

Q-NOTES

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AIDS Hotline, Columbia (803) 779-PALS
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(704) 338-1138

Victory Hailed in AIDS Treatment

by: Cliffe O'Neil
Metroline

WASHINGTON—In an unexpected and unprecedented development, the Bristol-Myers pharmaceutical company has announced that it has agreed to widely distribute ddl, an experimental anti-HIV drug, to AIDS patients as part of an innovative drug dispersion program developed by AIDS activists.

The drug, ddl, is a close relative of the highly toxic AZT, currently the only anti-HIV drug available on the market, but it is much less toxic than its precursor. The drug completed Phase I clinical trials at the FDA, where it was tested for toxicity levels, and will begin Phase II trials where it will be tested for efficacy.

In recent weeks, AIDS activists have lobbied federal AIDS officials and pharmaceutical companies to have them accept a new drug distribution program, called a "parallel track" program, where experimental therapies are made widely accessible at no charge to AIDS patients who otherwise would not qualify for Phase II clinical trials.

At a New York City conference on community-based research initiatives, where the

parallel track studies are expected to be conducted, both National Institute for Allergies and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony Fauci and National Cancer Institute Director Broder endorsed the parallel track program.

"I think it's a major victory for AIDS activists," stated Peter Staley, spokesperson for the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP/New York), which has done much of the front work on the parallel track program. "It remains to be seen how widely distributed this drug will be on compassionate use or parallel track—the names are interchangeable in this case. It depends on who you talk to. The stumbling block will be Ellen Cooper at the FDA.

Copper, who the AIDS activists have met with on the parallel track program, is the chief person at the FDA in charge of research on antiviral drugs and has alternately supported AIDS activists and lobbied against the program.

"I think her heart is not with us on this," Stanley added. "And I think there's a good chance she'll be dragged into it."

The program protocol will be written in coming weeks in discussions between Fauci, Cooper, Bristol-Myers and AIDS activists.

Once approved, the dispersement program would begin in September.

The unprecedented development came as a welcome surprise to AIDS activists who did not expect the drug company to agree to the program this quickly. Bristol-Myers officials have echoed the activists arguments noting that the program will provide the FDA with more research data faster, will help treat more patients who would not have received the drug and may speed the approval process for the drug, points the company and activists suggest will offset the cost of distributing the drug for free.

Citing major differences with AZT, Jim Eigo, from ACT Up/New York, suggested that the program may not necessarily result in high prices for the drug, once it would be approved.

"In regard to ddl, there are many facts that would work against a high price," he said. Under that agreement, the government has some say in the final pricing. What that means, I'm not exactly sure. But it will not be an AZT, or we will make a bigger stink that we did with AZT."

This article is reprinted from Metroline, Hartford, CT.

Best Bets

- August 5 Mature Gay Men
- August 10 Gay Parents Coalition
- August 11 Spiritual Renewal MCC Charlotte
- August 18 thru 20 Liaisons Grand Opening
- August 19 Games Night First Tuesday
- August 25 Musical Fantasy Fashion Revue Oleens
- August 25 Festival of Entertainers Charades
- September 1 Burkhardt Boys Scorpio

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Mortician Becomes Escort 'Whiz Kid'

by: Bill Dedmon
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON - In an isolated corner of West Virginia in 1986, Henry Vinson, the state's youngest medical examiner, had a few problems.

First the 25-year-old funeral director was charged with making harassing phone calls to a competing funeral home. Later the state claimed he was overcharging on pauper funerals. Then there was the small matter of the exhumed coal miner's remains he didn't rebury for 42 days. He finally left town.

Within two years the stocky sandy haired coal miner's son was calling himself Dr. Henry Vinson and running Washington's largest homosexual escort service. With computerized client lists, credit card processing and a toll-free 800 telephone number, he had plans for a nationwide business.

Henry Vinson may have been too sophisticated for his own good.

On Feb. 28, police and Secret Service agents broke down the door to his Chevy Chase, Md., house, where they claim in court records he was operating a prostitution ring under the names "Man to Man," "Jack's Jocks" and "Dream Boys..." Following a tantalizing trail of credit card receipts and computer discs from Washington to West Virginia, police have interrogated his friends and searched his family's homes. Vinson, who denies any involvement in prostitution, has gone into hiding.

The Vinson case has become more than an ordinary vice raid. On June 29, The Washington Times began a series of reports with the headline: "Homosexual Prostitution Probe Ensnarers Officials of Bush, Reagan." The Times said the case raised the possibility "of threats to national security from the blackmail of homosexuals in sensitive government positions." The story named as clients only low-level government employees and Craig Spence, a Washington lobbyist who the paper said took prostitutes and friends on late-night tours of the White House and "served drugs, sex at parties bugged for blackmail."

With all the publicity, fundamental questions have not been answered by previous accounts, not the least of which is: How did a fallen West Virginia mortician become the central actor in a Washington summer-time sex scandal?

The Washington Post has interviewed

Vinson and employees of the service, examined credit card, bank and telephone records, and discussed the investigation with knowledgeable sources. The Post found:

- Investigators have found no evidence of any high-level government officials procuring prostitutes through the service. Authorities also have no evidence of blackmail or espionage.

- Rather than customers, the operators of the service, principally Vinson, are the focus of the investigation. The exception appears to be lobbyist Spence. Vinson said in an inter-

view that Spence called for escorts, who later told Vinson they had engaged in sex with Spence and military officers. Spence could not be reached for comment.

- The Secret Service, which joined the investigation because it has authority over allegations of credit card fraud, is conducting a separate, internal probe of two uniformed officers who allowed Spence to make late-night White House tours. One officer has admitted accepting a Rolex watch from Spence and giving him a piece of Truman china.

SEE Mortician page 10

Liaisons Open for Business

by: Christian Alexander
Q-Notes Staff

Coming out of the dust of, the now defunct Steven's Cafe, new owners Linda Swinson and Pat Sizemore have raised up Liaison's Restaurant with a new mission: to provide "something that the gay community has never had before...[but] certainly deserves", says Swinson.

After much effort, many changes, and very little time Swinson and Sizemore, their staff and many friends are well on the way to accomplish the mission.

When structural damage to the building necessitated major renovations, the new crew began the hearty tasks of gutting and completely rebuilding the kitchen, reconditioning the bar, and performing the tedious but obvious cosmetic surgery to all areas of the building. While all the clean up and renovation work took a mere two weeks time, everything but the electrical and plumbing duties were performed by the staff and friends who had more than their share of 3 a.m. nights, Swinson boasted.

But structural changes are only the beginning.

The bar and dining room offer two distinctively different menus so that there is something available for every pallet and every budget. The bar, open from 4 pm until 1 am, carries a variety of appetizers, sandwiches and assorted munchies (priced from \$2.50-5.00). While the downstairs dining room offers French Continental fare including a nice selection of pasta, chicken and beef specialties, salads, appetizers, and of course a "Chef's Choice". The chef's choice, al-

though it changes periodically, is soup, salad, appetizer, entree, dessert and wine planned at the discretion of the house chef, Robin Latham.

Chef Latham, from Wisconsin by way of Greensboro, is an award winning chef who also holds a patent for a special item dubbed "Tour Ne Dos Rainier" which, as I understand it, will be available on the menu. According to Swinson, Chef Latham and the kitchen staff will also prepare vegetarian dishes as well as meals for people on special diets upon request. All this served, of course, by a carefully selected wait staff donning tuxedos, which Swinson stresses will be the constant uniform; "the only thing that's going to change (about the server's dress code) is the color of their ties." Even upstairs at the more casual bar, where burgers and light fare is the rule, a formally attired bar staff is there to serve you, under the direction of Head Bartender/Bar Manager Kathleen Earle, of Clearwater, Florida.

Although the Grand Opening celebration doesn't take place until the weekend (all weekend) of August 19-21 the restaurant and bar and open nightly, but since opening on the 15th of July, the crowds have been heavy (including turning people away in order to honor reservations), reservations are recommended.

Ms. Swinson said it best when she summarized the changes: the patrons "will notice a big difference all the way around."

Ms. Swinson wanted to publicly thank the community "for their tremendous support...everyone involved in cleanup and the opening preparation." Thank everybody for everything!