

Man runs around country to combat AIDS

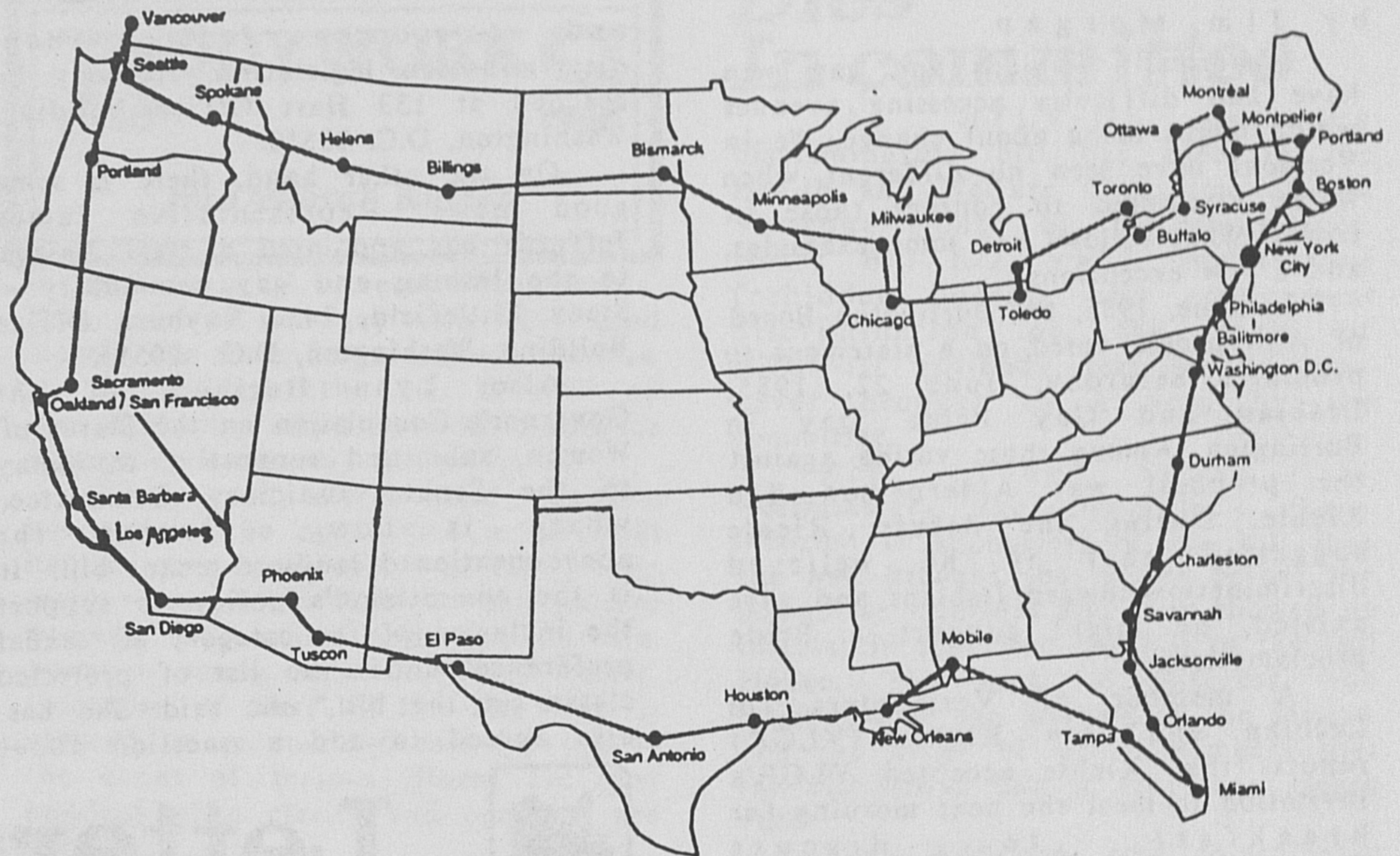
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Earle is enthusiastic about the National AIDS Network, the newly formed group which will benefit from the \$10 million he hopes the run will raise. "The Network is such an important project, because it will be there to provide advice, information-sharing and expertise to local AIDS efforts across the country. We can learn so much from each other, and everyone's efforts will be more effective as a result."

"The AIDS crisis is so overwhelming, it continues to amaze me that people have managed to produce so much positive out of it" says Earle. "The volunteers, the organizers, and the staff people around the country are real heroes. This run is in many ways an extension of that: an effort to remind people that amid all the negative press and the human suffering, individuals can still make a positive difference."

Earle is buoyed by the positive reception he has seen in the first month of the run. "Everywhere, people honk in support when they drive by, the local media provide tremendous coverage, and everyone has an encouraging word." He hopes that "by the time we make it to the west coast this fall, the run will start to get national attention. People will start to say 'hey, this guy is serious about this, he's going to do it.' That's when the run should really start bringing in money for the National AIDS Network."

He says that he is not intimidated by parts of the run that will take him



The American Run for the End of Aids

through areas of the country where AIDS hysteria and anti-gay sentiments may be pronounced. "I suppose there's a small part of me that worries about Biloxi, Mississippi, and what it will be like, but I think a major part of something like this run is that it is very non-threatening, very disarming to hostile people. If we can use the run to reach people like that and educate them, it will be worth it. AREA humanizes the fight against AIDS -- when we go through a town, suddenly

people can identify with something other than the evening news reports. It's the unfriendly places that need to hear our message the most."

"When I started, I really had to ask myself if I could do this. Now, there's no question, I have to finish. I draw so much energy along the way from all the people we meet. I know that will keep me going."

Contributions or requests for further information should be sent to: AREA, 2350 Broadway, New York, NY 10024.

Married gays face special concerns

BY Gary S.

For a very small minority of gay people, the realization and acceptance of their gay identity comes with little struggle, anguish, and anxiety. For the vast majority, however, this process can be very painful and overwhelming. The isolation that one experiences, especially the isolation from other gays, contributes to the negative assessment of one's self, and not a few few become suicidal. Most of us, if we truthfully look back at the process of coming out, can relate to the pain and the feeling of being the only one in the whole world with such insurmountable problems.

There is within this group of gay people another sub-group of gays which is little understood and even less accepted. Unlike those who "discover" their gay identity before forming serious alliances, these people have been particularly adept at suppressing their true identities and have entered the American heterosexual mainstream. They have married and produced children. And their anguish when they

do come to terms with their sexual selves can be unique. Not only do they have the usual anti-gay societal and internal messages to contend with, but they also find themselves in marriages and parental roles with varying numbers of children. Many of these people truly love their spouses and certainly their children.

The dilemma can be overwhelming. What does one do? How can one leave one's spouse and children? How can one not be true to his or her real self? There are few places to turn for help. Heterosexuals certainly do not understand. They seem to feel that as long as one was hetero before, one could remain so if one really wanted to. Most gays truthfully are not much more sympathetic. Married gays are accused of fence-setting...of being married solely to claim a tenuous connection to heterosexual respectability. Those that do accept a married gay's situation can not fully understand it. It is common to think that others went through the coming-out process with less pain: "If

only it had been just the gayness I'd had to deal with! How much simpler it would have been!"

So whom can one turn to for help when faced with such a dilemma? We can turn to each other...other married gays, others that have been married, others that have children. The problems are unique, but these people understand, and that can make a world of difference. One can make decisions and receive support, whatever the decisions, because others have been there.

This unique group of people needs to unite. Those that have been there need to help; those that are there now need help. Isolation is overcome by people joining together. Let's do so. We can explore the possibilities in a confidential atmosphere, learning and growing; not alone, but as part of a group of special, unique people.

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