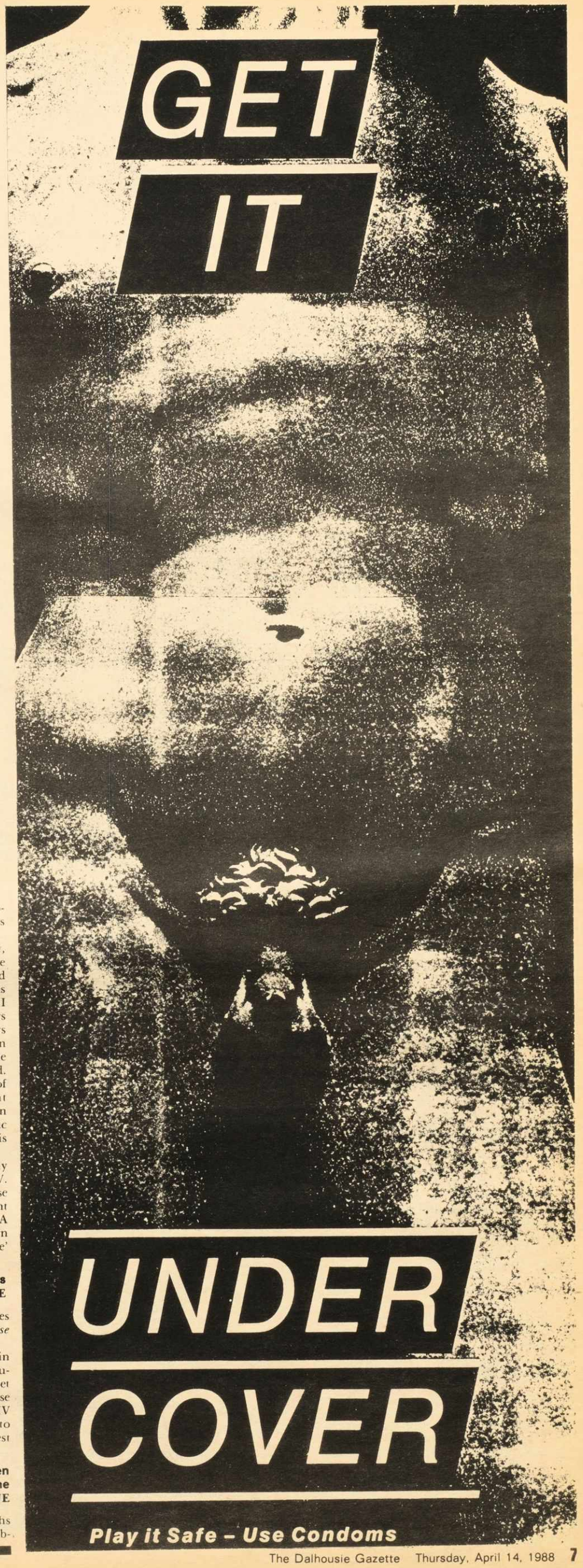

AIDS is a very serious disease.

The good news is that the HI virus (AIDS virus) cannot be caught through casual, everyday contact. There have been no infections caused by shaking hands, hugging, crying, bed linen, straws, eating utensils, food, insects, or animals.

The term AIDS was first used to describe the advanced stages of a serious illness in which the body's immune system failed to perform its natural functions. It is important to understand that AIDS is caused by a virus - Human Immunodeficiency Virus(HIV). It previously had been called Human T-Lymphotrophic Virus, type III(HTLV-III), Lymphadenopathy Associated Virus(LAV), or AIDS Related Virus(ARV). The virus may be present in the body long before any AIDS symtoms become apparent. Researchers are investigating whether certain co-factors may be necessary to trigger the disease. Preliminary studies show that some individuals with HIV infection demonstrate symptoms while others have no symtoms, most HIV infected persons remain in good health; others may develop illness varying in severity from mild to extremely serious.

However, all persons infected with AIDS virus, whether they show any symptoms or not, present risks of transmitting the virus to others.

This HI virus(which causes AIDS) is found in the blood, semen or vaginal fluid of an infected person, and is spread when any of these infected substances enters another person's body(bloodstream).

The virus has also been isolated in the laboratory from tears, sweat and saliva of some infected individuals. However, in over 45,000 known cases of AIDS worldwide, *not one* is known to have contracted the disease from these bodily fluids.

If the virus is able to enter the body in sufficient concentration *and* if it finds its way into the bloodstream, it can have devastating effects.

The following are the answers to the AIDS survey conducted by the Dalhousie AIDS Education Committee.

Being HIV positive is the same as having AIDS **FALSE**

HIV is the Human Immunodeficiency Virus which is present in AIDS but is also found in the stages leading up to AIDS.

HIV positive: when a person has been in contact with the HI virus and has produced antibodies. The person does not necessarily have AIDS. All persons with AIDS are HIV positive but not all HIV positive people have AIDS.

HIV carrier is the same as a person who is HIV positive.

AIDS carrier is used synonymously, although incorrectly, to describe someone who is HIV positive. This term should not be used. HIV positive is the more appropriate term since the person may not actually have AIDS.

TESTING FOR AIDS

How is AIDS diagnosed?

There is no simple single laboratory test for AIDS. To diagnose AIDS a physician needs a medical history, a physical examination and a number of tests. The doctor will ask about, and look for, physical symptoms like swollen lymph glands, weight loss , night sweats, severe fatigue and certain skin conditions. If sympoms or signs are present and persist for a number of weeks, the physician may request blood tests.

What kinds of tests can be done?

Three types of tests may help in diagnosing AIDS or AIDS-related conditions:

1.Blood screeening tests for the AIDS virus *antibody*.
2.Tests of the immune system.
3.AIDS *virus* tests.

The AIDS test checks for the AIDS antibody in the blood sample **TRUE**

The AIDS(HIV) antibody is produced by the body in response to an invasion y the HI virus - it shows that the virus is or has been in the body. *The AIDS test does not detect the virus itself.* If HIV antibodies are found in a person's blood, it doesn't necessarily mean that the person has AIDS or will develop AIDS. Nor does it mean the person is immune to AIDS (usually antibodies protect a person from a disease, but this is not the case with the HI virus antibodies).

If antibodies are found, it simply means that, at some time in the past, the virus has entered the person's bloodstream. It is currently estimated that 40 per cent of people who have antibodies will develop AIDS. Some people have the HI virus in their bloostreams for a number of years and never develop symptoms of AIDS. Others develop AIDS after the virus has been present in the blood for a few months. Tests are available that can identify HIV antibodies in the blood. The blood screening process involves the use of an ELISA(enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay) screening test. If the results are positive on two of these tests a more sensitive and specific antibody test known as the *Western Blot* is conducted.

All studies indicate that these tests are highly effective in identifying blood infected with HIV. In fact, the ELISA test errs on the side of 'false positive' readings, since only about 10 per cent of blood that tests positive on the initial ELISA test is confirmed positive through the Western Blot. An antibody test is not called 'positive' until the test is repeated and confirmed.

The AIDS test checks to see if the AIDS virus (HIV) is present in the blood sample **FALSE**

When the HI virus enters the body, antibodies are produced - the AIDS test identifies *these antibodies*, not the actual virus.

Very specialized and expensive tests used in research can determine whether HI virus is actually in a person's blood. These tests are not yet available for diagnosing AIDS or for wider use in testing large numbers of people for HIV infection. Researchers are currently working to develop simpler and less expensive ways to test for HI virus in the blood.

The AIDS test result may be negative even though the person has been infected with the AIDS(HI) virus **TRUE**

Because there can be a delay of 3 to 6 months before the body reacts to the HI virus with antib-