bleeding disorder caused by an unidentified infection."

"The first independent review of the records, obtained by *The New York Times*, suggests that poisoning was highly unlikely and dispels a rumor that he may have died of AIDS," the *Times* said. "Nonetheless, the records show that despite extensive testing, his doctors could not determine the underlying infection."

The Jerusalem Post claimed that Gay.com has reported that Arafat was bisexual and had AIDS. A search of Gay.com turned up nothing except a message board posting by a user linking to an article at 365Gay.com that speculated about AIDS and said, "For several years there have been suggestions that Arafat was bisexual."

AMERICAS**GAY MEXICAN SUES COCA-COLA**

A Mexican man has sued a Latin American branch of Coca-Cola alleging anti-gay discrimination, the NotieSe news service reported.

Former senior manager Roberto Mendoza Ralph says Coca-Cola FEMSA, a branch that covers Mexico and eight other nations, harassed, demoted and ultimately fired him after he came out. He claims several witnesses heard one executive declare, "As long as I am director of human resources, we will not have a fag as a director"—the position Mendoza had been in line to achieve.

Coca-Cola FEMSA—the world's second-largest Coca-Cola bottler—maintains Mendoza was let go because he was no longer needed.

STRIPPERS FOUND DEAD IN MONTREAL

Two U.S. strippers who were working at the Toronto gay bar Remington's were found dead Sept. 1 inside a rock quarry outside Montreal.

Mark Kraynak, 23, and Steve Wright, 20, had been missing since Aug. 22, when they planned to visit a nearby after-hours bar, Red Lite, in the suburb of Laval.

Police have not determined if the men fell, were pushed or were placed at the quarry after being murdered. The bodies were found on a ledge about 50 feet into the quarry.

Kraynak, who was from Uniontown, Pa., and Wright, who was from Santa Rosa, Calif., had been part of a successful lawsuit against the Canadian government by six U.S. adult entertainers who sought the right to perform in Canada. Kraynak served as a specialist with the Army's 82nd Airborne Division in Baghdad,

Iraq, prior to being wounded and receiving a Purple Heart.

EUROPE**ILGA TO MEET IN PARIS**

The European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association will stage its annual conference Oct. 26 to 30 in Paris. Better funded and more active than the larger ILGA organization, the European subgroup is promoting the confab as "one of the hottest events on LGBT activists' calendars."

A special Web site—www.ilga-europe.org/conference/Paris—provides registration forms, tourist information and details on this year's conference themes.

BERLIN MAYOR**WELCOMES SANDOMASOCHISTS**

Berlin's gay mayor, Klaus Wowereit, took some heat in late August for welcoming a sado-masochistic street festival to the city. Some Christian Democratic and Social Democratic politicians accused him of showing poor taste, Reuters said.

"The first weekend in September stands for the pure zest for life," Wowereit wrote in the Folsom-Europe Street Festival program book. "A warm welcome to Berlin!"

The mayor called his critics "narrow-minded." He said, "Anyone who has a problem with it doesn't have to go to the event."

**BRITISH SOLDIERS MARCH
IN PRIDE PARADE**

Thirty members of Britain's armed forces joined Manchester's Gay Pride parade Aug. 27 as part of a recruitment drive in the gay community. The United Kingdom lifted its military gay ban in 2000 under order from the European Court of Human Rights.

Ten soldiers marched in the parade, and 20 members of the Royal Air Force rode on a float with a replica of an airplane cockpit. The soldiers handed out candy as they trailed a float of muscular men in pink Lycra shorts dancing and blowing whistles, said *Sky News*.

"We don't really care what sexual orientation you are if you want to come and join us in the army," said Logistics Corps Warrant Officer Lutha Magloire. "The army can only get better the more it represents all the community."

More than 200,000 people watched the parade, which featured 80 floats.

"There were men in frocks with big mustaches, sailor boys with blow-up dolphins and bare-chested dancers wearing tiny black hot pants," said *The Manchester Evening News*. "There were cowboys, jugglers, acrobats, stubble-chinned nuns, a rather manly impersonator of Queen Elizabeth II and even a pink tank."

AUSTRIAN GAYS PICKET IRAN AIR

About 50 gays picketed Iran Air's Vienna

