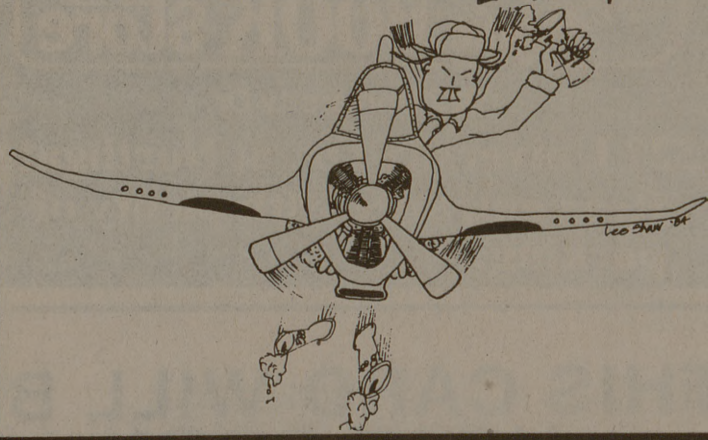
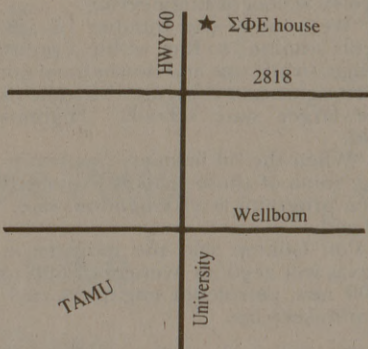


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**AIDS**

(continued from page 1)

hearing about AIDS for two years. It didn't really scare me until recently, when my boyfriend told me about his HTLV-III test being positive. Then I heard somebody had died that I knew, and that's when I thought, 'Oh, I really better start changing.'

HTLV-III is a virus that has been linked to AIDS, but has been found in some healthy homosexual men. Why some people develop the illness and others do not is not yet clear.

This virus has made possible the development of blood tests that will indicate exposure to the AIDS virus. Also, it helps blood banks determine if a donor can be used.

Wallace says the Department of Health is now giving the test because it gives people a chance to go somewhere else besides blood banks.

"The HTLV-III test is not an AIDS test," Wallace says. "It's just a way to help determine if a person has been exposed. If someone takes the test and it is positive, the exposed victim should do everything possible not to spread the virus. If the test comes out negative, the person should plan for keeping it this way by using safe sex techniques."

Noah says the health department works with the state health department in helping AIDS victims.

"Mr. Wallace comes from Austin and together we both go and see the physician and the patient in terms of his disease and anyone else involved," Noah says. "We are responsible for the epidemiology aspects of disease — who else will be affected."

Mahnke says when the two cases of AIDS were reported at St. Joseph Hospital, people in the hospital were concerned about having contact with the AIDS patients.

"At first, they were concerned about even going into the room," Mahnke says. "But now they know the precautions that need to be taken are very simple. We take the same kind for hepatitis."

"In the role of a counselor, I try to help the patient manage a problem that may terminate in death. I give him what information is available in trying to get him to change his behavior in terms of protecting people he will come in contact with."

The three A&M students say AIDS literature dealing with safe sex techniques is abundant.

"The AIDS foundation in Houston distributes this pamphlet that is very blunt about what you can do and cannot do," one says. "It's part of the Play

Safe Campaign. Rather than have drawings of human beings, it has drawings of bears and rabbits in the literature."

Another student says, "The Play Safe Campaign advocates safe sex practices. In other words, it tells you what you can't do or shouldn't do because it will increase your chance of getting AIDS."

The third student says, "The gay community is very aware of the prob-

The A&M students say the GSS does not officially discourage taking the HTLV-III test, but they do discourage it on the advice of the KS Foundation in Houston.

"The reason is the fact, number one, it doesn't really tell you if you have AIDS or not," one member says. "Number two, if you are seen taking the test, then you're labeled as a homosexual and it may be used against you."

One member says that he feels discriminated against because he is gay and thus more susceptible to AIDS.

"People complained at work," he says. "They didn't want to shop where I work because they knew I was gay and they were afraid I would give them AIDS."

Mahnke says the opposite is true. "A nurse, doctor or anyone isn't in jeopardy when around an AIDS victim," Mahnke says. "It's more that we are a fear to them because all their immunities are gone and we carry viruses."

Four high-risk groups have been identified so far:

- homosexual or bisexual men,
- intravenous drug users,
- recent Haitian immigrants,
- hemophiliacs.

Groups in which AIDS has occurred but in which the degree of risk is not yet known, include female sex partners of people with AIDS, children of mothers with AIDS and male prison inmates.

"The average life span for these cases is around 18 months, but it varies depending on the type of disease," Wallace says. "The 12,256 cases of AIDS that have been reported is a staggering number. It doesn't have to be so large if people would practice safe sex techniques."

Noah asks, "Isn't it scary to think that this disease is so widespread in the population that it has the potential of becoming an epidemic?"

"Now it can be transmitted to the female population by having sex with bisexual males. It has the capability of reaching major proportions."

For some homosexuals, AIDS doesn't seem to be reality — yet.

"You hear about it over and over again in the media, so you become used to it," one homosexual student says. "I know I hadn't thought seriously about it until a person close to me died. For a few days I was really upset. Sometimes I sit and think, 'My God, I wonder if I've got it?'"



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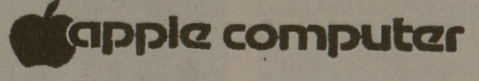
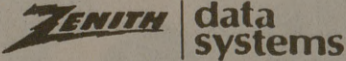
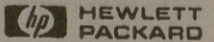
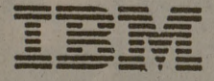
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