

rome

Furor over ads showing Reagan with AIDS lesions

The Italian clothier that continuously courts controversy with provocative advertisements has come up with a new startler: Ronald Reagan with AIDS.

The new issue of Benetton's company magazine, *Colors*, features a retouched headshot of the former president covered with AIDS lesions, accompanied by a fake obituary blasting his administration's record on AIDS.

The magazine has yet to reach newsstands, but posters with the picture have appeared on the street in New York.

Benetton's publicity machine has attracted a lot of attention over the last few years with ads such as one showing two models, dressed as priest and nun, kissing.

The photographer behind the series of controversial photos, Oliviero Toscani, denied the retouched photo of Reagan was a provocation.

In Friday's *La Stampa* newspaper, based in Turin, Toscani criticized both Reagan and former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher for their AIDS policies.

"They didn't understand anything about AIDS, they did everything wrong. They never realized the emergency," he said. Reagan "did nothing to spread the use of condoms, he did nothing to sensitize the people to the risk of contracting" AIDS.

The offices of Benetton's corporate headquarters and of the magazine were closed Saturday, and there was no answer at the home of the magazine's director.

yokohama, japan

In Japan, hotel managers getting fast AIDS training

You can't "catch" AIDS from tableware or sheets, and people with the disease can stay in hotels without putting anyone in danger.

That may sound like familiar advice. But organizers of Japan's first major international AIDS conference want to make sure hotel managers are thoroughly familiar with it.

The conference organizers arranged a lecture Friday for hotel managers with just a month left before Japan hosts the 10th International Conference on AIDS.

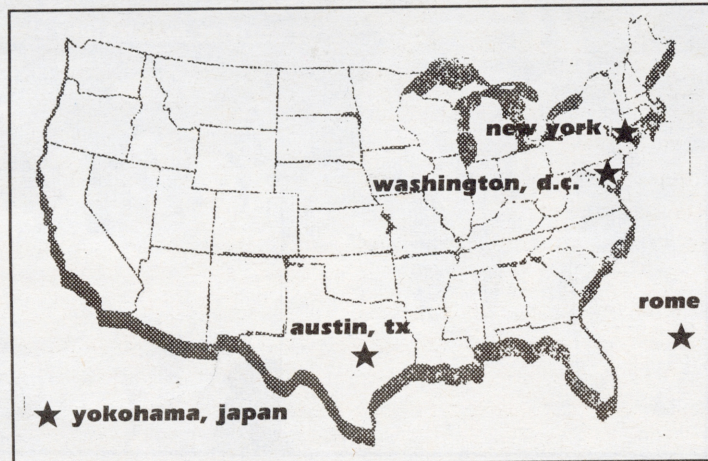
Last October, Alexander Martin, an American playwright infected with the AIDS virus, was rejected by 18 Tokyo hotels before he could find one that would take him in. In September

1992, AIDS victim Sean Duque was turned down by a hotel next to the hall holding an AIDS symposium he planned to address.

Government officials say they're confident that is changing.

"I think the Japanese people are sophisticated enough to host a successful AIDS conference," said Yuichi Shiokawa, chairman of the organizing committee. But he conceded lack of awareness about the disease probably would have made it impossible to hold the conference in Japan a decade ago.

"We haven't had a guest



declare that they had AIDS yet," said Yasuhiro Ishida, who manages the Hotel Rich Yokohama. "But we want to serve anyone who comes to our hotel. I'm here to learn what I can."

About 10,000 people are expected to attend the Aug. 7-12 conference in Yokohama, 27 kilometers (16 miles) southeast of Tokyo, many of them infected with the AIDS virus.

washington, d.c.

New anti-viral AIDS drug gets FDA's approval

A fourth drug that directly attacks the virus that causes AIDS was approved Monday by the Food and Drug Administration and is expected to be on the market within two weeks.

The chemical name of the new drug is stavudine, or d4T. It will be sold by Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. under the brand name Zerit.

Stavudine joins three other products — zidovudine (AZT), didanosine (ddI) and zalcitabine (ddC) — in a class of AIDS drugs called nucleoside analogs. All slow the spread of the human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV, by blocking the action of an enzyme essential to making new viral particles.

Bristol-Myers Squibb officials said that stavudine will be prescribed for HIV-infected adult patients who have shown no benefit or have become intolerant of the other anti-viral drugs.

"Stavudine is an important drug because it gives people with AIDS, and their

doctors, another treatment option when currently available drugs become less effective," said FDA Commissioner Dr. David A. Kessler.

Donald Hayden, a Bristol-Myers vice president, said that clinical trials of stavudine proved there is a need for a new weapon against AIDS.

"We put 13,000 patients into the 20-month trial," he said. "That shows that there are a number of patients in need."

Bristol-Myers Squibb applied to the FDA under the agency's accelerated approval mechanism and feder-

al officials did move swiftly. Final approval came less than six weeks after the application was reviewed by an advisory committee.

Under the accelerated approval system, the company is required to continue studying the drug to clarify its clinical effect.

Dr. Nick Hellman, a Bristol-Myers researcher, said that studies of patients' survival rates and other effects of stavudine are continuing and that some final results may be reported to the FDA by December.

austin, tx

States battle over twin girls after dad dies

Twin 5-year-old girls, at the center of a custody battle after being orphaned by an AIDS victim, could be placed in the home of a Minnesota couple as early as next week, an attorney for the couple says.

A ruling by the Texas Supreme Court apparently will fulfill the wishes of Robert Schlaepfer, who died of AIDS Sept. 2, 1993, and left the custody of his twin girls to close friends rather than to the children's Texas grandmother.

The court decision, handed down Wednesday, appears to end a 10-month custody battle between the dead man's mother, who took the children to Houston, and the couple who were granted custody of the girls.

Schlaepfer said in his will he wanted close friends Kandi Geary and Lance Rhicard, a married couple from

Duluth, Minn., to have custody of his daughters, Natasha and Felicia. The children's mother died in 1990.

A legal battle ensued after Schlaepfer's mother, Phyllis Durichek, took the children with her to Texas.

State District Judge John Peavy Jr. in Houston had granted custody of the girls to Mrs. Durichek in September, just days after a Minnesota court had granted temporary custody to Ms. Geary. The Minnesota court rendered a final decree awarding custody to Ms. Geary on May 27.

The Texas Supreme Court determined that the jurisdiction of the case belongs to the Minnesota court. The state's highest civil court ordered Peavy to withdraw his ruling.

new york

Stonewall 25: tens of thousands celebrate freedom

Unfurling a mile-long rainbow banner proclaiming their gay pride, tens of thousands of people marched Sunday in a peaceful tribute to the bar riot that ignited the gay rights movement 25 years ago.

They marched arm in arm, hand in hand, out and proud under a bright, sunny sky.

"It's amazing that in 25 years we've come so far, from when you couldn't get out of a gay bar to where you fill the streets proudly," said Jerry Clifford, who helped carry the giant nylon banner along what he called "a continuous path of freedom."

The parade, dubbed Stonewall 25, commemorated the fight with police at the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village that launched the gay liberation movement.

The parade ended at Central Park, where the crowd shared a minute of silence for AIDS victims, followed by a scream of rage.

Drag-queen singer RuPaul later brought the crowd to its feet. Wearing a metallic mini-dress, RuPaul sang a gospel-tinged number that included the lyrics "Ain't no stopping us now. Free to be who you are. Free to love who you need."

After a brief speech and some tap dancing by Gregory Hines, the crowd heard from Liza Minnelli, who told them that the Stonewall commemoration has a personal meaning for her. The riots began the day of the funeral of her mother, Judy Garland.

Police Chief John Timoney called it "the busiest day in the Police Department's history," with thousands of extra officers called out for crowd and traffic control.

Crowd estimates varied.

Organizers said 1.1 million people, including spectators, attended the march and rally. City Hall estimated 150,000, while police said the total was closer to 110,000.

Sylvia shows up in full drag at head of parade

As the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall riots approached, the single most prominent veteran was missing. But on Sunday Sylvia Rivera turned up — in full drag, at the head of a march up Fifth Avenue.

Asked what it meant to her Rivera said, "It means I'm still alive to see our gay brothers and sisters here fighting for our rights. It means I'm here to see that we still have the guts to take Fifth Avenue."

The ranks of Stonewall veterans have been decimated by AIDS and drug abuse, and until her appearance at the march friends worried that Rivera, too, had fallen.

Rivera said she had kept a low profile because she was depressed over the death two years ago of another transvestite, drag queen Marsha P. Johnson. But, she added, "I always knew I would be here to bring Marsha's spirit along."

Rivera, who is in her 40s, wore black pumps and a gold dress that was decorated with a small rainbow flag and a lavender ribbon. An AIDS ribbon was pinned to her left shoulder.

To homosexuals, Rivera was one of the bona fide heroes of Stonewall. She was also a street hustler and heroin addict, "the lowest scum of the earth at that time," as she once put it.

On the night of June 27, 1969, Sylvia was dancing at the Stonewall Inn, a Mafia-run dive in Greenwich Village, when the police launched one of their periodic raids.

"I was just not in the mood," Sylvia later explained to historian Martin Duberman. "I had got to the point where I didn't want to be bothered anymore." When the rebellion began, she said, "Something lifted off my shoulders."

Virtually every reliable account credits Sylvia with a major role in the riot. Some witnesses even say she threw the first bottle, an honor she declines.

Sylvia was a troubled, chaotic character who'd begun hustling in Times Square at the age of 11.

The first Gay Pride March was held one year after Stonewall and Sylvia walked up front.

On Sunday she was back in front, waving flamboyantly as she sashayed up Fifth. "I'm the great diva," she laughed. "Happy birthday!"