

SF Chronicle 5/21/88
p. C10

Persistent Protester On AIDS Sentenced

■ A protester confined to a wheelchair was sentenced yesterday in San Francisco to six months probation and 100 hours of community work for being arrested 15 times at AIDS demonstrations in the United Nations Plaza.

U.S. Magistrate Joan Brennan imposed the sentence on 53-year-old Jane Jackson of Oakland at the close of two-day, nonjury trial in federal court.

Jackson, who suffers from severe vertigo, was found guilty of blocking entrances to the old federal building at 50 United Nations Plaza — the site of the nearly 3-year-old "ARC/AIDS Vigil," the city's oldest continuing AIDS demonstration.

Since December, Jackson and 200 others have been arrested for chaining themselves to the federal building to dramatize their pleas for more government funds to fight AIDS. Jackson was arrested 37 times, but charged with only 15 violations.

The Oldest Established AIDS Protest

By Leslie Guevarra
Chronicle Staff Writer

Five days a week for the past four months, a group of AIDS research advocates have chained themselves to the doors of the old Federal Building in San Francisco and waited to be arrested.

The protesters include AIDS patients, people with AIDS-related complex, doctors, nurses, health counselors, bureaucrats, rights advocates, gays and straights.

Tuesdays are "celebrity days,"

when politicians often get into the act. They join the group outside the old Federal Building at 50 United Nations Plaza to call for more federal funds for AIDS research and treatment.

The Tuesday events are elaborate demonstrations with music, rallies and slogan chanting that frequently draw 75 to 100 spectators, many of them people who stop to watch the protests on their way to lunch. The chainings, and subsequent arrest or citation, of the rally speakers cap the protests.

Earlier this week, Ying Kelly, a

staff assistant to Representative Ronald Dellums, D-Oakland, found out what it was like to be shackled to a door of the old Federal Building for 40 minutes after participating in a 2½-hour rally.

"I didn't think it was going to take that long," said a bemused Kelly, after she was cited by federal police on Tuesday and then allowed to return to work. "I kept telling the officers, 'arrest me, arrest me.' I had a lot of afternoon appointments."

Kelly was among the 16 people cited that day for blocking a federal entrance. The offense carries a \$25

fine, and those cited were allowed to leave without being arrested.

Four other demonstrators were arrested Tuesday after their impromptu sit-in at the feet of federal police who stood by the chained protesters resulted in a brief scuffle with the officers.

The four were later released and await formal charges, which could include blocking a federal entrance, refusing to obey an officer and attempted assault on an officer.

The daily protests, which began December 11, are an outgrowth of

the continuing "ARC-AIDS Vigil" by AIDS patients and their supporters, who have been living in a tent city set up outside the old Federal Building in October 1985. The building houses the western regional office of the Department of Health and Human Services.

More than 180 people have been arrested or cited since the protests began. Those cited in the past four months include San Francisco Supervisors Harry Britt, Nancy Walker and Carol Ruth Silver, Berkeley Mayor Loni Hancock and Steve Morin, a legislative assistant to Representative Nancy Pelosi, D-San Francisco.

Wheelchair-bound Jane Jackson, who tends a friend who has

AIDS in her Oakland home, is among the protesters who gather outside the old Federal Building almost every day — regardless of whether political notables join her.

"I intend to keep on doing this until something changes in the way that the government addresses the AIDS crisis," said Jackson, who has received 37 citations since December.

Although she faces up to 18½ years in prison and \$18,500 in fines if she is convicted for each offense, Jackson is unfazed by the possible penalty. "I am a human rights activist," she said. "My commitment compels me to do what I believe in, that is why I am here."

2/3/88
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BY STEVE RINGMAN/THE CHRONICLE

Arrest at AIDS Vigil

San Francisco Supervisor Carol Ruth Silver waited to be arrested in front of the old Federal Building yesterday after giving a speech in support of the AIDS vigil at United Nations Plaza. Silver and 15 others were cited and released after they chained themselves to the doors of the building to call for more federal money for AIDS research and treatment.

ON MARCH 1, TUESDAY, AT NOON

- BERKELEY MAYOR LONI HANCOCK
BERKELEY CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS:
ANN CHANDLER, DON JELINEK,
MAUDELL SHIREK AND NANCY SKINNER WITH
TOM BROUGHAM, PERALTA BOARD
AND SUPPORTERS**

**WILL BE ARRESTED AT THE ARC/AIDS VIGIL AT 50 UN PLAZA
AT THE OLD FEDERAL BUILDING IN SAN FRANCISCO**

**THE URGENCY OF FEDERAL ACTION ON THE AIDS CRISIS
THE URGENCY OF THE CRISIS IN HEALTH CARE FOR ALL
DEMANDS ACTION BY THE GOVERNMENT NOW!**

If you haven't already been touched by the AIDS crisis, you will be: 1.5 to 2 million Americans are already infected with the AIDS virus. In 1991, as many Americans will die of AIDS as died in Vietnam (over 50,000 people in one year!) unless there is a cure or palliative measure found.

The AIDS crisis is part and parcel of the growing crisis in the health care system that we all depend on. Will we have to close down health services provided to seniors, people of color, the uninsured and under-insured working people and their families to keep up with the growing costs of AIDS? Funds from the military budget must be diverted to fight AIDS and insure proper health care for all.

The U.S. and South Africa are the only industrial nations without a national health care system. It's time to get the word to Washington, D.C.

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2-Year Anniversary at U.N. Plaza

AIDS Vigil — A Grim Reminder

By Bill Gordon

When two men chained themselves to the doors of the Old Federal Building in San Francisco two years ago yesterday, it was a spontaneous act of protest over the government's response to AIDS.

But the instant demonstration has evolved into a grim vigil maintained 24 hours a day by hundreds of volunteers, many of them suffering from AIDS or related illnesses.

For some, the protest has faded into the landscape near United Nations Plaza, but for others it makes a fresh statement every day about government responsibilities.

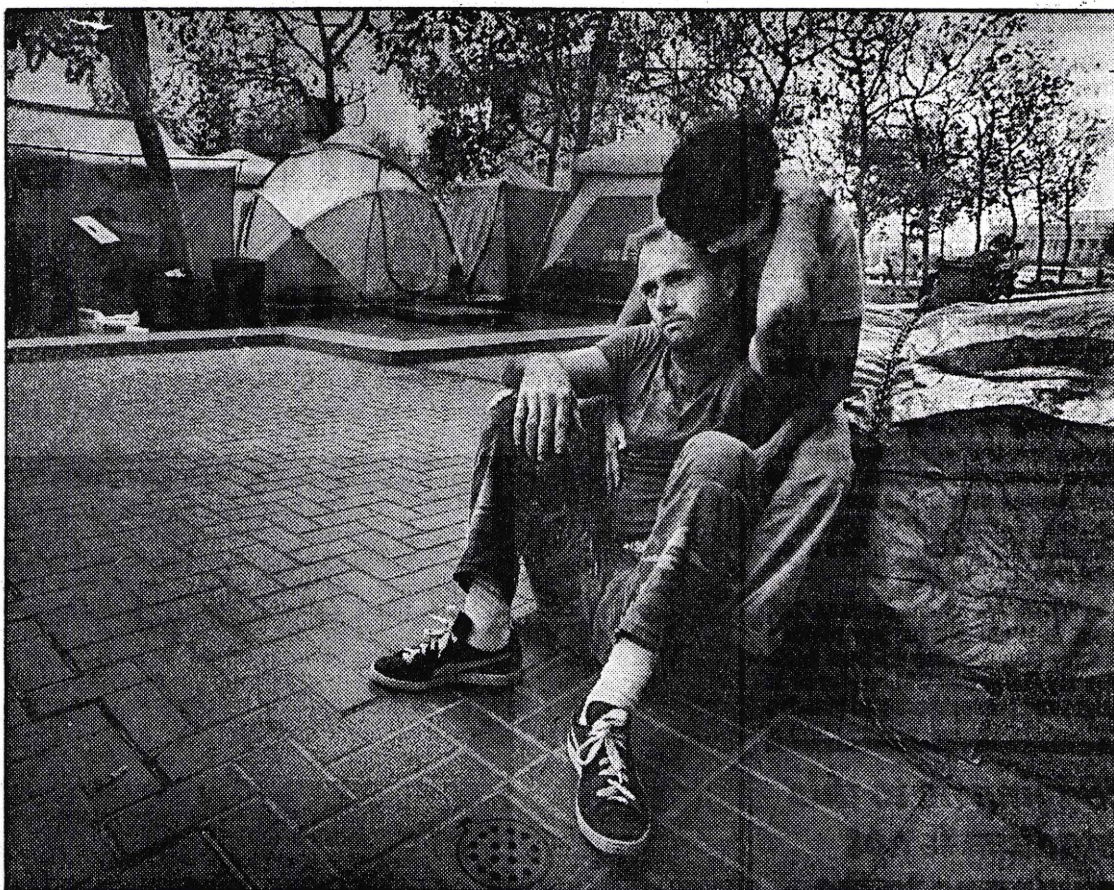
"It doesn't make any difference to me," said Department of Education worker Lawrence Mersmann, as he passed on his way to lunch yesterday. "They haven't bothered me in two years. I suppose they'll live here forever."

Others hurrying past say they hear the difficult message. "It's comforting discomfort," Gail Peto said of the vigil's constant presence outside her Department of Human Services office.

"Generally, when people leave a workplace, they feel like they're leaving their problems inside," said co-worker Caren Kirkland. "This reminds us that what we do inside affects the lives of people out here."

For vigil members, the encampment underscores devastating change in their lives. Five active participants have died of AIDS over the past two years and three others now suffer from the disease, said Harvey Mauer, one of the early organizers.

Others estimate that more than 100 of the estimated 500 people associated less actively with the vigil have died.



BY STEVE RINGMAN/THE CHRONICLE

James McCord and Jenny McCord are two of many people keeping the AIDS vigil going

The encampment consists of six donated tents and two mattresses. A table is stacked with educational pamphlets, a jar of condoms and a display of small bottles of bleach to disinfect intravenous needles. A donation box provides the only funds for the operation.

A fading, hand-painted sign lists the demands that have not changed in two years: Increase funds for AIDS research, expand

Medicare benefits for those with AIDS-related complex, allow the domestic sale of drugs already available to AIDS patients outside the United States, and have President Reagan condemn AIDS-related discrimination and hysteria.

A constantly changing crew of protesters, often homeless AIDS patients, occupy the tents and staff the information table. Nearby missions and shelters provide showers

and meals.

Critics call the scene an eyesore, and organizer Mauer won't dispute the description. It provides a valuable symbol for the disease that too many people want to ignore, he said.

"There's no avoiding the damn thing," Mauer said. "We provide a reminder that the problem still exists."

San Francisco Examiner METRO

CITY, STATE & BAY AREA NEWS

Year 3 for AIDS watch

Anniversary rally
to honor volunteers

By Benjamin Seto
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

Outside the tent at the old San Francisco Federal Building, a protest placard listing demands was streaked by rain and dirt.

On a table stacked with pamphlets, a yellow rose drooped in a Thermos.

There was no way of hiding the signs of passing time.

For the members of the ARC/AIDS Vigil, their 2-year-old protest on United Nations Plaza is growing old. They fight each day to keep from being forgotten.

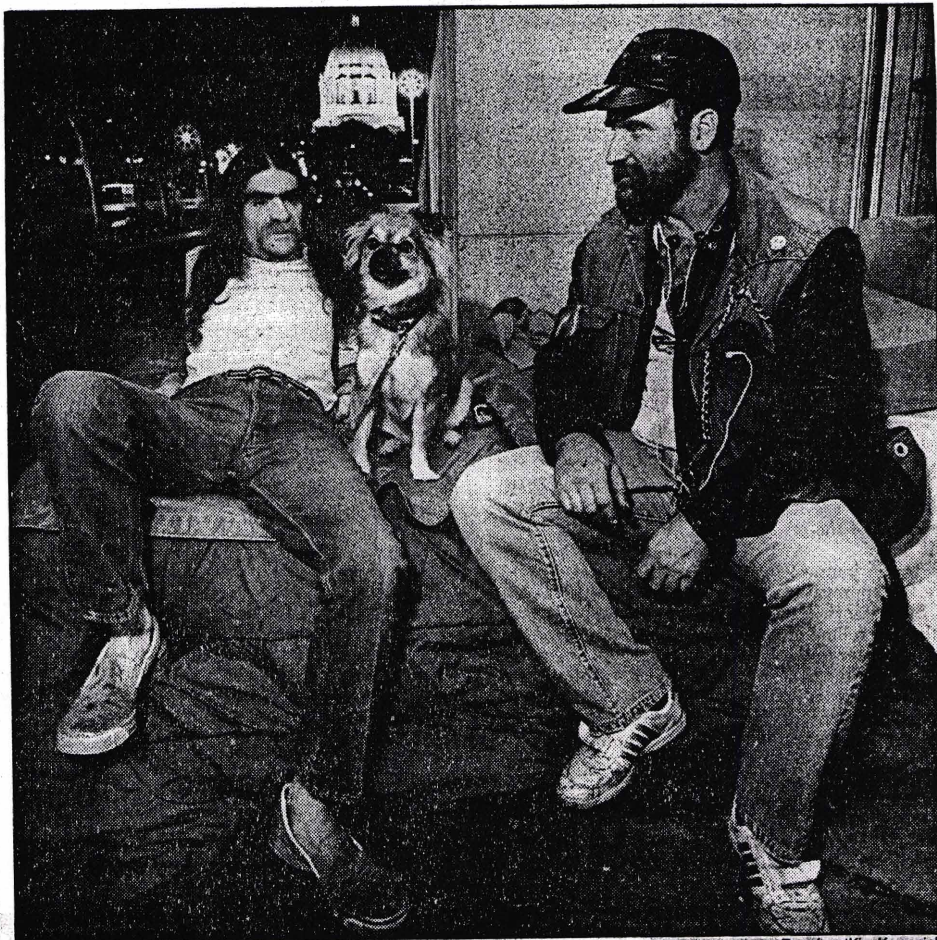
"It's been a tough battle," said Richard "Smokey" Lorenzo, who joined the group soon after four men began the protest on Oct. 27, 1985, by chaining themselves to the old Federal Building's doors.

"But we'll go on until our demands are met or until we're escorted off of here by the police," Lorenzo said.

For the last 730 days and nights, the group has maintained a 24-hour vigil on a tiny portion of city-owned land outside the building. Each day, at least nine members are camped out in six tents set up under the trees on the site. They man a desk, passing out leaflets on acquired immune deficiency syndrome and gathering signatures for a petition demanding stronger action on AIDS from the federal government.

Two twin-size mattresses covered with a crinkled blue tarpaulin are chained to the federal building's doors. They are reserved for those suffering from ARC or AIDS.

The group has scheduled an anniversary rally for Tuesday night. Supporters will light candles for the more than 500 people



Examiner/Kim Komenich

Garth Ferguson, left, and his dog, Brandy, with "Smokey" Lorenzo at old Federal Building

who have kept the vigil alive through the years.

The group says not one of its "Four Moral Appeals" has been met by the federal government. The group has asked that:

- The government commit \$500 million this year to find a cure for AIDS.

- The government recognize AIDS-related conditions, or ARC, as a "critical dimension of the AIDS crisis." People with ARC should receive proper funding for medical care and support.

- The Food and Drug Administration immediately allow use of drugs currently available outside the United States for AIDS treat-

ment.

- President Reagan and other officials condemn AIDS-related discrimination against the disease's high-risk groups.

The City has not attempted to evict the group from the site, vigil spokesman Harvey Maurer said, adding that officials have "a tacit understanding of our presence."

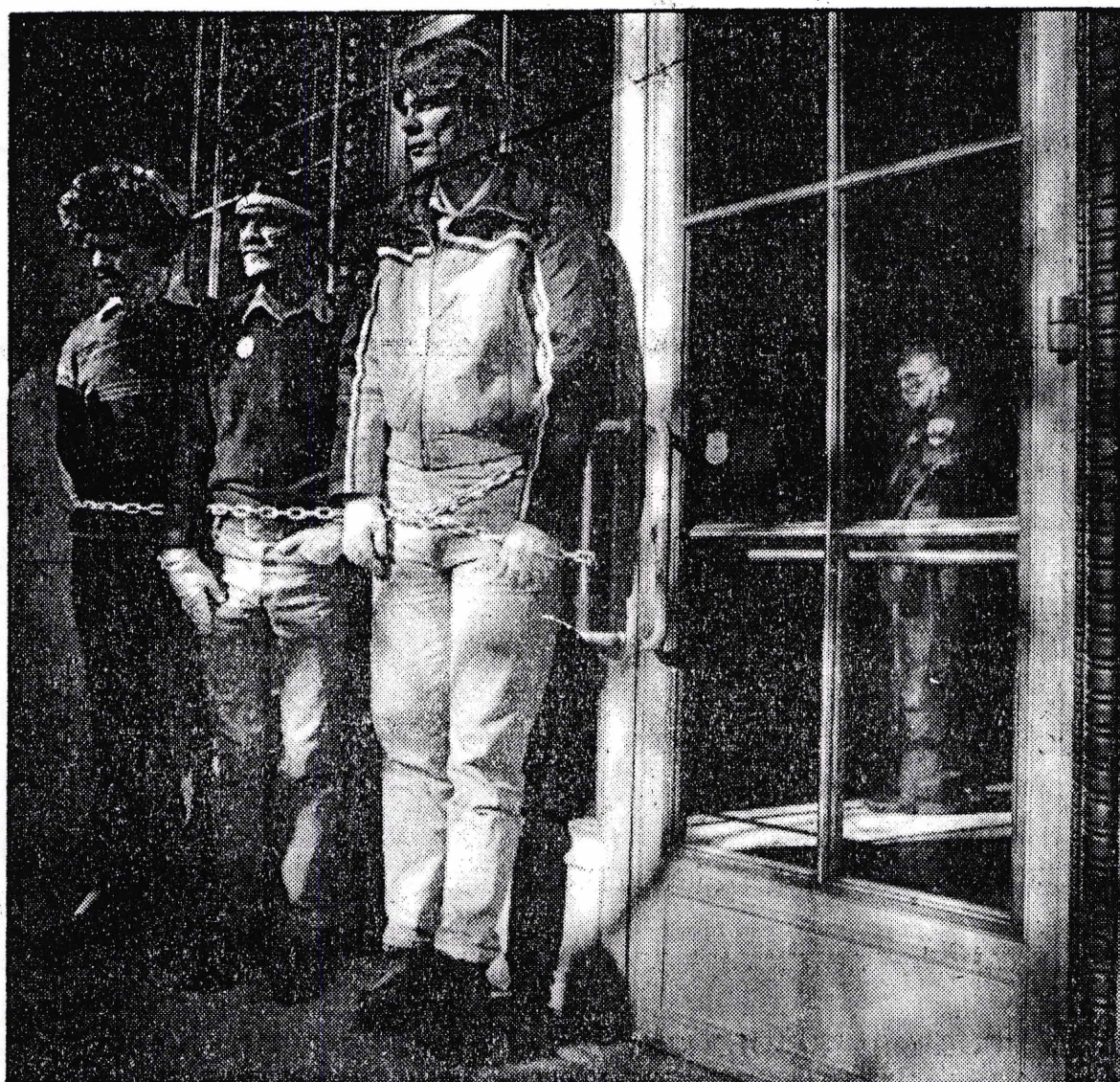
Those keeping the vigil live on food donated by St. Anthony's Dining Room or supporters — fish from the woman at the open market, muffins from a nearby restaurant. The street people at the plaza respect the group's space, rarely violating its area in the last two years.

Lorenzo, who works at a local recycling company and drops by after work, said some of the original members see changes.

"Half of the people now I don't even know," he said. "They wander in and stay. They're just filling time, not knowing where to go."

Lorenzo said many don't understand the original intent of the protest, and some of the newer members ignore the rules written down in a black book in the main tent.

"Their first responsibility should be to the civil disobedience," he said. "Their life has to be secondary."



S.F. CHRONICLE
12/12/87

BY SCOTT SOMMERDORF/THE CHRONICLE

Eric Basher, Russell Galena and John Belskus chained themselves to the Federal Building in S.F.

3 From AIDS Vigil Arrested

By Maitland Zane

Federal police arrested three men who chained themselves to the door of a government office building on United Nations Plaza yesterday as a two-year vigil by AIDS patients heated up.

The three wore white, hospital-type gloves intended to mock the law enforcement personnel elsewhere who have worn such gear as a safety precaution while arresting AIDS protesters.

The three chained themselves to the door of the old Federal Building after officials hauled off two mattresses used by members of the

nearby AIDS vigil encampment.

For the past two years, a band of AIDS patients and their supporters have camped on a grassy patch of United Nations Plaza to protest the Reagan administration's policies toward the ailment.

"Chainings" were an almost daily occurrence from the time the first tents were pitched on Oct. 27, 1985, but they were abandoned as a tactic in mid-1986, said vigil spokesman Harvey Maurer.

The incident that prompted yesterday's arrest began when federal officials removed the mattresses used by vigil members that were left next to the entrance to the

building at 50 U.N. Plaza.

"There was nobody in those beds — they were just trash so far as we were concerned," said George E. Miller, regional director of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Arrested were John Belskus, 36, Russell (Garth) Galena, 42, and Eric Basher, 26. Ross Biatek, spokesman for the General Services Administration, said the three men were taken before a U.S. magistrate and issued citations for blocking the entrance to the building.

A year ago, in a letter to Mayor Dianne Feinstein, Miller called the little tent city on his front doorstep a "blight."

Recently, however, Miller has struck up friendly relations with members of the AIDS vigil. As Basher put it, "We hold him in a lot of respect."

"I get along fine with Eric and Garth," said Miller. "I have nothing personal against them, and they show no animosity to me. But it's a hardship to have to go around those damned tents. I think they've proved their point. I can't tell 'em what to do, but in my opinion they should just declare victory and leave."

Maurer said yesterday's arrests by security guards wielding a bolt-cutter were unrelated to the short-lived encampment of 25 homeless people, who moved their tents from U.N. Plaza to another city park on December 6.

Chained bodies again at AIDS vigil

By Benjamin Seto
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

Members of a 2-year-old AIDS vigil resumed their tactic of chaining themselves to the old Federal Building after a regional health director had beds at the vigil removed, calling them an "eyesore."

John Belskus, Russell "Garth" Galena and Eric Basher of the ARC/AIDS Vigil chained themselves at noon Friday to the doors of the Federal Building at United Nations Plaza.

Five federal guards wearing rubber gloves arrested them less than five minutes later after one guard used bolt cutters to free the protesters.

The group has maintained a 24-hour vigil — some sleeping in six tents pitched on city property a few feet from the building — since Oct. 27, 1985.

Members, who originally chained themselves to the building doors, listed "four moral appeals," including a request for at least \$500 million from the federal government to find a cure for acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

After a few months, the members stopped chaining themselves

and instead chained two twin-size mattresses on wooden frames to the doors as a symbol.

The beds remained until Thursday, when Federal Protective Service guards removed the mattresses after receiving a written request from George Miller, regional director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Basher said the group was not mad at Miller, who last December wrote a letter to Mayor Feinstein and called the vigil a "blight" on society.

Belskus, one of the original members and a sufferer of pre-AIDS symptoms, said the group is angry with the Reagan administration, whose policies are "not adequate to meet the needs of this epidemic."

Miller was not in his office Friday afternoon, but John C.B. Johnson, director of administrative services, said Miller considered the beds a "nuisance and an eyesore." He said Miller felt the beds had not been used in the last several months and should be removed.

The men arrested Friday were ordered to appear in federal court later this month to face charges of obstructing federal property.

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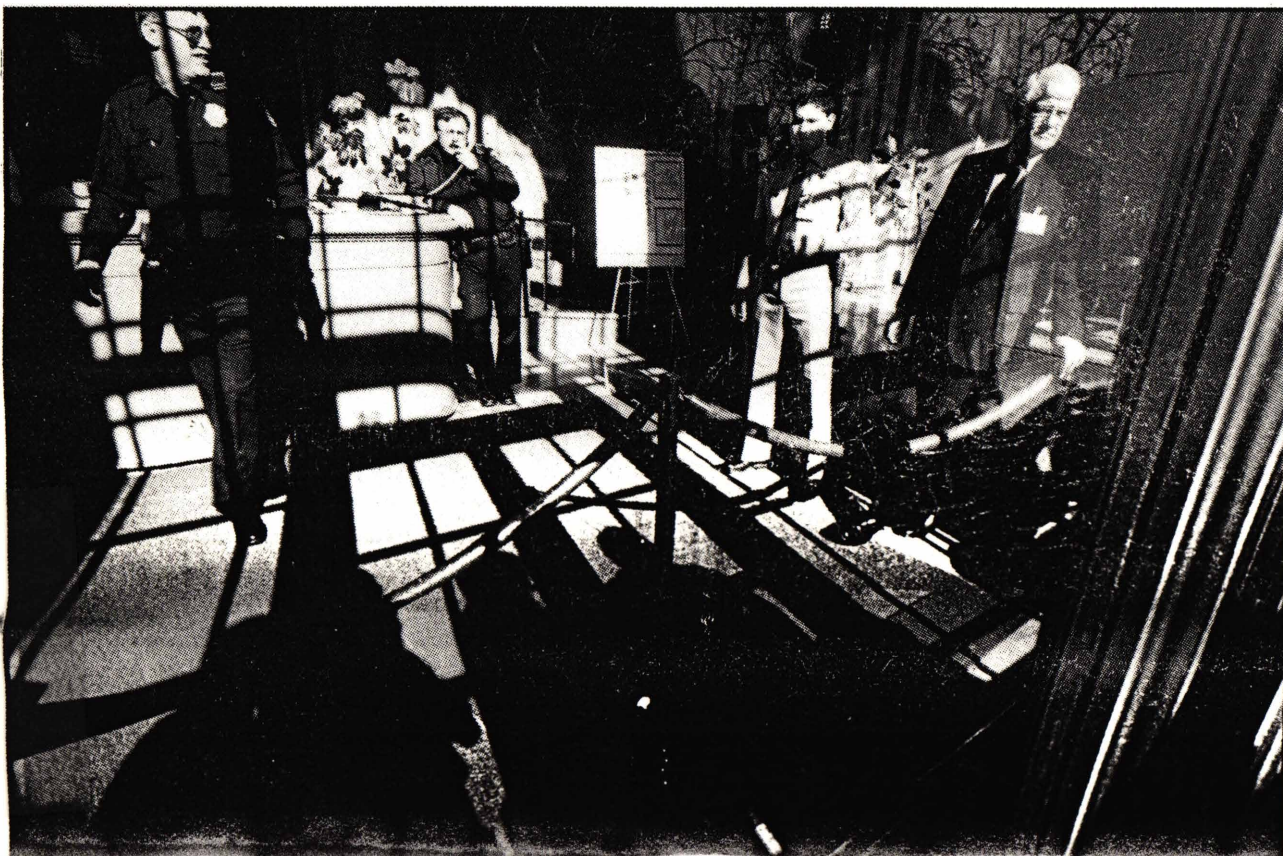
500 Hayes Street, SF, CA 94102

• January 22, 1988 •

Vol. 16, No. 4

ON THE FRONT LINES AT THE VIGIL

THOMAS ALLEMAN



by Alex McDonald

Jane Jackson rolled up to the doors of the federal Department of Health and Human Services last Tuesday and chained her wheelchair to the art deco door handles — relics of the New Deal era — to protest the AIDS health policies of the Reagan administration. A statuesque woman when, with the help of one or two friends, she stands up, Jackson provoked arrest, often acting alone, for the 14th time in less than a month as part of the nonviolent civil disobedience sponsored by the ARC/AIDS Vigil.

This time she was not alone. Supervisor Harry Britt; Walter Johnson, the executive secretary/treasurer of the San Francisco Labor Council (AFL-CIO); and Ellen Shaffer, the director of the Community Health Coalition, were with her. Health workers were with her. Human rights activists and members of the ARC/AIDS Vigil, which more than two years ago began the protest Jackson embraces, were also with her. In all, 15 arrests took

place on Tuesday before a sympathetic crowd of well-wishers, newspaper reporters, radio broadcasters and TV camerapeople and commentators.

Tuesday's arrests bring the total number of people arrested in the last month to 42. Because some people have been arrested more than once, the total number of arrests exceeds 50. Of Jack-

these doors for two years and two months before there were any arrests. I supported them then, and once it became apparent that this needed to grow, I offered myself as one among many."

The ARC/AIDS Vigil in Civic Center's UN Plaza began 27 months ago in the expectation of swift arrests by federal authorities, which would then dramatize the plight of people with ARC and AIDS who were falling through the so-called safety net of federal health policy. The protesters

more people will join in."

James Bernard, an agent for Local 250 of the Service Employees Union, joined Jackson and the Vigil on Tuesday. "I'm here," he told the *Sentinel*, "because our country has not only criminally neglected the AIDS crisis, but also the entire health care system. Every day people suffer because they don't have access to health care. It's a human issue. All of our members work in the health industry, and they see daily how it affects people. They care for AIDS patients. They're in emergency rooms when people get turned away. And a lot of our members who work in convalescent homes have no insurance themselves."

Bernard used the inspiration of Martin Luther King Day to start using the tactics of civil disobedience. "What we should have learned yesterday is that civil disobedience is a potent weapon for dealing with society's injustices. Certain issues are so immediate that you can't always rely on normal channels. You can't always get dressed up in a blue suit and go down to the legislature."

Bernard attributed the awakened conscience of his union in part to its membership in the Community Health Coalition, a San Francisco organization formed 18 months ago to work for affordable health care for everybody. According to Ellen Shaffer, the coalition's director, the CHC grew out of the Gray Panther's Health Committee and now includes unions, the Central Labor Council, organizations of the homeless and the disabled, women's groups and seniors. Shaffer estimates that 170,000 San Franciscans have no medical coverage at all.

"We're here today," Shaffer says, "in solidarity with people with AIDS. They're waging a courageous struggle for better attention from the federal health care system, which we feel is where the focus needs to be."

Shaffer points out that the cost of personal health care services in San Francisco will rise to \$8.5 million by 1991. She fears that as health costs rise the city will face worse deficits than those which recently came to light.

More than two years ago, the Board of Supervisors foresaw the coming crisis and went on record as endorsing the civil disobedience tactics of the ARC/AIDS Vigil as part of an attempt to alert the public and to bring pressure on the federal and state governments for relief.

Although the endorsement was an extraordinary action in itself — it is thought to be the first time that one jurisdiction in the United States has officially endorsed civil disobedience against another jurisdiction — the supervisors nevertheless confined their public support of the Vigil to occasional visits to help bolster the morale of the protesters encamped outside the old Federal Building. That changed on Tuesday when Supervisor Harry Britt joined Shaffer, Bernard and Jackson in donning chains and shackling himself to the doors.

Asked why he chose civil disobedience, Britt replied, "Why not? These people have been out here a long time. It's an inconvenience for the people in this building, but nothing like the inconvenience that AIDS is and that Ronald Reagan's posture on AIDS is to

all the people affected by the epidemic."

Britt's appearance greatly cheered the vigilers, who gave him the first of several rounds of applause as he walked into the encampment. "This is not the Harry Britt show," he advised the press and media people who quickly surrounded him. "This is the people of the ARC/AIDS Vigil speaking out, and I hope that everyone who cares about AIDS will identify with what these people are trying to say. I'll be happy when the epidemic is treated like an epidemic and we begin to have an end to it. Civil disobedience is just another of the strategies that we have for calling attention to the urgency of responding better than we have up until now."

Both the urgency of the protest by the ARC/AIDS Vigil and its goals have changed since the protesters put down their blankets and sleeping bags and chains and set up camp. Originally, the Vigil proposed a simple but comprehensive program under the title "Our Four Moral Appeals to the American People." The appeals called for \$500 million for research for a cure for

up a Manhattan Project."

The Vigil now speaks of a Manhattan Project for AIDS. In calling two years ago for \$500 million for a cure — "one hour of federal spending" as he put it at the time — Paul Boneberg of Mobilization Against AIDS spoke of a Moon Shot approach: a full mobilization of the nation's scientific resources to halt and conquer the disease.

The protesters of January 19, led by Britt, Jackson and Johnson, walked in chains from the Vigil encampment to the doors of the old Federal Building. The DHHS appeared to ignore the men and women chained to its central doors. Other protesters "chained-in" on the north doors, and a third group blocked and chained the remaining entrance.

Seeing his building effectively shut down, George Miller, the regional director of DHHS, ordered federal police to arrest the protesters.

After Britt and the 15 others signed their citations for obstructing the doors to the building and returned to UN Plaza, labor leader Walter Johnson announced that while they were in custody, he had persuaded Britt to host



Jane Jackson heads the civil disobedience honor roll.

son's 14 arrests in the last four weeks, 11 were her citations for infractions and three count as misdemeanors which could cost her up to a year in prison if convicted. She will appear in federal court before Judge Lowell Jensen on January 28.

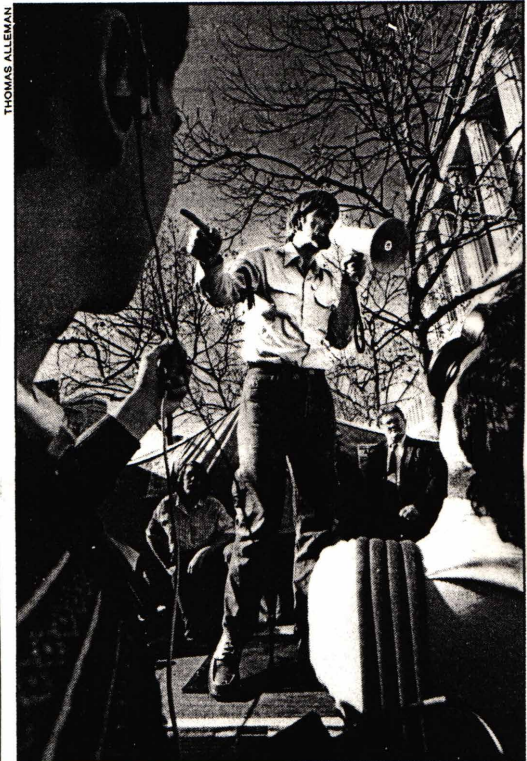
"I'm doing it," she says, "in keeping with the people who founded the ARC/AIDS Vigil who were chained to

also charged the Reagan administration with failing to develop a coherent policy for fighting the AIDS epidemic.

The government, however, chose to avoid confrontation then and ignored the sick and dying men chained to its doors. The protesters responded by moving in beds and tents. A long, slow game of stoic endurance by the protesters and petty harassment by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) followed through the next two years.

After 26 months, the DHHS last December ordered the beds removed from the doorway. The arrests, which the protesters sought on October 28, 1985, finally took place on December 12, 1987, when, at 5:30 am, vigilar Randy Welch decided to put his body where the beds had lain. Federal police promptly arrested him. Jackson learned of the arrest and immediately offered herself. Others followed. The arrests have continued on an almost daily basis.

"Sometimes many have been with me," Jackson says of the last month. "Sometimes I have been alone. I hope that today is an indication that many



John Belskus exhorts the crowd at the ARC/AIDS Vigil.

AIDS, presumptive disability for people with ARC, access to treatments available in other countries and a presidential denunciation of discrimination against people with AIDS.

"That was in 1985," says Frank Richter, one of the co-founders of the Vigil. "The epidemic has progressed. Only the first demand [for \$500 million] is close to being met. But you have to look at how it's spent. The government paid for the surgeon general's report, but it sits in a warehouse."

From its inception in October 1985, the Vigil conceived of itself as an act of petition for redress of grievances, but as a petition to the people as much as to the government. "We believe," Vigil co-founder John Belskus told the crowd in UN Plaza last Tuesday, "that the people do have power in this country, that we can get our message across to Reagan and to the Congress." Having said that, he then announced a new demand of the Vigil: "On January 25th, Congress goes back in session. We would like to see [Congresswomen] Boxer and Pelosi, the Congressional Black Caucus and Republicans and Democrats introduce a National Health Care bill in that Congress, introduce legislation mandating nationwide education, introduce legislation setting

a breakfast meeting of the Vigil with Bay Area Congressional Representatives Pelosi, Boxer, Miller and Lantos. The breakfast will be held to honor Jane Jackson. The date will be announced in a few days.

Tuesday's demonstration of broad community support for greater militancy around federal policy on AIDS and health care will be repeated more and more often. On January 26, another chain-in will happen at the old Federal Building when Paul Boneberg of Mobilization Against AIDS; Reverend Jim Sandmire of the Metropolitan Community Church; Ben Schatz of National Gay Rights Advocates; Pat Norman of Peace, Jobs and Justice; and possibly the president of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, Nancy Walker, will force the federal police to arrest them.

On January 28, Jane Jackson will appear in federal court on misdemeanor charges. She is the only protester who has been given the heavier charge — and the only one who has been arrested almost daily. She expects to be put under a restraining order. "I don't think," she told the *Sentinel*, "that the system is going to allow me to do this very much longer."

SP Chronicle 12/24/87

Both Sides PA.4

Toughen Stand On AIDS Vigil

By Bill Gordon

After ignoring a protest vigil against federal AIDS policies for more than two years, police have begun arresting demonstrators on a daily basis.

Twenty-one demonstrators have been arrested since December 11 for chaining themselves to a door of the old Federal Building at United Nations Plaza. Both federal police and the demonstrators vow the arrests will continue indefinitely.

Several more demonstrators plan to block the door again tomorrow and to spend Christmas Day in jail for refusing to sign their citations, said John Belskus, 38, who suffers from AIDS related complex, a possible precursor to AIDS.

"We intend to keep the arrests going every day over the next weeks and months to pressure the Reagan administration to change its policies on AIDS," Belskus said.

Volunteers from a variety of civil rights and public health advocacy groups are being recruited by vigil organizers to engage in the acts of civil disobedience, said Belskus, who expects to be arrested for the second time tomorrow.

Fines for those convicted of the charge of blocking an entrance to a federal building range from \$25 to \$500 or six months in jail. All the AIDS vigil protesters have received \$25 fines, according to a federal official.

Protesters first chained themselves to a door of the building at 50 United Nations Plaza in October 1985, but federal police decided not to arrest them.

The "chainings" evolved into a 24-hour vigil with AIDS sufferers and their supporters sleeping in tents pitched on the adjoining city-owned Civic Center Plaza.

The protesters contend that the federal government has provided too little money for research into finding a cure for the disease and too little assistance to those suffering from AIDS and AIDS related complex.

By mid-1986, protesters stopped chaining themselves to the door but left wooden pallets and mattresses blocking one of three sets of double doors on the south side of the building.

Federal officials removed the pallets December 10, and the next day protesters began chaining themselves to the same set of doors at noon daily. Federal police have arrested them each time.

Vigil organizers said the arrests are what they wanted to occur since the protest began.

"I think they thought the vigil was running out of steam," Belskus said. "The arrests brought us back to our original purpose and dedication."

Correction

A story that appeared in Monday's Chronicle erred in stating that the San Francisco AIDS Foundation lost \$3 million in state funds and private grants because it did not involve minority groups in its planning for AIDS education. It was the city of San Francisco that lost the funds, including a \$2.6 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Feds Continue Vigil Bashing

by Alex MacDonald

The arrests which began last week at the ARC/AIDS Vigil continued on a daily basis this week with a total of 18 arrests as of noon on Wednesday.

The first arrest occurred at 6 am last Friday when federal officers booked Randy Welch for obstructing federal government property after he chained himself to the doors of the old Federal Building to draw attention to the removal of the two beds which the Vigil has kept chained to the building's doors since November 1985 as a protest against the Reagan Administration's AIDS policies.

According to Welch and other Vigilers, the beds and their location on

According to Mary Filippini, an official of the General Services Administration (GSA) which acts as the custodian of federal properties, the GSA removed the beds on orders from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) because they were "abandoned trash." The beds at the time of the removal had not been slept in on a regular basis for several months.

The removal of the beds raised concern among Vigilers that the small tent encampment which grew up to support

"We support strong federal action on AIDS and AIDS discrimination as well as efforts to call attention to those issues."

— Bush

federal property are the very heart of the Vigil's protest — now in its third year — against what they see as a dilatory and increasingly murderous course of inaction by the Administration on funding for research towards a cure for AIDS, dissemination of AIDS information, and indifference to discrimination against people with ARC or AIDS and people at risk for HIV infection.

the people who originally slept in the beds might also be removed. Unlike the beds, however, the support camp sits on property owned by the Department of Public Works. Deputy Mayor Hadley Roff told the *Sentinel* that the city has no intention of interfering with the Vigil, nor did city officials know anything of the federal action until Jean Harris, an aide to Supervisor Harry Britt, called to inquire whether the city

was involved in any way with the DHHS action.

In January of 1986, the Board of Supervisors officially endorsed the Vigil and its goals. The Vigil subsequently received public support from City Attorney Louise Renne, who described it as a protected expression of the First Amendment right of free speech. Renne made her comments at the time of a request from DHHS Regional Director George Miller to Mayor Feinstein. In a letter to the mayor, Miller called the Vigil a blight on the UN Plaza and asked the mayor to have it removed. Officers of the San Francisco Department

proach," Bush said. "We support strong federal action on AIDS and AIDS discrimination as well as efforts to call attention to those issues. We have never wavered in our support of the Vigil."

No arrests occurred over the weekend. On Monday, a small rally took place at the Vigil site. Steve Morin, a UCSF professor of clinical psychology and aide to Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, was the main speaker. Morin called on the community to start "acting up" in protest of federal AIDS policy. Following the rally, four persons chained themselves to the door and

Vigilers say, will be released as soon as ten minutes after arrest. Fines have amounted to \$25 or less. The Vigil maintains a fund to cover the cost of the fines.

Since the pushing and shoving between the Vigil and DHHS began with the removal of the beds on December 10, federal officials have changed their procedures in only one important respect: During the removal of the beds, custodians wore gloves. Vigilers contend the gloves were latex surgical gloves. GSA spokesperson Mary Filippini claims the gloves were ordinary utility gloves which are routinely worn



AIDS activist John Belskus addresses demonstrators attending a protest rally at the ARC/AIDS Vigil last Monday at noon.

ment of Public Health then surveyed the site and gave the Vigil a clean bill of health.

On the occasion of the present DHHS action against the Vigil, Larry Bush, an aide to mayor-elect Art Agnos, assured the *Sentinel* that Agnos' office was not consulted or informed by anyone at DHHS. "We would not have supported this ap-

proach," Bush said. "We support strong federal action on AIDS and AIDS discrimination as well as efforts to call attention to those issues. We have never wavered in our support of the Vigil."

No arrests occurred over the weekend. On Monday, a small rally took place at the Vigil site. Steve Morin, a UCSF professor of clinical psychology and aide to Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, was the main speaker. Morin called on the community to start "acting up" in protest of federal AIDS policy. Following the rally, four persons chained themselves to the door and

for trash removals. During the arrests on Monday however, this reporter saw federal police wearing surgical gloves. By Wednesday, the arresting officers used only their bare hands. AIDS activists contend that the use of surgical gloves gives the public the false impression that AIDS is contagious by casual contact.

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12/18/87
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ARC/AIDS Vigil Marks Rainy Anniversary

by Charles Linebarger

Rain greeted the second anniversary of the ARC/AIDS Vigil at the city's old Federal Building. The evening's candlelight celebration on Tuesday, October 27, went on as planned despite the steady downpour — though the candles had to be sheltered under umbrellas.

Several score of undaunted supporters of the vigil had to cluster near one of the ornate doors of the building to hear the speakers because the electrical sound system wouldn't work in the rain.

"It is appropriate that we are gathering here in the rain tonight," said Supervisor Harry Britt, "because these people have been staying out here for two years in all kinds of weather.

"I hate to have to ask you to stay out here for another year or another two years or three years," continued Britt, "but I have to because what you are doing here is very important. We need you here. This vigil has taken on an important significance to people all over the country as we wait for the federal government to address this epidemic."

Gay Vietnam war hero Leonard Matlovich braved the weather to speak to the gathering despite his diagnosis with AIDS over a year ago.

"You know there are both sung heroes and unsung heroes in the gay movement," said Matlovich. "You

here at this vigil are the unsung heroes."

Matlovich added that the fact that people had come out in the rain to honor the vigil's anniversary was a sign "of the goodness and the morality of gay people. They [straight society] don't want to hear about the goodness and morality of gay people, but the truth is that we are good and moral people and this vigil proves that."

Vigil member Gary Harmon introduced the vigil's secretary-auditor, Harvey Maurer, and gave him an award for his long affiliation with and support of the vigil.

Maurer told the crowd that the vigil depended on the support of the outside community, "on the support of religious groups, political groups and union groups," and he noted that without the continuing physical support of the vigil members themselves it could not continue.

"We need a massive federal effort to find treatments for AIDS," exclaimed John Belskus, a longtime member of the

vigil and a representative from the grass-roots AIDS activist organization, Citizens for Medical Justice, "and we need adequate medical care. Until these needs are taken care of, this vigil must remain here."

Several speakers charged that the federal government has all but ignored the epidemic for the last eight years while it has spread through the gay community.

"When I came to San Francisco, I thought I didn't have to worry about AIDS because I was straight," recalled Eric Basher. "I don't have ARC or AIDS, but I am antibody positive. I think it's sad that we have to be out here to educate the federal government about AIDS after all these years."

The memorial celebration ended with a silent remembering of those who have died of AIDS or are suffering with it today. On the tents behind the small rain-swept throng, a faded, weathered sign proclaimed the goals of the ARC/AIDS Vigil, which remain unfulfilled after two years: massive funding to find a cure and vaccine for the disease and decent medical care for those suffering with AIDS or ARC.

Said one man with a candle in one hand and an umbrella in the other, "Seven years of the Reagan presidency have only seen the epidemic spread. Nothing has been done to stop it — nothing."

THOMAS ALLEMAN



Supporters of the ARC/AIDS Vigil at UN Plaza on one of the more sunny days during their two-year protest against the Reagan Administration's slow response to the AIDS epidemic.

The Vigil, now beginning its third year, will remain at the old Federal Building until their demands are met.



BY VINCENT MAGGIORA/THE CHRONICLE

Ultimatum on AIDS Vigil

Gary Harmon (foreground), speaking for the 11-member AIDS vigil at San Francisco's United Nations Plaza, said the group will refuse to remove two beds — the second one seen here occupied by Wesley North — from an entrance to the Federal Building. A deadline for the beds' removal was set for 8 a.m. today by the building's security authorities. Harmon said he and the others are willing to be arrested rather than move the beds from the spot where the vigil began 16 months ago in an appeal to the government to commit an additional \$500 million for AIDS research, provide disability benefits to people with AIDS-related complex and lift rules limiting use of experimental drugs.

AIDS Vigil Continues As Deadline Passes

Members of San Francisco's AIDS vigil remained chained to a door of the Federal Building on United Nations Plaza yesterday as a deadline for them to leave passed without incident.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which has offices in the building, last week "requested" the group to remove chains and beds by 8 a.m. yesterday.

Ten vigil members, including three who have AIDS, waited in the doorway as the deadline approached and vowed to be arrested rather than removing the chains and beds.

About 50 supporters gathered around, chanting and holding signs protesting the threat to remove the group.

An aide to George Miller, regional director of health and human services, said after the deadline passed that there is no immediate plan to end the vigil forcefully.

"We're sticking with the request," building security director John Johnson said. "We hope they will debate the situation and the danger of blocking an emergency exit and choose to leave voluntarily."

The government has not set another deadline for the group to remove the chains and beds.

Vigil members contend that the doors remain unobstructed, because the chains drape the door handles rather than actually blocking them and the beds are placed at the side of the doors. The vigil occupies the area outside one of three sets of doors on the building's south side.

"We're not just speaking about our lives. We're speaking about your lives. Everyone is at risk unless the federal government gets off its duff," said Gary Harmon, who has AIDS and has been participating in the vigil for 14 months.

Tents in the Tenderloin

More than a year old, the AIDS vigil at the Federal Building seems as much a part of the neighborhood as the Pussycat Theater or City Hall

BY DANA SACHS

On days when the farmers bring their produce to sell in United Nations Plaza, you'd think these tents a few feet away were booths selling grapes or dried apricots or flowers. The day-glow orange, blue and green tarps fit right in with the atmosphere of commercial activity. But the people sitting under these particular awnings have no intention of leaving when the sun goes down, or when the last customers stroll away. Members of the ARC/AIDS vigil have been camped out here for almost 15 months now, and they have no plans to leave.

"We're probably the only 24-hour information source in San Francisco, besides the hospitals," says vigil member Carlton Smith, a bearded man wearing a khaki-colored baseball cap. On a table in front of him sit bottles of bleach, condoms and safe-sex information for drug addicts and other passers-by who need information about AIDS. Stacks of pamphlets in different languages discuss such topics as "Lesbians and AIDS," "AIDS Risk Reduction" and "Coping with ARC."

The distribution of such information is an unforeseen result of the vigil, not something its original members ever planned. Here in the heart of the Tenderloin, they began as a bunch of folks with sleeping bags who got together to protest the lack of a strong government response to the AIDS crisis. None of them could have expected it to last a week, much less a year. The action was meant to be an all-night affair. But somewhere in the middle of the evening, curled up together

on the cold concrete pavement, the people decided not to leave.

That initial few people lying on the ground has grown into a conglomeration of six tents, a large kitchen, a recreation area, the information tables and the cots on which people sit chained to the doors of the Federal Building a few feet away. Towels dry on lines stretched between trees and pots of plants and flowers, donated by the Gray Panthers, dot the surrounding sidewalks.

A faucet on the wall of the Federal Building once supplied water — literally drop by drop — for the drinking, cleaning and cooking needs of this community of anywhere from eight to 15 people. Lately, that faucet became the focal point of a new battle between the vigil community and the federal government. Around the time that George Miller, regional director for the Department of Health and Human Services, started to complain that the vigil was a health hazard and its members were getting preferential treatment over other homeless people in the area, an officer came up to the site to explain that if the members continued to use the faucet they would be arrested. "Do not use the water . . . You will go to JAIL! It's not worth it!" wrote one vigil member in a Jan. 5th entry in the group's journal.

The faucet has been an object of controversy throughout the past 15 months. It used to run full force, but in an unsuccessful effort to get the people to leave, the government turned it off after the vigil began Oct. 27, 1985. People adjusted quickly to getting water drip by drip. But the recent controversy has forced them to borrow water from the nearby Delectables Cafe and the Starlight Cafe across Market Street.

Ironically, the federal health department's complaint that the vigil is a health hazard has amounted to a catch-22 situation. "How can we not be a health hazard if we're not allowed to have water?" asks Carlton Smith. Besides, he says, given the fact that

some of their members have AIDS, this group is particularly health conscious. Jugs of bleach sit on the linoleum floor in the kitchen and behind the tents. The circumstances of AIDS demand that the group be very careful, and they scrub the area clean regularly. For the people who live here, AIDS, like the cold wind, is a central factor in everyday life.

The controversy over the water doesn't seem devastating — vigil members have been through worse. Now that the vigil has completed its first year, its very temporariness has become permanent. The tents, solidly fixed in position, can no longer be moved without being destroyed. Vigil members receive mail addressed to 50½ United Nations Plaza, the scene of the action. The Federal Building administration provides the vigil with notices on general security, the same ones they give to their own staff. Homeless people wander past without a glance, or stop by for a chat or to ask for an extra blanket. These days, the tent city in the middle of San Francisco seems almost as much a part of the neighborhood as the Pussycat adult theater down the street or City Hall three blocks away.

Coffee with Debbie

All along, the group has strived to maintain a close-knit, family-like community. One Tuesday night at seven, everybody got together for "Coffee With Debbie." By that time the wind outside the Federal Building had gotten pretty chilly, and the 15 or so people curled up in blankets and under sleeping bags, or wrapped sheepskin rugs around their shoulders. The wind whistled, and it got hard to hear each other, especially when a fire truck or police car roared by on Market Street. But people were patient, and they spoke louder or they waited until the noise let up to finish a sentence.

Several smoked cigarettes, and flicked the ashes into a drain in the brick pavement. Someone poured coffee in-

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to styrofoam cups, put cream or sugar into a few and passed them around. They held their cups tightly in their hands, close to their faces, to keep warm. No one complained about the cold. Instead, they seemed happy, even relieved to participate in this odd urban mixture of rustic campfire chat and new-age consciousness-raising session.

It took a while to get this evening's meeting started, though. Earlier, perhaps the night before, someone had slashed several of the group's explanatory posters. Most people had become used to such forms of mild harassment, and merely grumbled at the annoyance. This is a group that had, in its first few weeks, been sprayed by city workers with water hoses and faced knife attacks in the middle of the night. After a certain point, poster slashing seemed harmless, if rather frustrating. "People who do things like that are petty," someone muttered.

Earlier this evening, they couldn't find the coffee thermoses. A husky man named Joe scouted around in the kitchen tent, searching, but everyone immediately assumed they'd been stolen. It wasn't an unfair assumption considering that nearly everyone has had something stolen — from sleeping bags and pet dogs to tents and cars. Tonight, they needed those thermoses, and their absence proved a bit embarrassing to the residents, what with guests here and everything. "Coffee with Debbie with no coffee," a woman laughed.

Sadly, there was no Debbie, either — a fact that was not lost on any of tonight's participants. Jay Young — Debbie — started the gatherings soon after the vigil began, as a way to relieve stress among members of the vigil and to open up discussion with the larger community. He saw it as an attempt to promote an understanding of the issues related to AIDS. Gary Harmon, a vigil resident with AIDS, described Young as "a clinical psychologist turned hairdresser turned clinical psychologist, and then only so that he could hold these sessions." But Young died early last year, the group's first casualty of the AIDS epidemic. And, until recently, coffee with Debbie died as well.

Now the vigil's members were trying to resurrect it, both as an homage to Young and for the reasons he first created it. A pot of flowers sitting on a table in the center of the group represented Debbie, but unfortunately the wind kept blowing the flowers over. Gary, tonight's discussion leader, simply picked them back up. "Now Debbie," he scolded, "stop that."

It relieved the tension. Almost everyone at this meeting had lost someone to AIDS, making Jay Young a notable among many. Once the coffee pot was indeed found somewhere in the kitchen, the talk became a more structured back-and-forth exchange around the circle. People spoke slowly, describing their experiences, their feelings. One man told of his lover's death, and the last few months they had together. Another man, sitting with his legs crossed on one of the two beds next to the building, exclaimed that you can't let AIDS get you down, you've got to fight. On the other bed, a

woman began to cry, and rested her head on another woman's shoulder. A man with AIDS asked the group how they would deal with his death; another said he'd been feeling better that day than he had in weeks.

Bundled up in a leather jacket at the very center of the group, Gary Harmon was trying to get everyone to talk, to participate. "What do you feel?" he asked a man who had as yet said nothing. "Have you lost anyone?" It seemed that everyone had.

Name changing

Gary lost himself. He says now that he only began noticing a difference in his body after his diagnosis as a person with ARC (AIDS-Related Complex). One day while talking on the phone, he glanced at himself in a mirror and saw another person, no longer the self he knew. He threw the phone at the mirror and shattered it, feeling he had died. After that, he changed his name from Randy to Gary. He wasn't Randy anymore. Randy was dead.

Then, he says, he came to the ARC/AIDS vigil and met Jay Young. The two men began to discuss how they felt, watching their bodies deteriorate because of AIDS. "Don't you just get tired of it after a while?" Jay asked.

"Yeah," Gary/Randy replied. "It's boring."

But the vigil seems to have given Gary more to do than watch himself die. Its four moral appeals center on the needs of people like him: 1) \$500 million in federal money for research (the equivalent of one hour of government spending), not to come from funds for existing social programs; 2) recognition that the financial and medical needs of ARC patients are the same as those with AIDS; 3) FDA approval for testing and treatment of drugs developed in other countries; and 4) that the government condemn AIDS hysteria and bigotry through education.

The \$534 million Reagan budgeted for fiscal 1988 satisfies the first appeal, except that Reagan plans to cut funds from existing programs to come up with the money. For the members of the vigil, such a plan will not do.

Gary's personal struggle has centered around the second appeal, and he prides himself with coming up with a new interpretation of the law. When you have ARC, he says, "You are worried about whether you go into a full blown diagnosis of AIDS [and] the feelings inside of you then are causing mental problems which causes mental disability. So if you can't get the resources available to you on a physical disability claim, I propose that you would file a mental disability based on that." Gary's novel approach worked, and he has gotten funds because of it. "I'm not crazy," he says, of the mental disability ruling. "I'm just slightly —"

"Upset?" someone asks.

"Upset. Right."

At an ARC/AIDS vigil anniversary rally late last year, family member John Belskus remembered the initial decision to extend the vigil indefinitely. He described to the audience of perhaps 100 supporters the words of a person whose brother was dying. "Why

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don't we stay," the man had asked. "None of this is going away. My brother is still dying, and I don't have anything to go home for."

Jan Beck, who calls himself an AIDS victor and who is also a candidate for mayor, was carried onto the stage in his wheelchair. "I hope to God I never have a last wish," he told the crowd. "Dying deserves ten minutes of my attention. Anything else is self-indulgent."

These individuals themselves have become a community. From coffee with Debbie to passing out drug-use and safe-sex literature among residents of the Tenderloin to just eating spaghetti at the table outside the kitchen tent, people go about a certain routine of daily life. They've grown accustomed to sleeping in tents, using the restrooms in a lounge across Market Street, and taking showers in the apartments of friends. And because their demands have not yet been met, they plan to stay awhile.

"We have no intentions of disbanding," says Carlton Smith, from outside the kitchen tent. "We wish we could take this all down and go, but no, we're not over yet."

Gary Harmon agrees. "We'd be glad to go home. Ever so glad. I'd pack up so fast it would make my head spin." Until their demands are met, though, they're ready to stay. For now, it's home. ■

Anniversary March

S.F. AIDS Vigil Is 1 Year Old

By Marc Sandalow

Praising the determination of a small group of protesters, about 500 candle-carrying marchers last night celebrated the one-year anniversary of the AIDS/ARC vigil at San Francisco's United Nations Plaza.

For 365 days and nights, the vigil has maintained an around-the-clock presence outside the old federal building to protest the federal government's failure to commit greater resources to combatting Acquired Immune Deficiency Disease

and AIDS-related complex.

The marchers, escorted by police from Castro and Market streets to the vigil site, cheered participants for braving the elements in an effort to keep the public from ignoring the AIDS epidemic.

Despite reminders of the lives claimed by the disease, speakers at a rally that followed the march spoke in optimistic terms of the strength created by the tragedy, and of an eventual cure.

"I am a person with AIDS but I am not a victim," said Jan Beck, who twice was given his last rites at

San Francisco General Hospital after lapsing into convulsions and is now confined to a wheelchair. "When I started this vigil I was on two feet — now I am on these four wheels — but it does not matter because I still make it here each night."

Vigil participants, who number anywhere from 10 to 30 on any given day, reside in tents outside the entrance to the building that houses offices of the federal Health and Human Services Department. At times throughout the past year, members have slept in beds chained to the building's door.

The vigil is an act of civil disobedience, but is officially sanctioned by the city's Board of Supervisors.

Supervisor Harry Britt, the only openly gay member of the Board of Supervisors, told the crowd that "we will not go away until the epidemic goes away."

Britt and other speakers berated the federal government for its failure to spend more money on AIDS research, and attacked Proposition 64, the Lyndon LaRouche-sponsored AIDS initiative, as a gross attack on civil liberties.

Pat Norman, a candidate for the Board of Supervisors, drew loud applause by calling LaRouche an "idiot," a "fascist," and a "Nazi."



BY DEANNE FITZMAURICE/THE CHRONICLE

Jan Beck said, 'I did some consciousness-raising in my wheelchair last session at the state Capitol'

A Tough Year, but AIDS Vigil Refuses to Fold Its Tents

By L. A. Chung

An icy midnight wind blows in fog from the Pacific. And the vigil-keepers shiver amid the cluster of tents and beds outside the old Federal Building in San Francisco.

It has been nearly a year. And the rainy season is coming again.

By Monday, the protest staged by a handful of people with AIDS and ARC — AIDS related conditions — will have stretched into 365 days and nights.

With a 7 p.m. candlelight march from the Castro and a rally at the site, the vigil-keepers will celebrate the fact that their protest has prevailed despite sickness, street assaults and last winter's heavy rains.

They are older, wiser, politically more sophisticated and maybe a little stronger. Some have moved on to other things. One has died.

"My only regret is that Jay isn't here to see this day," said Evan Durant, 21. He was speaking of Jay Young, a fellow vigil-keeper who died of acquired immune deficiency syndrome in February at the age of 38.

Both men were part of the small group that demonstrated on Oct. 27, 1985, outside the building that houses the federal Health and Human Services Department. Their message was that the federal government was doing too little, too slowly, for too few.

Seven people had stayed the night in sleeping bags. Before long, they had chained themselves to two beds in front of a door and raised a small tent city for 25 supporters.

"It's been a long vigil and it's been a successful vigil," said Durant, a lanky former high school basketball center who was diagnosed as having ARC. "It's taught

me a lot about human compassion and human dignity."

Nevertheless, the four "moral appeals" that the group has made in behalf of the nation's 25,650 AIDS patients — and possibly 10 times that many with ARC — have gone largely unrealized:

- Funds for AIDS research are still far below the \$500 million the protesters want committed to find a cure. About \$224 million was approved by Congress for 1986.

- Medicare and Social Security disability insurance benefits are still not available to ARC patients. Advocates maintain ARC is an artificial distinction, because ARC diseases have proved to be just as debilitating and deadly as AIDS.

- The Food and Drug Administration has been slow to approve AIDS drugs and treatments currently available in Mexico and France.

- President Ronald Reagan has still not publicly condemned discrimination against AIDS patients.

Yet the vigil has accomplished some things.

The group has become more politically active, mobilizing against Proposition 64, the so-called LaRouche initiative that might lead to the quarantine of all AIDS patients in California. They have monitored state AIDS legislation, testified before state Senate committees and lobbied congressional members on Capitol Hill. They do not take credit for the passage of state AIDS legislation this year, but say they have contributed to it.

"I did some consciousness-raising in my wheelchair last session at the state Capitol," said Jan Beck, a vigil member who met with legislators so they could see "that they were dealing with real human beings, not the Elephant Man."

The vigil site near Market and Hyde streets has become a focal point for the AIDS issue, a kind of 24-hour referral center for social services and information about AIDS — and a stop for tourists.

The vigil has touched people.

Sean and Bonnie McDonald, a married couple who were moving from Atlanta to San Francisco last year, happened across the vigil last December and "were hooked." They have worked at the vigil site daily since January and lived there since May.

Bonnie McDonald, 45, saw a group of young men whose families have abandoned them in the face of a fatal affliction, she said.

"I got so angry," said Mrs. McDonald, a mother of three grown children. "It made me angrier than I've ever gotten in my life. How could their families disown them, their children?" She started a kitchen at the camp, making sure there were hot meals every day.

Sean McDonald has worked as a computer consultant at Stanford University for the past two months and has worked the information table almost daily.

"This is the family who won't hang up the phone on you," said Beck, whose own father hung up when Beck told him in December that he had AIDS.

There is help from unlikely quarters. The Gray Panthers come by regularly, donating chrysanthemums and gladiolas to brighten the scene. When last February's storms tore down the entire encampment, community groups helped rebuild.

"The vigil has taught me that there is support and unconditional love in places where you would least expect it," said Beck.

Federal Official Says AIDS Vigil Is a 'Blight'

By Maitland Zane

The 13-month AIDS vigil in San Francisco's United Nations Plaza has become a "blight," the regional director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said yesterday in a letter to Mayor Dianne Feinstein.

"The mounting filth is becoming a serious hazard to the health and safety of our community," George E. Miller wrote of the vigil outside the old Federal Building at 50 United Nations Plaza. "Despite signs prohibiting loitering and sleeping, nothing is done about enforcing the code.

"While those who try to sleep on the city library grounds, doorways or benches are dispersed by the police, the encampment is granted an immunity from the law. Many of the more perceptive homeless persons are beginning to congregate on the perimeter of the encampment since they have concluded this is a 'safety zone' where the law is not enforced.

"I object to this selective law enforcement because it is inequitable and unfair to those equally in need. I am requesting that you provide your personal leadership to this matter so that these serious problems can be resolved. I believe it is in our mutual interest to restore the Civic Center area to a place where we can once again be proud to live and to work."

The plaza, a pedestrian mall between Market and Hyde streets, is city property. Three days a week there is an open-air farmers' market. At night the area is a haunt of street people, many with no place else to sleep.

In an interview, Miller denied he wants the police to roust the AIDS patients and their supporters who have camped out to draw attention to their hopes for increased federal support for AIDS projects.

"The point I raised is the question of fairness," said Miller, who was welfare director for the state of Nevada for 12 years before coming here five years ago.

"Those people have been here a year and a half, they've made their point, I've carried their stuff back to Washington. Why shouldn't the homeless be allowed to set up their tents, too? I don't have the answers. I wish the hell I did."

Volunteers at the little tent city expressed surprise at Miller's attack, noting that the mayor, members of the Board of Supervisors and city Health Director Dr. David Werdegard have expressed support.

"To be blunt," said vigil volunteer Barry Silver, "there are a few inaccuracies in Miller's letter. The fact is we haven't had much support from his department. That's why we're here, to get the government to take more action in fighting this disease."

Bill Strawn, a Feinstein press aide, said Feinstein had not received the letter and had no immediate comment.

Tents in the Tenderloin

More than a year old, the AIDS vigil at the Federal Building seems as much a part of the neighborhood as the Pussycat Theater or City Hall

BY DANA SACHS

On days when the farmers bring their produce to sell in United Nations Plaza, you'd think these tents a few feet away were booths selling grapes or dried apricots or flowers. The day-glow orange, blue and green tarps fit right in with the atmosphere of commercial activity. But the people sitting under these particular awnings have no intention of leaving when the sun goes down, or when the last customers stroll away. Members of the ARC/AIDS vigil have been camped out here for almost 15 months now, and they have no plans to leave.

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on the cold concrete pavement, the people decided not to leave.

That initial few people lying on the ground has grown into a conglomeration of six tents, a large kitchen, a recreation area, the information tables and the cots on which people sit chained to the doors of the Federal Building a few feet away. Towels dry on lines stretched between trees and pots of plants and flowers, donated by the Gray Panthers, dot the surrounding sidewalks.

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some of their members have AIDS, this group is particularly health conscious. Jugs of bleach sit on the linoleum floor in the kitchen and behind the tents. The circumstances of AIDS demand that the group be very careful, and they scrub the area clean regularly. For the people who live here, AIDS, like the cold wind, is a central factor in everyday life.

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Coffee with Debbie

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Local Color is a showcase for original previously unpublished poetry, fiction and short essays on life in the Bay Area. Submissions should be typed, double-spaced (except for poetry) and no longer than 1,300 words. Send submissions with a SASE to: Local Color, Bay Guardian, 2700 19th St., SF 94110.

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to styrofoam cups, put cream or sugar into a few and passed them around. They held their cups tightly in their hands, close to their faces, to keep warm. No one complained about the cold. Instead, they seemed happy, even relieved to participate in this odd urban mixture of rustic campfire chat and new-age consciousness-raising session.

It took a while to get this evening's meeting started, though. Earlier, perhaps the night before, someone had slashed several of the group's explanatory posters. Most people had become used to such forms of mild harassment, and merely grumbled at the annoyance. This is a group that had, in its first few weeks, been sprayed by city workers with water hoses and faced knife attacks in the middle of the night. After a certain point, poster slashing seemed harmless, if rather frustrating. "People who do things like that are petty," someone muttered.

Earlier this evening, they couldn't find the coffee thermoses. A husky man named Joe scouted around in the kitchen tent, searching, but everyone immediately assumed they'd been stolen. It wasn't an unfair assumption considering that nearly everyone has had something stolen — from sleeping bags and pet dogs to tents and cars. Tonight, they needed those thermoses, and their absence proved a bit embarrassing to the residents, what with guests here and everything. "Coffee with Debbie with no coffee," a woman laughed.

Sadly, there was no Debbie, either — a fact that was not lost on any of tonight's participants. Jay Young — Debbie — started the gatherings soon after the vigil began, as a way to relieve stress among members of the vigil and to open up discussion with the larger community. He saw it as an attempt to promote an understanding of the issues related to AIDS. Gary Harmon, a vigil resident with AIDS, described Young as "a clinical psychologist turned hairdresser turned clinical psychologist, and then only so that he could hold these sessions." But Young died early last year, the group's first casualty of the AIDS epidemic. And, until recently, coffee with Debbie died as well.

Now the vigil's members were trying to resurrect it, both as an homage to Young and for the reasons he first created it. A pot of flowers sitting on a table in the center of the group represented Debbie, but unfortunately the wind kept blowing the flowers over. Gary, tonight's discussion leader, simply picked them back up. "Now Debbie," he scolded, "stop that."

It relieved the tension. Almost everyone at this meeting had lost someone to AIDS, making Jay Young a notable among many. Once the coffee pot was indeed found somewhere in the kitchen, the talk became a more structured back-and-forth exchange around the circle. People spoke slowly, describing their experiences, their feelings. One man told of his lover's death, and the last few months they had together. Another man, sitting with his legs crossed on one of the two beds next to the building, exclaimed that you can't let AIDS get you down, you've got to fight. On the other bed, a

woman began to cry, and rested her head on another woman's shoulder. A man with AIDS asked the group how they would deal with his death; another said he'd been feeling better that day than he had in weeks.

Bundled up in a leather jacket at the very center of the group, Gary Harmon was trying to get everyone to talk, to participate. "What do you feel?" he asked a man who had as yet said nothing. "Have you lost anyone?" It seemed that everyone had.

Name changing

Gary lost himself. He says now that he only began noticing a difference in his body after his diagnosis as a person with ARC (AIDS-Related Complex). One day while talking on the phone, he glanced at himself in a mirror and saw another person, no longer the self he knew. He threw the phone at the mirror and shattered it, feeling he had died. After that, he changed his name from Randy to Gary. He wasn't Randy anymore. Randy was dead.

Then, he says, he came to the ARC/AIDS vigil and met Jay Young. The two men began to discuss how they felt, watching their bodies deteriorate because of AIDS. "Don't you just get tired of it after a while?" Jay asked.

"Yeah," Gary/Randy replied. "It's boring."

But the vigil seems to have given Gary more to do than watch himself die. Its four moral appeals center on the needs of people like him: 1) \$500 million in federal money for research (the equivalent of one hour of government spending), not to come from funds for existing social programs; 2) recognition that the financial and medical needs of ARC patients are the same as those with AIDS; 3) FDA approval for testing and treatment of drugs developed in other countries; and 4) that the government condemn AIDS hysteria and bigotry through education.

The \$534 million Reagan budgeted for fiscal 1988 satisfies the first appeal, except that Reagan plans to cut funds from existing programs to come up with the money. For the members of the vigil, such a plan will not do.

Gary's personal struggle has centered around the second appeal, and he prides himself with coming up with a new interpretation of the law. When you have ARC, he says, "You are worried about whether you go into a full blown diagnosis of AIDS [and] the feelings inside of you then are causing mental problems which causes mental disability. So if you can't get the resources available to you on a physical disability claim, I propose that you would file a mental disability based on that." Gary's novel approach worked, and he has gotten funds because of it. "I'm not crazy," he says, of the mental disability ruling. "I'm just slightly —"

"Upset?" someone asks.

"Upset. Right."

At an ARC/AIDS vigil anniversary rally late last year, family member John Belskus remembered the initial decision to extend the vigil indefinitely. He described to the audience of perhaps 100 supporters the words of a person whose brother was dying. "Why

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don't we stay," the man had asked. "None of this is going away. My brother is still dying, and I don't have anything to go home for."

Jan Beck, who calls himself an AIDS victor and who is also a candidate for mayor, was carried onto the stage in his wheelchair. "I hope to God I never have a last wish," he told the crowd. "Dying deserves ten minutes of my attention. Anything else is self-indulgent."

These individuals themselves have become a community. From coffee with Debbie to passing out drug-use and safe-sex literature among residents of the Tenderloin to just eating spaghetti at the table outside the kitchen tent, people go about a certain routine of daily life. They've grown accustomed to sleeping in tents, using the restrooms in a lounge across Market Street, and taking showers in the apartments of friends. And because their demands have not yet been met, they plan to stay awhile.

"We have no intentions of disbanding," says Carlton Smith, from outside the kitchen tent. "We wish we could take this all down and go, but no, we're not over yet."

Gary Harmon agrees. "We'd be glad to go home. Ever so glad. I'd pack up so fast it would make my head spin." Until their demands are met, though, they're ready to stay. For now, it's home. ■



ARC/AIDS Vigil Survives Storms Inside & Out

By Alex MacDonald

During its fourth month, the ARC/AIDS Vigil found concern and defeatism in response to its appeals to Washington; support and honors from San Franciscans; and, by sheer obstinacy, survived ten days of torrential rains and gale winds that turned Northern California into a disaster area. The hardy band of protesters also suffered the loss of one of the strongest and wisest of the Vigil founders, Jay Young, who died on February 5 after 101 days of protest, and four days after a group of Vigil dissidents backed down from an attempt to escalate the protest by provoking the federal police to make arrests.

The Vigil sent a delegation to Washington, D.C. Frank Richter, Esther Oppenheimer and Evan Durrant traveled to the capitol on behalf of the vigilers; they reported few concrete gains. Richter told *Coming Up!* of leaving Washington with a sense of having knocked on many doors and finding no one home. "I get the feeling," he said, "that the liberal Democrats think we're in their pocket and that we really don't have any recourse except to work through them, and they really are pretty self-congratulatory about all they have done. I'm tired of people acting like our cause is not a popular one. I think it would be popular if they came forward and showed a little bit of courage."

Some doors, however, opened. Barbara Boxer's aide, Mark Cloutier, a person with ARC/AIDS, joined the Vigil's delegation in an hour-long meeting with officials of the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). An earlier briefing by Jeff Levy of the National Gay Task Force and Gary McDonald of the AIDS Action Council prepared the delegation for some of what they would hear throughout their lobbying effort: in a word, Gramm-Rudman.

The delegation pressed three issues with FDA and NIH: more access to experimental drugs; treatments combining immunomodulators and antiviral drugs; and greater effort by researchers to combat public hysteria and bigotry.

Richter reports, "They are primarily interested in justifying what they have already done: screened over 100 antiviral agents *in vitro* and started Phase One Studies (studies for toxicity and dosage) of any drugs that seemed at all promising in laboratory tests. That is the only level of clinical study right now. None of the drugs has shown any real benefit, so far, to any of the patients." Therefore, NIH and FDA officials argue, it would be unethical to provide these drugs to people who are not acutely ill.

The health officials added that they expect the drug programs to be expanded next year until they include about 1,000 people. Cloutier pointed out to them that about two million people are currently infected with the virus.

"Basically," Richter says, "we would bring up a point and they would bring up a defense."

One point Richter thought they heard: "If it is really true that 30,000 people are taking isoprinostine and ribavirin informally, the pool of people to draw from for controlled studies will become tainted."

In general, the delegation found that a concern for careful methodology dominates the approach of both the FDA and the NIH. Conceding that the approach is slow and of little use to people who are desperate for effective treatments, they defended their position by pointing to less rigorous studies in France, which they see as seriously flawed and useless.

The same concern for methodology slows research in combinations of immunomodulators and antivirals. Researchers want to determine the effects of drugs in isolation before attempting to devise combinations.

"They seemed," Richter says, "to understand our sense of urgency, but they were interested in getting across to us their desire for a very methodical approach.... They perceive that they are acting at the highest possible level of urgency."

The delegation probed that perception. "I asked them whether the government had developed purchase orders for vaccines or for treatments. They wanted to know how they could buy something that doesn't exist. I pointed out that the military does precisely that all the time: they say what they want and leave it up to private industry to figure out how to make it. They create incentive. But these guys don't look at stopping disease the same way the military looks at stopping Russians."

After meeting with FDA and NIH, the delegation concentrated its efforts on members of the House Budget Committee. The Committee, in effect, sets budget priorities and determines the upper limits of spending. Its recommendations then go to the Appropriations Committee, which decides on specific items and reports to the full House of Representatives. In lobbying the Committee, the delegation met with aides to Representatives Wright (D-TX), Lowry (D-WA), Fazio (D-CA), Miller (D-CA), Burton (D-CA) and Boxer (D-CA).

Gramm-Rudman, which mandates cuts in virtually all social programs, was a constant and discouraging theme in these meetings. The Vigil demands of Congress that AIDS funding be doubled. Both the National Gay Task Force and the AIDS Action Council demand spending increases for AIDS research, but Jay Levy and Gary McDonald, their respective lobbyists in Washington, told the delegation that they doubt the realism of trying to do more than slow the reductions demanded by the Reagan Administration.

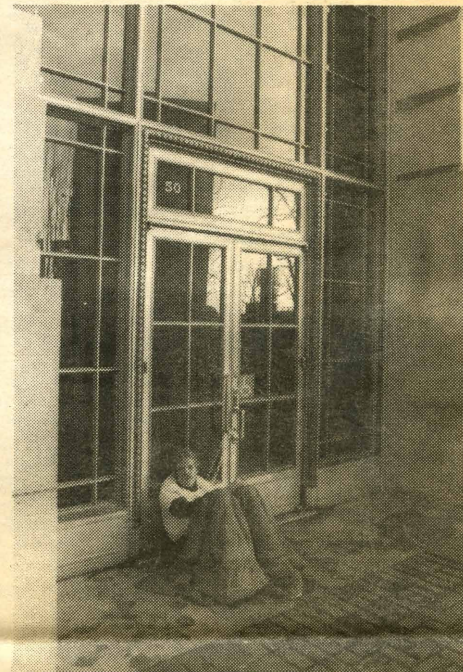
In their rounds of the congressional offices, the delegation found little to counter the

pessimism of Levy and McDonald. "They all sounded defeatist," Richter says. He added cautiously, "I don't have the impression they are not supportive. But our friends talk to us, and our enemies talk to the country."

But the vigilers felt that even some of their friends were wary, if not of talking to them, then of being seen with them. Congresswoman Barbara Boxer "presents herself as our greatest supporter," says Richter, but when she came out of her office to greet the delegation, she declined to be photographed with them, pleading that she had a cold and should not come too near.

The downbeat mood in Washington did not sway the delegation. Rather, it forced them to begin reconsidering strategies. "The people who appeal from a moral perspective are unfriendly to people with ARC/AIDS," Richter notes. "There's a vacuum on the other side. But if the issue is put in terms of compassion and caring for people who are ill rather than of hatred for them, I got the impression people will start to listen."

Upon their return to San Francisco, the



Steve Russel takes the center door at the Old Federal Building.

delegation got together with Paul Boneberg of Mobilization Against AIDS to begin to concretize plans based in part on the Vigil's intelligence from Washington. Their lobbying, in effect, turned out to be a reconnaissance.

In spite of Gramm-Rudman, the delegation found no reason to retreat, either publicly or privately, on the demand for \$500 million

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Human Rights Commission Holds Hearings on ARC/AIDS Discrimination

By Elizabeth Pincus

Oscar had been living in a close friend's house for over five years when he discovered he had AIDS. As Oscar's health worsened, his friend became increasingly agitated and distant. Oscar always paid his rent in cash and he had no formal rental agreement. Eventually, the friend shunned Oscar completely and kicked him out of the house on his birthday. Hurt, weakened and with no legal recourse, Oscar now finds himself on a long waiting list for housing through the Shanti Project. Other friends have taken him in, but the pain of rejection has marked him deeply.

Such instances of ostracization continue to cause an additional burden of distress for people with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and AIDS Related Complex (ARC). As well as the denial of services and discrimination in areas such as housing and employment, the hysteria that has mounted around the epidemic fuels increased hostility against gay men in particular. But other persons are also jeopardized due to misperceptions about AIDS/ARC. Women, minorities and youth, groups generally thought to be at lesser risk of contracting the disease, have been overlooked for services and education. And another glaring case of discrimination, so well spotlighted by the AIDS/ARC Vigil, involves the distinction between ARC and AIDS — a distinction that results in the denial of much needed assistance to people with ARC.

In a first-ever attempt to provide a public forum to address these concerns, the Human Rights Commission (HRC) of San Francisco sponsored hearings in early February to listen to direct testimony about AIDS/ARC related



discrimination. The public was invited to participate and/or attend. Approximately 60 people spoke during the two emotionally wearying evenings of testimony. Some were people with AIDS/ARC and others were spokespeople for various human services endeavors, including government agencies, hospitals and civil rights organizations. The HRC hopes to use the information garnered to encourage ongoing public discussion and to continue developing strategies to combat discrimination.

The public hearings were organized by the staff of the Lesbian/Gay Advisory Committee of the HRC in response to a disturbing increase in the number of AIDS/ARC related discrimination complaints they received. The HRC, empowered by the city to investigate and mediate complaints of sexual orientation discrimination, is bolstered by a new article in the San Francisco Municipal Code enacted this past December. Article 38 prohibits discrimination based on AIDS in the areas of employment, housing, business establishment, public accommodation, education, city facilities and services, association, testing and liability. Financial compensation and other retribution is authorized by this legislation.

Despite the strength of this new law, little has been done until now to actually correct discrimination, according to HRC Chair Esta Soler. Lesbian/gay community liaisons Eileen

Gillis and Jackie Winnow and several staff interns work directly with complainants and attempt to counter homophobia through community education and outreach. However, attacking the enormity of the injustices resulting from widespread fear of AIDS/ARC requires attitudinal changes on a far grander scale than they are equipped to deal with.

Preliminary recommendations and a summary report of the hearings' findings are not yet available. A committee is working to coalesce the information from individuals' testimony and push forward very tangible goals. Through the documentation of the type and number of AIDS/ARC discrimination cases, they plan to recommend ameliorative methods to city officials and private agencies. They hope to directly affect the quality of services to all people suffering from discrimination and to discourage future discrimination by supporting progressive education and legislation.

Although it will take time to finalize these recommendations in report form, members of the Lesbian/Gay Advisory Committee recognize the necessity of moving quickly in order to meet the immediate needs of people with AIDS/ARC. Much of the testimony at the hearings focused on the need for basic life support services as opposed to concern over employment issues. The urgency for provision of food, shelter and medical services to people already under physical stress was continually underscored. Several persons with ARC spoke

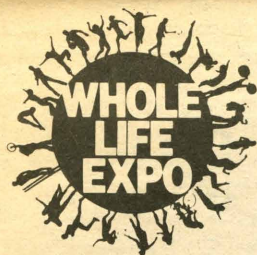
of the emotional brutality of being stigmatized and shunned on top of the difficulties of supporting themselves financially. The AIDS/ARC Vigil was credited as one compassionate refuge for people left homeless due to evictions, loss of jobs or inadequate public assistance.

Like Oscar, Jerry is currently without permanent housing. His family has cut off all contact with him since his ARC diagnosis a year and a half ago. A former construction worker, Jerry's illness has left him severely debilitated and unable to work. He is ineligible for most public assistance programs because he lacks an AIDS diagnosis, though his symptoms are equally grave. With the help of the HRC, Jerry hopes to be re-evaluated as disabled in order to qualify for SSI. Meanwhile, he lives in a hotel on Folsom Street but faces a possible eviction — the hot plate he uses to prepare the nourishing meals he needs is prohibited by the hotel.

In light of the crucial need for housing, the HRC plans to push city officials to consider more emergency housing for people with AIDS/ARC. Larry Saxon is the housing coordinator for the San Francisco AIDS Foundation one of several agencies that attempts to fill the enormous need for shelter with limited residential space. He expressed annoyance over an apparent effort to keep people with AIDS/ARC out of most hotels in order to maintain the city's image.

The imperative to reach young people was mentioned by many testifiers for several reasons. Diane Christiansen, director of the Community United Against Violence, spoke of recent increases of anti-gay violence perhaps due in part to hostility arising from the misperception that all gays carry AIDS/ARC. Also of concern is the possibility that youth may increasingly contract AIDS/ARC through IV drug use.

IV drug users were just one of the underserved populations discussed at the hearings. A majority of IV drug users diagnosed with AIDS/ARC are people of color, as are most of the women who contract AIDS/ARC. So while defining AIDS/ARC as a "gay disease" casts a stigma on gay men, it also diverts needed attention and funding from minorities, women and IV drug users who have the



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Herman Aihorn, 1:45-2:30 pm

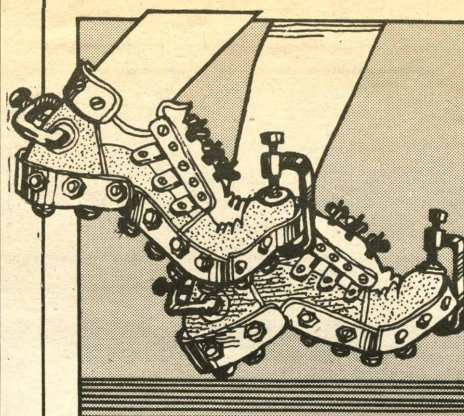
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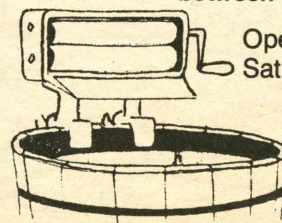
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towards research for a cure. Having learned from the delegation the budget committee's schedule of hearings in cities across the country, Mobilization succeeded in reaching gay and lesbian action groups in advance of the hearings. In Chicago, the AIDS Action Council was able to make itself heard when the committee arrived there on February 15. The Boston AIDS Project had already targeted the committee's hearing in Lowell on the 16th. No gay presence could be organized for the hearings in Tallahassee on the 17th. On the 18th, the committee heard testimony from the Dallas Gay Alliance. And on the 19th, Rep. Boxer put health and AIDS issues on the agenda of hearings in San Francisco, while Mobilization mounted a picket outside.

Boneberg, following up on the work of the delegation, finds reason for optimism. The budget committee is friendly, he says. The senior members are liberal Democrats. Three of them — Boxer, Fazio and Miller — come from the Bay Area where constituents are hurting and organized. Further, aides and associates of the committee members indicate that at least five members are ready to support *and vote* for a \$500 million appropriation. There are, however, no commitments from the Representatives themselves, and none is thought ready to introduce a resolution.

Boneberg's strategy is to hold the membership accountable in their districts. In particular, he feels it is time to call Barbara Boxer on what she owes the lesbian/gay community in San Francisco for the decisive support given her in her race against Louise Renne. "We went out on a limb for her," he notes. "If Renne had won without our support..."

Dissent Within The Vigil

At the Vigil site in U.N. Plaza, mere survival as a group taxed the protesters' resources. The day after the delegation left San Francisco, a dissident group within the Vigil nearly rendered the delegation vigil-less. Steve Russel formally resigned from the Vigil and, at 7 a.m. on Sunday, February 2, chained himself to the central doors of the old Federal Building while other Vigilers slept. He remained squatting on the granite door sill with only a thin sleeping bag to ward off the wind and intermittent rain. Because it was a Sunday and the building was closed, he presented no obstacle.

"I find it extremely fascinating," he told *Coming Up!* at the time, "that the ARC/AIDS Vigil will not support someone chaining himself to the doors of the Federal Building, and I can now ask, if they do not support it, then why are they here? This will show who really supports the cause and who is here for other reasons. I don't want the Vigil to get a bad name in the press for not supporting this,

Jay Young

Jay Young, a founder of the ARC/AIDS Vigil, passed away on February 5. In a conversation with *Coming Up!* last November, he spoke at length of his situation, his prospects and his reasons for joining the protesters in U.N. Plaza.

A former Shanti counselor, he rejected counseling for himself. "If I have to," he said, "I can sit in front of a mirror and do role playing with myself." More seriously, he had already answered many questions prior to his diagnosis. "I took care of a lot of things, my will and so on, things we should all take care of, even if we're healthy."

He had answered many of the health questions, too. Before he became ill, he decided to opt for alternative therapies, should the occasion arise. Private health insurance permitted him to choose his own doctors, and with them he worked out a program of treatments based on isoprinosine and ribavirin. "I don't have the diarrhea and vomiting that some people have; and I can maintain a certain energy level. Before taking them, I could see myself going down and down and down. But now I've levelled off."

By last November, Jay estimated, he had been involved in over one hundred deaths from AIDS. Yet his own diagnosis, he said, "hit like a truck. It took at least a month just to recuperate from the diagnosis. Now I surround myself only with people who want to live. I want to live. At Shanti, I knew both kinds, those who lie back and wait to die, and those who fight to live. I learned from them, both kinds, that I can live as long as I want to live. I think asking 'How long am I going to live?' is the worst thing you can do to yourself. You're giving yourself a death sentence. I haven't done so much wrong that I deserve a death sentence."

The plight of people with ARC touched him especially. "They live in limbo," he said, "unacknowledged by the medical community, waiting for a time bomb to go off, wondering what will happen next. Some stay behind locked doors, telling no one, because they've heard the horror stories. By word of mouth, I've heard of many suicides among them, because some people just cannot see any

but at the same time I am going to tell them point blank. My very dear friend, Jay Young, may not be here on the hundredth day.... If he can get word that this is happening now, it is my hope, dream and prayer that it will give him a little added strength."



"I have my friends on the other side waiting for me."

future with a thing like that hanging over them."

He hoped the Vigil would give people with ARC a goal to fight for, a way to help themselves and to find each other and an instrument to use.

Jay remained in the Vigil until his death. Even during his last four days when he was extremely sick he made brief visits on foot from his hotel.

"I've seen how people die with this disease," he told *Coming Up!*. "Some go comfortably, just let go. But others are struggling and need help to get to the other side. They don't know it's okay to die. You can still see the anger in their faces after they're gone. But others, the ones who just let go, show a softness and contentment and even beauty. When my time comes, I'm going to be comfortable. I'm just going to cross over. I have my friends on the other side waiting for me. Hopefully they're in a better place, a place without bigots, without Jerry Falwell; just true non-judgmental love, where you'll be accepted for yourself alone."

—Alex MacDonald

Suffering from exposure and running a fever after twelve hours in the doorway, Russel ceded his solitary post to a small nucleus of supporters, men who had either quit the Vigil early on or drifted away from it. One of these was still chained to the door the following

morning when the building opened for business. Russel had not returned. The Vigil, throughout the 24 hours, maintained a studied and total avoidance of Russel, even when he was becoming ill. Russel and his supporters reciprocated.

Shortly before 7 a.m. on the 3rd, Charles Johnson, the Regional Director of Health and Human Services, appealed to the dissidents to halt their action. A cordial dialogue lasting almost an hour followed. The dissidents made clear to him that the possibility of escalation was real. Johnson argued that the present action was counter-productive because "everyone in this building is already in your pocket. They all support what the Vigil is doing." He also said what the delegation would hear echoed in Washington several days later: that the federal government is acting with the utmost urgency to find a cure for AIDS. At length, he told them he would ask his security people "to return my building to me" if the door was still blocked at 8 a.m.

Vigil security meanwhile woke up the sleeping Vigilers. Johnson approached Harvey Maurer of the Vigil and told him and *Coming Up!* that he could not predict where arrests would stop once they started. A mass arrest appeared imminent. As a nearby church bell began to toll eight, the dissidents, with studied slowness, unchained while federal officers began to bear down on them. They then departed from U.N. Plaza "to re-think our strategy." They have not returned to the site, nor has Steve Russel, who told *Coming Up!* that his resignation is "definitive."

A few days later, the rains and gale winds began. On the 22nd, the encampment was blown down. Wes North's very little dog, Vigil, was blown away, but was finally rescued by a pedestrian. At least one tent was destroyed by the high winds and most of the tent poles were bent or broken. Vigilers salvaged what they could and secured the remains under tarpaulins. At times during the series of storms, the number of Vigilers-on-site has been as low as three. Protecting the remains from theft proved to be a continuing problem. Over 12 inches of rain poured in on them during the ten-day period. Between 25 and 30 of the Vigilers are now homeless.

In the midst of the hardship and grief, San Francisco presented the Vigil with a Cable Car award on February 15. Vigil representatives John Lorenzini, Steve Russel and Frank Bert received the longest standing ovation of the evening. The following day, Bert resigned for reasons of health and burn-out.

Despite the complications and heartaches of recent weeks, the protesters show no sign of stopping: their spirits are high and they talk of keeping the watch going for a full year.

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AIDS Legislation Proposed In the California Legislature

By Chris Bowman

Although the number of new cases of AIDS in San Francisco has levelled off over the past 13 months and the increase of new cases of AIDS in Los Angeles has slowed, the number of new AIDS-related bills being introduced in the California legislature has grown exponentially.

In 1983, one bill was introduced and became law — SB-910 created the California AIDS Advisory Committee. In 1984, no AIDS legislation was authored. In 1985, nine bills were introduced, five of which became law. In 1986, in addition to the four bills carried over from 1985, there is a minimum of 22 new

pieces of proposed legislation. (We don't really know how many bills were introduced at the last minute because the printing office is log-jammed, but there may be several bills not included in this report.)

Some of the bills represent a forward-looking response to the epidemic. Others need to be fleshed out and improved. Many, however, suggest demagoguery on the part of legislators placating or manipulating unwarranted public fears about casual contagion and the belief that AIDS should be stopped by testing everyone for the HTLV-3 antibody with "appropriate" actions to ensue. Fortunately, to my knowledge none of those actions, including discrimination and quarantine, have been written into proposed legislation. Although last De-

cember the threat loomed menacingly — cooler heads seem to be prevailing for the time being.

In 1985, two bills dealing with the HTLV-3 antibody test were rushed through the legislature (AB-403 - Agnos and AB-488 - Roos) and both authors have introduced follow-up language to deal with new FDA guidelines. These include AB-3667 (Agnos), which would allow People with AIDS to sign a blanket consent form authorizing test results to be discussed with anyone providing his/her care or treatment; AB-3407 (Roos), which would provide for four separate alternative testing sites in Los Angeles County; and AB-3440 (Roos) which would allow state reimbursement to alternative testing sites for counseling and up to two follow-up visits by persons tested for the antibody.

Several AIDS-related bills became law in 1985. SB-292 (Marks) provides confidentiality for individuals participating in AIDS research and serves as the model for a new bill by Marks (SB-2454) which will provide AIDS confiden-

tiality for public health records. SB-678 (Roberti) extends the life of the California AIDS Advisory Committee to 1990 and adds two new members from U.C. and the Department of Mental Health. SB-1251 (Roberti) requires the Department of Health Services to streamline its procedures on AIDS, conduct a number of studies and provide another \$4.9 million in AIDS funding for FY 1985/86.

A number of bills got stalled in committee. One of these is AB-600 (McAllister). Not specifically an AIDS bill, AB-600 provides access to health insurance for people previously denied it. Also on hold is AB-1452 (Alatorre), a bill that would give special disability to police officers and firefighters who contract AIDS in the course of their official duties (again playing on beliefs of casual contagion). SB-1327 and 1328 (Marks) include a study bill to look into the feasibility of the State picking up the insurance premiums of individuals with private health coverage who become unemployed due to catastrophic, debilitating or terminal ill-

(continued on page 15)

AIDS Hearing...

disease.

Explained Reggie Williams from Black and White Men Together, "There has been a lack of education about AIDS/ARC for anyone except well-to-do gay white men. We must offer outreach that is culturally sensitive; we must get to non-English speakers. Although San Francisco has fewer AIDS and ARC cases among non-whites, nationwide it's a serious problem for people of color."

The issue of women with AIDS/ARC was highlighted by numerous testifiers, including Pat Norman from the Department of Public Health, representatives from the Women's AIDS Network and Nancy Shaw of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. All stressed that the male bias in AIDS/ARC research and education is detrimental to women, who may be misdiagnosed or overlooked for needed services as a result.

In one case exemplifying paranoia, a woman who felt herself to be at high risk took the HTLV-3 test for the AIDS virus. She tested negative. Upon telling her dentist of ten years that she had taken the test, he refused to treat her unless she supplied written proof of the results. Exasperated, she did so, but found him and his staff unreceptive and hostile; they still refused to treat her. She is considering legal action.

Identifying the medical and social service needs of underserved populations relates in-

tricately to the problem of scapegoating. Like the homophobia that has escalated as gay men get blamed for spreading AIDS/ARC to the straight community, prostitutes, IV drug users, pregnant women and women in general have all been slammed and ostracized as "carriers" of AIDS/ARC. Testifiers argued that such a public and media response is not only astoundingly inaccurate, but also completely focuses concern on straight men. For example, explained Priscilla Alexander of the prostitutes' organization COYOTE, many more straight, monied men would have AIDS/ARC if prostitutes were efficient carriers. In fact, women generally contract AIDS/ARC from men, not the other way around, she claimed.

Along with the aforementioned concerns, other key problems came up repeatedly throughout the two evenings of testimony. Discrimination in the areas of insurance, employment, corrections and education remain threatening. One well-publicized case involves Terry, an accountant who was denied bereavement leave, much less any compassion or kindness, after his lover died of AIDS. Upon returning to the job that he had held for five years, Terry was fired without warning.

In addition, most speakers also voiced worries over the increased use of the HTLV-3 test for presence of the AIDS virus. This could result in increasing sanctions against people who test positive, as well as the further erosion of civil liberties if the test becomes required for

certain groups (i.e. food handlers, prisoners, immigrants, etc.). Supervisorial aide Brandy Moore, among others, asked the HRC to take a strong stance in opposing all mandatory testing for the AIDS virus.

The other oft-mentioned complaint was the lack of funding and services available for people diagnosed with ARC which, as in the case of Jerry, can cause health deterioration as severe as for people with AIDS. During his testimony, Jerry spoke of cases in which ARC patients have falsified their records to forge an AIDS diagnosis and have thereby qualified for needed assistance. He and others urged the HRC to recommend that the CDC abolish the distinction between AIDS and ARC and thus begin ending discrimination against people with ARC.

Whereas most of the testimony about discrimination focussed on specific cases or the needs of certain groups, one speaker attempted to offer an international perspective on the AIDS/ARC crisis. Komika Ajanaku from the All People's Congress gave a blazing indictment of United States domestic and foreign policies; she criticized the administration for prioritiz-

ing military funding over money for human services. She drew applause for asserting that AIDS/ARC concerns everyone, and insisting on continued grassroots to evoke change. Other speakers also criticized inadequate government funding, re-emphasizing a charge that has been levied for several years.

The plethora of information and accusations was absorbed by the HRC and the audience during the emotionally draining testimony, though a sense of determination also seemed to mark the proceedings. The Lesbian/Gay Advisory Committee of the HRC is optimistic that the concrete proof documented during the hearings will help speed action to end AIDS/ARC related discrimination. Equally advantageous is the opening of communication throughout the community, and the sense that the gravity of the AIDS/ARC epidemic has gained increasingly broader recognition.

Further information about specific legal remedies for AIDS/ARC related discrimination may be obtained through the Lesbian/Gay Unit of the Human Rights Commission at 558-4901, or the Employment Law Center of the Legal Aid Society of San Francisco at 864-8848.

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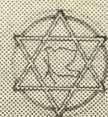
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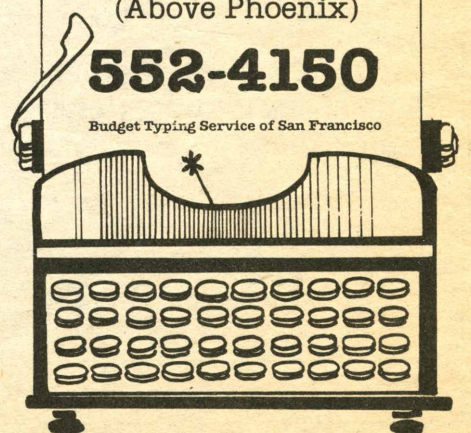
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THE STATE OF THE SCIENCE

By MICHAEL HELQUIST

A Mixed Bag: Politics and Concern

On February 20, Marcus Conant, MD, dermatologist at UC San Francisco, hosted his regular KS Study Group meeting to look at another facet of AIDS research. What resulted was a revealing view of the conflicts, concern and professed cooperation of AIDS researchers and physicians who sometimes appear to be united only in their desire to see an end to the epidemic.

Conant had invited speakers to discuss the goals of Project Inform, a volunteer group researching the combined use of Isoprinosine and Ribavirin. The other presenter was to be Bruce Mills, MD, the local dermatologist who has been looking at the effects of the drug compound DNCB on what he considers the autoimmune factor in AIDS.

Mills, scheduled to be the first speaker, appeared 45 minutes late and thus forfeited his opportunity to finally provide data to his colleagues about the use of DNCB. Conant offered to reschedule Mills for an April appearance. The *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology* has accepted Mills' revised report including his data about DNCB for publication in an upcoming issue. In addition, Mills gave a copy of his journal submission to this reporter (see following article). Paul Volberding, MD, AIDS researcher at San Francisco General Hospital (SFGH), has also been sent a copy of Mills' report.

Before introducing the Project Inform speakers, Conant discounted the data previously reported by this writer about use of the drug Isoprinosine. That data suggested that the drug had beneficial effects for AIDS and ARC patients. The study results were published in the official proceedings from the African AIDS conference held in Brussels, Belgium, last November. Conant and Don Abrams, MD, AIDS researcher at SFGH, said they were investigators for this Isoprinosine study; yet they refuted the Brussels report presented by the drug manufacturer. Abrams said he had been

told not to talk about the study; but for the record, he added, "There was no improvement at all in my patients who used Isoprinosine."

The strong disagreements about Isoprinosine share some similarities with the varied responses to the drug cyclosporine. When local researchers strongly criticized the use of cyclosporine and the premature reports of its use by French researchers, they countered that suramin offered much more hope to Americans. Suramin has now been discounted at many research centers, including SFGH, as an effective treatment. Ironically, SFGH researchers are now developing protocols for a study of cyclosporine. Preliminary studies with both DNCB and cyclosporine suggest that autoimmunity plays an important role in AIDS. That notion had also been dismissed by many AIDS researchers who are now reconsidering the autoimmune theory.

Late last month the federal Food and Drug Administration joined the Isoprinosine debate and charged that Newport Pharmaceuticals, manufacturer of the drug, had made misleading claims about its effectiveness against the AIDS-Related Complex. The government ordered the company to halt the misleading claims; the federal agency also withdrew approval of the clinical trials of the drug.

The disputed benefits of Isoprinosine thus set the stage for the study being conducted by Martin Delaney and Joseph Brewer of Project Inform. Delaney emphasized several times to the audience at Conant's study group that Project Inform does not encourage anyone to start taking the two drugs. Instead he stated that the project was simply trying to determine whether the drugs produced dangerous side effects and whether any clinical benefit resulted. Delaney asserted that thousands of individuals are already using the two drugs, mostly procured from Mexican sources since the drugs are not approved for use in this country.

"Attempts by others to discourage use of the drugs have not worked, and to ignore the many who are taking them is not practical,"

Delaney said. "We're taking a pragmatic approach by recognizing what is happening anyway and by studying its effects."

Delaney suggested that the many anecdotal reports about people with ARC and AIDS improving after using the combined drugs "may be a mirage."

"But we don't know that yet," he said, "and neither does anyone else."

Joseph Brewer acknowledged the several "inherent weaknesses" in their study, primarily a dependence on participants' own recall of their adherence to the drug protocols, the self-selection of the study participants, and the likelihood of other simultaneous treatments, like use of megadoses of Vitamin C, that may distort the study results. Some of these factors, such as use of other treatments, may also exist in the controlled, officially sanctioned studies.

Brewer also emphasized that Project Inform hopes to study and present a clinical model for

"Because Project Inform operates outside the realm of official research protocol, it inherently challenges the scientific establishment."

clinicians rather than a research model for researchers.

Conant challenged the Project Inform speakers by asserting that there were so many variables in their study that it may be difficult to interpret the results.

"Can you come up with an answer that has any meaning?" he questioned.

Brewer responded that he was not inclined to defend the weaknesses of the study but offered that even if they determined that the drugs were harmful, the information would be valuable to the many individuals on the treatment plan.

Other physicians in the audience suggested that the mere existence of Project Inform "raised false hopes" for many people desperate for an effective treatment. To this observer it seems that testing any drug as a possible AIDS treatment raises hopes. AIDS researchers have been asserting for more than a year that ultimately the effective treatment for AIDS will probably be an antiviral combined with an immune stimulator. People have certainly placed their hopes on this potential treatment, and yet no officially sanctioned combined treatment has been developed or tested.

Abrams announced that he "doesn't see real evidence that a combination will work." He suggested that with currently available drugs, "It's like adding 0 plus 0 to look at the combined use of any of these drugs." On the other hand, while the antiviral drugs may not rid the body of the virus, a few agents appear at least to halt the replication of the AIDS virus.

On the issue of false hope, Brewer asserted, "I am more concerned with false doomsaying than I am with false hope."

Chuck Frutche, hotline coordinator for the San Francisco AIDS Foundation, suggested that Project Inform issue a statement advising healthy persons, who may be seropositive on the AIDS antibody test, that there is no reason to take these drugs.

Speaker Delaney reiterated that one to three thousand people were already taking the drugs and that the project did not encourage anyone to use them.

Project Inform, continuing its operation amidst the controversy, is an effort based on genuine concern for obtaining treatment information, with no apparent desire for career advancement on the part of the project administrators. They share these traits with a great many local physicians and researchers. Nevertheless, because the project operates outside the realm of official research protocol, it inherently challenges the scientific establishment. In this context, it is surprising that there has been so much cooperation, often quiet and anonymous, between local researchers and physicians, and Project Inform.

Delaney and Brewer hope to have prelimi-

nary results from their study within the next few months. They both assert that once the data is analyzed they are "prepared to go either way"; warning of toxic side effects, if any, and confirming clinical benefits, if justified.

In the meantime, the search for an effective AIDS treatment goes on, benefited by much genuine concern of researchers and hampered at times by competition and a lack of medical foresight.

DNCB Data

Dr. Bruce Mills has been looking at the effects of skin applications of DNCB as an AIDS treatment for at least a year. He has now accumulated enough research and clinical information to justify further studies by researchers into the possible role of DNCB as a therapeutic treatment for AIDS. Mills has submitted his report plus corresponding data to the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*, a respected publication that employs a peer review process to screen all submissions. The *Journal* has agreed to publish Mills' report in an upcoming issue.

Mills collected data from 26 individuals of varying immunological status who received initial applications of 2% DNCB in acetone until they developed a skin reaction to the drug compound. Afterwards, the patients received a 1% solution.

Mills noted that the applications induced changes in the number of circulating T-cells and B-cells, as well as improved immune T-cell responses tested under laboratory conditions. Mills also noted during laboratory analysis a "normalization" of other AIDS-associated abnormalities such as anemia, thrombocytopenia (an abnormal decrease in the number of blood platelets) and hypergammaglobulinemia (a higher than normal level of antibodies in circulation). Mills notes in his report that these results "suggest that topically administered DNCB also promotes reconstitution of T-cell immunoregulatory functions in immune suppressed patients."

As noted in this column several months ago, patients with Kaposi's sarcoma underwent changes in their skin and mucus membrane lesions after applications of DNCB. There was a reduction in lesion size and thickness, number of lesions, and decreased discoloration of the lesions. These changes included DNCB-treated lesions as well as untreated lesions.

There are currently several dozen individuals being treated with DNCB in San Francisco, San Diego, Santa Monica, Houston and New York. In addition, the American Foundation for AIDS Research has expressed an interest in the DNCB studies and has requested a copy of Mills' data. Since DNCB is an inexpensive, easily obtained chemical compound, there is little commercial incentive for a drug company to provide funding for more advanced studies. The next stage of research will likely require that AIDS researchers seriously consider the DNCB data and find ways to include it within their AIDS research programs.

Mothers United for Support

Stories of gay men sick with AIDS being abandoned by their parents are frequent enough, but probably more common are the number of times that mothers and fathers choose to stand by their sons. Often the needs of parents are overlooked, yet the emotional and physical demands upon them can be considerable. Therapists have encouraged the development of "respite shelters," safe places for relatives and loved ones, caregivers to people with AIDS, to rest and regain their strength for a few days. The most basic need for parents is support, and a new group in San Diego offers just that.

Mothers of AIDS Patients, an organization formed last summer by three mothers who each lost a child to AIDS, reaches out to others facing the same tragedy.

"By uniting, we can help each other bear our losses, and, out of understanding, help other patients and their families," wrote the three founders of the organization in a recent newsletter. But the mothers have made it clear that after support should come action. They intend to apply political pressure for increased funding for research, patient treatment, and in-home service programs. They hope to take their message nationwide.

For more information about the group, write to Mothers of AIDS Patients, c/o San Diego AIDS Project, P.O. Box 81082, San Diego, CA 92138.

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AIDS Legislation...

(continued from page 9)

ness, and to raise the ceiling required by the State from \$504 to \$800 a month before Medi-Cal starts paying the individual's medical bills. SB-1327 passed the Senate in January 1986; SB-1328 failed to get out of the Appropriations Committee (again because of the log-jam of legislation) and will be amended into SB-1327 in the next months.

New bills include those which will substantially improve the health delivery system for people with AIDS and ARC, and those which would expand the use of the antibody test. Those in the former category include the following:

AB-3137 (Vasconcellos) would have the Director of Corrections enter into contracts to house, care and treat inmates with AIDS;

AB-3204 (Bronzan) would study the prospect of the state purchasing health insurance policies for persons eligible for Medicare and Medi-Cal. This proposal is broader than Marks' SB-1327;

AB-3323 (Waters) would facilitate Medi-Cal coverage for AIDS drugs approved by the FDA;

AB-3487 (Klehs) would determine the number of Californians covered by health insurance and other health care coverage;

AB-3720 (Brown) would increase the Medi-Cal reimbursement for in-home attendant care from \$3.97 to \$4.75 an hour. This will keep the hospice and visiting nurses program afloat;

AB-4249 (Vasconcellos/Brown), a spot bill that would expand the hospice services that Medi-Cal reimburses AIDS patients for;

AB-4250 (Vasconcellos) would promote the development of an AIDS vaccine and have the State assume liability for lawsuits against drug companies should the vaccine not be 100% safe and effective;

SB-1928 (Watson) would provide AIDS education to health professionals in San Francisco and Los Angeles counties in each general acute care hospital; report the number of people diagnosed with severe ARC; and study the costs to the counties for their care and treatment;

SB-2192 (Rosenthal) would mandate yearly training of school employees as to "safety practices when in contact with students with AIDS or ARC," and provide optional training to such employees on AIDS in general;

SB-2245 (Roberti) calls on the State to provide comprehensive programs and funding on AIDS plus legislative oversight of current programs;

SB-2453 (Marks) would make severe ARC (as defined by the Department of Health Services and other health professional groups) a presumptive disability. AIDS currently is a presumptive disability but severe ARC is awarded disability on a case-by-case basis over the course of up to six months.

Those bills which exploit public misconceptions and fears about casual contagion include:

AB-3318 (Seastrand) would provide chief medical officers in the prison system and California Youth Authority facilities to test anyone they suspect may have contracted AIDS;

AB-3393 (Floyd) would require the Department of Health Services in consultation with the Department of Corrections to recommend policies for the "identification, classification, placement and treatment of state prison inmates afflicted with AIDS;"

AB-3551 (Frizzelle) would require hospitals to test anyone entering (being admitted?) for the antibody, maintain confidential test result records, notify those who test positive, transfer the information to other hospitals if the patient is transferred and notify the local public health officer of the patient's domicile.

AB-3616 (Rogers) would tack three years onto the prison term of a person convicted of a felony sexual crime if that person knew he/she was afflicted with AIDS or carried the HTLV-3 antibody;

SB-1478 (Doolittle) would require that couples applying for a marriage license take the antibody test for HTLV-3. It doesn't prohibit those who test positive from getting married, nor does it protect such information from public inquiry;

SB-1513 (Doolittle) would require that individuals convicted of a misdemeanor or felony who are sent to the county jail or state prison system for more than three days be tested for the HTLV-3 antibody. Such information would be reported to the County Sheriff or Warden who could do with the information as they saw fit. Currently, everyone who tests positive for the HTLV-3 antibody in the prison system is sent to the California Medical Facility at Vacaville and placed in segregated housing under virtual quarantine conditions

SB-1518 (Royce) would require emergency and public service workers to be informed if they came into contact with a person who has an infectious disease (including AIDS).

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