

MAA HISTORY

NOTES:

People With AIDS/San Francisco preceded us, and sort of founded us. Bobby Campbell and Dan Turner of People With AIDS/San Francisco initiated that effort.

The "Castro apartment" at which MAA was born was the apartment of Paul Boneberg and Joe Norton at 647-A Castro.

There's a video of the meeting at which MAA's structure, policies etc. were created. The video was made by Charles Cyberski from Men Productions (a porn company). FYI, Cyberski is the person that attorney Walter Caplan was recently jailed for defrauding. I have the video in a box here in the office.

There was an early conflict at MAA over whether or not people should be tested for HIV. MAA had a Research and Documentation Committee, which included John James. They were in favor of testing. MAA also had a Civil Rights Committee that was against testing. The anti-testing faction prevailed because the Civil Rights Committee was the bigger committee. The Research and Documentation Committee walked out and formed DAIR, which spawned PI.

Note that Marty Delaney gave his first lecture at an MAA meeting.

MAA created the ARC AIDS Vigil, which spawned Citizens for Medical Justice (Frank Richter).

For more information about MAA's early years, see the book "Best Intentions." Also speak to Ken McPherson (who became involved with MAA in May '85) and Laurie McBride (who may have become involved even earlier) and Hank Wilson (who did the first Candlelight in '83, and was involved with MAA right from the start) and Frank Richter (the others mentioned here might know where to find him).

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1984

- This is the environment in which MAA was formed: In 1984, no national AIDS prevention education program existed. Federal funding to fight AIDS was only \$85 million, none of which was for treatment or education. One third of the AIDS research projects approved by the Federal government were not funded. Grossly inadequate services for people with AIDS and an unwillingness on the part of health care workers to treat them forced some cities to fly AIDS patients to San Francisco for treatment. The media ignored the issue of government inaction, and blamed gay men for infecting "innocent victims."

- In October of 1984, in response to a discussion with Morris Kight, Paul drafted a "brainstorm" proposal for a new organization and circulated it among friends and activists. This small group of people agreed on the urgent need for a new, grassroots, nonpartisan, gay organization to fight AIDS and to defend people with AIDS and members of "high risk" groups from discrimination.

- On December 21, 10 people met in the small front room of a Castro Street apartment to make a commitment to form this organization and to call it Mobilization Against AIDS. They decided to emulate the political tactics of the anti-Vietnam War protests and the early civil rights movement. They named Paul Boneberg, a gay activist who had recently organized the National March for Lesbian and Gay Rights at the Democratic National Convention, as the organization's sole paid staffperson. With no funding, no office, and one staffperson to be paid with money yet to be raised, MAA began its drive to mobilize the nation against AIDS.

- On December 28, MAA formed an Interim Steering Committee and Direct Action, Documentation and Structure Committees and determined a structure, timeline and budget. It decided that the purpose of the organization would be to organize militant political actions "to encourage adequate and

appropriate governmental response to the AIDS epidemic." As a political organization, MAA would be destined to remain unable to receive public funding, but as an early brochure declared, "we exist to push the Federal government into giving meaningful support and funding to the other AIDS organizations."

- On December 31, MAA sent out its first press release, announcing the formation of the group and announcing an action on January 7, 1985 in which it would present Federal and state legislators with demands for investigations into the limits and delays of AIDS funding and into the use of AIDS as a political weapon against lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.

1985

- On January 7, over 50 MAA members with picket signs, accompanied by the media, presented 2,000 signatures to all levels of elected officials, demanding investigatory hearings on AIDS. As a result, U.S. Senator Alan Cranston called for hearings in the Senate, Rep. John Burton stated his support for a hearing in the House of Representatives and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors scheduled hearings for February.

- On January 17, MAA lobbied regents of the University of California at San Francisco to expand AIDS research funding.

- On January 18, MAA picketed the San Francisco office of the Department of Health and Human Services to demand the release of funds already appropriated for AIDS.

- On January 25, MAA held a "town hall" meeting attended by over 90 people.

- From February 11-12, thanks to lobbying by MAA, the State Legislature modified legislation on imminent AIDS antibody testing to guarantee anonymous testing at alternative testing sites. The legislation was used as a model in many states across the country.

- In February, MAA picketed the Congressional Budget hearings and blocked police surveillance in gay bathhouses.

- On March 2, MAA held a press conference at San Francisco's Holocaust Memorial to criticize the Federal government for licensing an AIDS antibody test without guaranteeing the civil rights of those tested. The availability of the test was announced the same day.

- From March 29-31, MAA held a "Strategy and Founding Conference" attended by over 200 people, including many national AIDS leaders. The group's first official steering committee was elected.

- From May 20-22, a delegation of MAA members, including people with AIDS, confronted elected officials in Washington, DC. They presented 10,000 signatures on MAA petitions to the House Appropriations Committee, and had a heated, two-hour meeting with Acting Assistant Secretary for Health and Centers for Disease Control Director Dr. James Mason. During the meeting, Mason revealed that the administration was considering the possible quarantine of people with AIDS. Mason opposed the delegation's recommendation that the government launch a national education campaign to stop the spread of AIDS. Mason asserted that AIDS was not a threat to the "general public," and that it would always be confined to a small group of "highly sexually active" people.

- In May, MAA organized the AIDS Candlelight Memorial in over 40 cities on four continents. This was the largest simultaneous AIDS action to date.

- MAA's Research and Documentation Committee conducted a letter-writing campaign to the House of Delegates to the American Medical Association, encouraging them to adopt medical/scientific and patient services resolutions proposed by MAA. The Committee also generated mail to the directors of the CDC, the NIH and the FDA and to an assortment of researchers.

- MAA testified on funding and civil rights issues before the California AIDS Strategic Planning Commission.
- In June, MAA circulated petitions at various Lesbian and Gay Freedom Day events. An MAA protest against Gov. George Deukmejian's veto of \$11 million in supplemental state AIDS funding gained national exposure in *Newsweek* magazine, humiliating the governor. MAA's Research Committee spun off to become an independent nonprofit group called the Documentation of AIDS Information and Research (DAIR) - an organization which continues today.
- On July 2, MAA held a rally at Harvey Milk Plaza to protest the government's inaction on AIDS.
- On July 3, a Congressional hearing on AIDS was held in San Francisco, called by Reps. Boxer and Weiss, due primarily to MAA's demands for such a hearing. MAA Steering Committee member Richard Rector, a person with ARC, testified at the hearing. Weiss said, "the Department of Health and Human Services is charged with being the watchdog of the nation's health, and Congress is in the peculiar position of trying to get the watchdog to bark." To MAA, he said, "thank you for your expert testimony. Now, take this show on the road."
- On July 21, the Ahavat Shalom Synagogue honored MAA with its annual social action award.
- In August, lobbying by MAA convinced state legislators to restore \$5 million of the \$11 million cut from the state AIDS budget by Gov. George Deukmejian in June.
- On August 21, MAA member Patty Rose gained national media attention for AIDS issues when she completed a 130-mile walk across Death Valley to challenge President Ronald Reagan to say the word AIDS in public. During a September 17 press conference, after being asked whether he would support a "moon-shot effort" to defeat AIDS (a concept created by MAA), Reagan finally said the word.
- On September 11, 50 MAA members picketed an appearance by Vice President George Bush at a fundraiser for Sen. Pete Wilson in San Francisco over the administration's silence on AIDS. Bush told the press, "I just hope that people don't think a lack of statements is equated with a lack of concern." His comments represented the first public administration statements on AIDS.
- In September, MAA called for an investigation into the treatment of people with AIDS in the nation's prisons.
- On October 2, the death of movie star Rock Hudson generated national interest. A 700-person candlelight memorial organized by MAA on October 3 was the nation's first event in commemoration of the celebrity.
- On October 27, a group of MAA members with ARC launched an overnight vigil for people with ARC/AIDS outside the San Francisco Federal Office Building in United Nations Plaza. The next day, during MAA's "National Day of Reckoning on AIDS," some members of the group chained themselves to the building. This was the start of the ARC/AIDS Vigil, which as today's independent, non-profit HIV Vigil is the longest-running act of civil disobedience on the issue of AIDS.
- On October 28, MAA held a "National Day of Reckoning on AIDS," featuring a protest at the White House by a delegation of people with AIDS led by MAA Co-Chair Dean Sandmire, in an effort to convince the Federal government to devote the equivalent of one hour per year of Federal spending (about \$500 million) on AIDS research.
- In December, MAA testified before the U.S. Congress' Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations, which oversees the Federal Department of Health and Human Services. Also testified before the California State Senate Health Committee. Also testified before the San Francisco Board of Supervisors' special hearings on ARC.

- In a front-page editorial, *Easyriders* motorcycle magazine called for the castration and decapitation of gay people as a cure for AIDS.

- In a nationwide Gallup poll, 72% of those polled were shown to favor mandatory antibody testing for health care workers and food handlers. A Los Angeles Times poll showed that 42% favored closing gay bars, 51% favored quarantining people with AIDS, and 15% favored tattooing people with AIDS.

- MAA chapters formed in Seattle and Phoenix.

1986

- MAA demanded that the federal government spend \$500 million on AIDS. \$416 million was eventually appropriated.

- On February 4, MAA testified before the San Francisco Human Rights Commission on discrimination against people with ARC/AIDS.

- From February 4-8, a delegation from the ARC/AIDS Vigil, led by MAA Office Manager Frank Richter, demonstrated in Washington, DC.

- On February 12, MAA held a press conference at San Francisco's Holocaust Memorial, featuring representatives of religious organizations, to denounce calls for quarantine of people with AIDS.

- On February 14, MAA succeeded in having a discussion of AIDS funding added to the agenda of a congressional Budget Committee hearing in San Francisco. MAA was also responsible for alerting activists in the other cities in which the Committee held hearings of the opportunity to press the issue.

- On February 15, MAA won a Cable Car Award for "Outstanding Community Event" for organizing the 1985 AIDS Candlelight Memorial.

- MAA testified at the National Academy of Science-Institute of Medicine Commission on AIDS.

- Four members of MAA, including people with AIDS, were named to the California AIDS Strategic

Planning Commission. MAA's influence on the Commission was partly responsible for the Commission's strong AIDS master plan for the state.

- MAA lobbied Assembly Speaker Willie Brown and Assemblyman William Filante to assure their opposition to forced testing bills.

- MAA organized a large protest against Jerry Falwell, a primary spokesperson against the civil rights of people with AIDS, at a Falwell speech in San Jose.

- MAA produced the first San Francisco AIDS Dance-a-thon.

- On May 26, MAA's Third Annual International AIDS Candlelight Memorial occurred in over 75 locations. MAA provided a videotaped public service announcement for the event, featuring Carol Channing, to each participating American city.

- An MAA chapter formed in Los Angeles

- In November, voters rejected the LaRouche AIDS Initiative, Prop. 64, which would have required people who are suspected of carrying the AIDS virus to report their names to public health authorities; would have required the removal from schools of schoolchildren and teachers who carry the virus, and the firing of food handlers who carry the virus; and would have permitted the arrest and internment of those found to carry the virus. MAA led the battle to defeat the Initiative.

1987

- By 1987, MAA's agenda included pressuring the federal government to create a national AIDS coordinating commission, to create a national health insurance program, to expand the availability of AIDS medications and treatment protocols and to expand the definition of AIDS in order to provide proper services and treatment to anyone infected with HIV.

- MAA demanded that the federal government spend \$2 billion on AIDS.

- MAA was instrumental in ensuring that AIDS was discussed during hearings conducted by the House Budget Committee in Los Angeles. At that hearing, congressional representatives on the Budget Committee formed an unprecedented AIDS Task Force.

- MAA conducted a petition campaign imploring President Reagan, the U.S. Congress and state legislatures to enact legislation guaranteeing the civil rights of the HIV-infected.

- MAA sent an open letter to Rep. Barbara Boxer criticizing her for compromising on AIDS funding and urging her to push for a greater increase in AIDS funding.

- MAA's Dr. Bill Paul led a successful effort to stall and defeat new proposals by California county public health officers to quarantine "recalcitrant" HIV-infected people.

- MAA conducted a campaign asking city councils in key cities nationwide to pressure local television stations to accept advertisements for condoms.

- In January, MAA issued threatened a boycott of and issued four demands to Delta Airlines in response to incidents of AIDS discrimination. Delta had refused to carry a person with AIDS, and claimed it was because the person was too ill to travel unattended, even though the person produced a doctor's letter stating that he was fit to travel. Additionally, Delta attorneys had argued in a settlement case that the life of a gay man killed on a Delta flight was lessened in monetary worth by the possibility that he might have contracted AIDS. Delta capitulated to three of MAA's demands, including demands that it reaffirm its existing policy of not discriminating against people with AIDS, that it publicly apologize for statements made by its attorneys in the settlement case, and that it sponsor AIDS education seminars among all Delta employees.

- In February, MAA staff members Paul Boneberg and Ralph Payne and representatives of several other

AIDS organizations lobbied members of the CDC to drop its mandatory HIV testing proposals and to support federal nondiscrimination legislation for people with HIV and AIDS. MAA circulated a petition on the latter issue, which was signed by many public health officials including Dr. James Curran, head of the CDC's AIDS programs. MAA was successful in both of its goals.

- On May 5, MAA co-sponsored a picket at the San Francisco Federal Building to protest new policies by the U.S. Job Corps that would require residential applicants to produce negative HIV-antibody test results.

1988

- Another LaRouche AIDS Quarantine Initiative

- Dannemeyer AIDS Initiative, Prop. 102

- MAA helped enact legislation to create model treatment centers for HIV-infected Californians.

- MAA formulated "20 Questions for the Next President of the United States." MAA worked to ensure that presidential candidates addressed AIDS issues in their campaigns.

1989

- There was no increase in the amount of Federal money allocated to AIDS.

- MAA participated in critical meetings of the National Institutes of Health with the pharmaceutical giant Bristol-Meyers-Squibb at which it was agreed that the promising new anti-viral drug ddI would be put on an unprecedented "fast track" to make it available to patients.

1990

- Federal legislation was passed to explicitly prohibit discrimination against people with AIDS.

- The Federal AIDS budget was \$1.8 billion.

- Progress is being made in developing new antiviral drugs, new drugs to treat opportunistic infections and AIDS vaccines. In addition, promising but small-scale "community-based research" is being conducted by physicians, patients, and activists. Roughly eighty drugs were in human testing as of June 1990.

- New research seems to show that the related drugs ddI and ddC are as effective as the anti-viral agent AZT but less toxic.

- Aerosolized pentamidine is shown to be effective in over 90% of patients to prevent Pneumocystis Pneumonia (PCP, a common AIDS-related infection). 47.5% of people with AIDS in California in 1990 had a bout of PCP.

- California's congressional delegation in 1990 was a potent force in the House of Representatives, particularly in budget and finance areas, where it held collectively more seats than any other state. California had five seats on the House Appropriations Committee: Reps. Dixon, Fazio, Lewis, Lowery and Roybal. On the Ways and Means Committee, the state had three seats: Reps. Matsui, Stark (Chair of the Subcommittee on Health) and Thomas. On the powerful House Budget Committee the state held five seats: Reps. Beilenson, Berman, Boxer (Chair of the Committee's Human Resources Task Force), Panetta (Chair of the Committee) and Thomas. And as Chair of the Health and Labor Subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Rep. Waxman was perhaps the most important congressional player on AIDS-related issues.

- To maximize the home-turf advantage, MAA assembled and briefed an informal association of fourteen California AIDS agencies: AIDS Project/Los Angeles, the Alameda County Advisory Board, the ARIS Project of San Jose, the Coachella Valley AIDS Consortium in Palm Springs, the Coalition for Compassion in Los Angeles, the Inland AIDS Project in San Bernardino County, the Long Beach AIDS Network, the Los Angeles-based Minority AIDS Project, the Sacramento AIDS Foundation, the San Diego AIDS Project, the Santa Cruz AIDS Project, and, in San Francisco, Project

Inform, the San Francisco AIDS Foundation and MAA.

These groups were chosen principally for their geographic diversity within the state, with a specific, pragmatic emphasis on groups that serve the congressional districts of the California representatives listed above. MAA coordinated and attended the meetings with the various local groups. Some of the representatives we met with had never had face-to-face meetings with constituents in their district office on AIDS issues.

- MAA's lobbying efforts in 1990 focused on increasing the allocation of funds for research and treatment, and streamlining the drug review process.

- MAA's most important activity in the funding arena came as the result of our face-to-face meetings with Budget Committee Chair Panetta. Panetta advocated for and secured hundreds of millions of dollars in increased AIDS funding during the White House budget summit meetings and in the Congress itself.

- MAA's most dramatic success on the drug front was the coordination of a "Dear Colleague" letter, circulated throughout Congress by Rep. Barbara Boxer, asking David Kessler, Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, to expedite the release of promising AIDS drugs ddI and ddC. By the time the letter was presented to Kessler, it had been signed by twenty-four members of Congress.

- MAA successfully pressured the California gubernatorial candidates to address AIDS issues in their campaigns.

- In the spring of 1990 MAA launched the Lobby Team, a grassroots army of letter-writers with which Mobilization generates hundreds of pieces of mail to key Congresspeople when crucial AIDS legislation is under consideration.

Four to eight times a year, MAA targets the pressure points that will open doors to increased state and federal response to AIDS. Lobby Team members then receive a packet of information designed to make it easy for them to write an effective, informed,

and personal letter. The packet includes a fact sheet outlining the pressing AIDS issue at hand, a brief background sheet on the targeted official, notes for the letter, an update on results of the previous Lobby Team activation, and a "Short-Cut to Action" sheet with bare-bones information for people who only have a few minutes to devote to the project.

About 1,000 people joined the Lobby Team in 1990.

- The first Lobby Team activation, in May, targeted Rep. Leon Panetta, chair of the House Budget Committee.

Thanks in part to the Lobby Team activation and the direct lobbying meetings coordinated by MAA, Rep. Panetta advocated in Congress and at the budget summit for more than a \$1 billion increase in AIDS spending.

- On May 20, the Seventh Annual International AIDS Candlelight Memorial happened in over thirty countries and two hundred cities.

In the U.S., MAA succeeded in gaining the participation of President and Mrs. Bush, who placed candles in the windows of the White House. Consequently, MAA launched the "First Families" campaign to involve civic leaders worldwide.

Most significant among the 1990 additions to our network of participants were Japan, Italy, and Sri Lanka.

- On Saturday, June 23, 1990, 20,000 people participated in the "HIV/AIDS March: A United Call to Action," of which MAA was the prime organizer. It was the largest AIDS demonstration of the year. The March and rally were coordinated to coincide with the Sixth International Conference on AIDS, hosted by San Francisco. The event united leading scientists, including Conference Co-Chair Dr. Paul Volberding, Dr. Jonathan Mann, Director of the World Health Organization's Global AIDS Program, and Dr. Mervyn Silverman, Director of AmFAR, with activists, including ACT UP, the Women's AIDS Network and the Black Coalition on AIDS and dozens of other multicultural agencies in their

common concern for issues that might otherwise have been overlooked by the conflict-focused world media.

The endorsing agencies formulated six principles for the event to spotlight: demands for "disaster relief" to areas hardest hit by AIDS; effective treatment; universal health care; massive funding increases for research; protection of civil rights; and an end to the discrimination that has sabotaged the fight against AIDS.

- Near the end of the year, MAA conducted a survey of its members. The average respondent was male (85%), between 35 and 49 years old (49%), gay (84%), Democrat (69%), and votes in every election (86%).

80% answered that someone close to them is fighting HIV infection. 44% rated the 1990 federal response to AIDS a "4" on a scale from "1" (excellent) to "5" (poor). 56% thought AIDS groups should be "1" in urging people to get tested and seek treatment, on a scale from "1" (aggressive) to "5" (neutral).

Respondents ranked the importance of MAA's activities as follows: direct lobbying on the federal level; direct lobbying overall; direct lobbying on the state level; direct lobbying on the local level; Lobby Team; International AIDS Candlelight Memorial; and marches, pickets and direct action.

On a scale from "1" (most) to "5" (least), 49% of the respondents rated the importance of MAA's focus on access to treatment "1."

On a scale from "1" (greatest) to "5" (least) 40% of the respondents rated the importance of MAA's focus on improvement of AIDS services specifically targeting lesbians and gay men of color a "2."

62% of respondents indicated that MAA should support - financially or otherwise - marches, pickets and direct action activities.

Respondents were evenly divided on the question of whether Mobilization should stay in California or move to Washington, DC.

40% of respondents indicated that they hear "infrequently" about MAA's activities in the media or from friends.

66% of respondents indicated that they belong to other groups that fight AIDS. Leading the list of those other groups were the American Foundation for AIDS Research, the Human Rights Campaign Fund, ACT UP, Project Inform and AIDS Project Los Angeles.

Respondents' most frequent answers to the question of how MAA should improve its work were: achieve greater visibility/publicity (including a newsletter); ally with other AIDS groups to fight AIDS as a united front; and educate legislators.

- MAA hosted almost 600 dancers at its Fourth Annual San Francisco AIDS Dance-a-Thon at the Fashion Center on Sunday, December 2. The gross revenue of \$127,000 set a record for the event. Strong publicity was generated by sponsors KMEL 106 FM and the *San Francisco Sentinel* newspaper; the endorsement of pop superstar Paula Abdul; and the performance of music group Tony Toni Tone. Proceeds were distributed to these Bay Area agencies: AIDS Action Council, AIDS Emergency Fund, Black Coalition on AIDS, GAPA HIV/AIDS Program, Latino Coalition on AIDS/SIDA, LIFE/AIDS Lobby, Mobilization Against AIDS, Project Inform, San Francisco AIDS Foundation, and the Shanti Project.

- In November, MAA also mounted a postcard campaign targeting both Rep. Henry Waxman, chair of the Health and the Environment Subcommittee of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, and FDA Commissioner David Kessler, urging them to press for FDA approval of ddI and ddC. The postcards also urged Rep. Waxman and Commissioner Kessler to consider a comprehensive reform of the system by which drugs for all life-threatening diseases are tested and approved for use.

- In December, the Lobby Team also targeted Rep. Waxman, asking that he force the FDA to speed up

the process by which potentially lifesaving drugs are reviewed and approved.

1991

- MAA met with the highest levels of the Food and Drug Administration to push for acceleration of the approval of AIDS drugs, particularly ddI and ddC.

- MAA asked key members of Congress to push the FDA on this matter because of the FDA's unsatisfactory response (the FDA said "be patient"). This resulted in strong pressure on the FDA Commissioner by Congress.

- MAA met with key members and staff of the House Budget and Appropriations Committee to push for a billion dollars in increased federal AIDS funding.

- MAA activated the Lobby Team, deluged targeted Congressional Representatives with letters, and organized meetings in the local district offices because of resistance to proposals for increases in funding.

- MAA prioritized the expansion of the International AIDS Candlelight Memorial and Mobilization.

- MAA conducted a postcard campaign directed to the CDC supporting the recommendations of most medical authorities that HIV-positive people not be banned from travel in or immigration to the U.S.