

Awake!

DECEMBER 22, 2002



ELECTRONIC GAMES
Is There a Dark Side?

Awake!

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Learn how one man won his lifelong battle against religious oppression.



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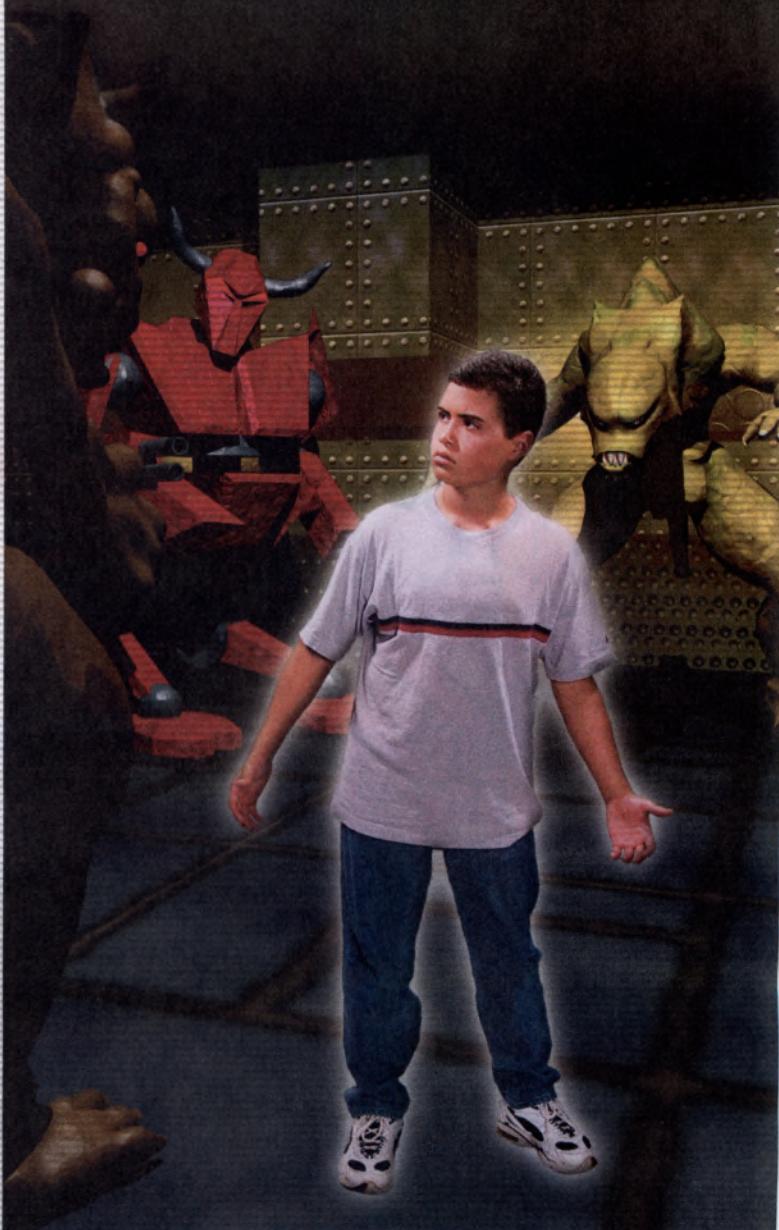
What do you need in order to control this powerful force in your life?

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ELECTRONIC GAMES

Is There a Dark Side? 3-8

Some say that computer and video games are educational at best, harmless fun at worst. Others call them dangerous. Are there risks that you and your family should know about?



The Changing World of ELECTRONIC GAMES

"Last year's best-selling videogame," according to "Newsweek" magazine, "was Grand Theft Auto 3." The object of the game is to advance in a criminal organization by taking part in various crimes, such as prostitution and murder. "Each of your actions has consequences," notes "Newsweek." If you kill pedestrians in your stolen car, police officers chase you. If you shoot one of them, the FBI gets involved. Kill an FBI agent, and the military seek to destroy you. Although the game is intended for those 17 and older, stores have been known to sell the game to younger children. Reportedly, even 12-year-olds are expressing interest in playing.

THE first modern computer game, Spacewar, was created in 1962. The game's objective: fight off asteroids and enemy spaceships. Countless similar games eventually followed. When more powerful personal computers became widespread in the 1970's and 1980's, computer games became increasingly common. There were adventure games, quiz games, strategy games, and action games. One type of strategy game, for example, requires the player to plan and manage the growth of cities or civilizations. Many games simulate sports, such as ice hockey and golf.

There are games that are praised for being educational and entertaining. In some, you can try to land a jumbo jet, drive a race car or a steam engine, ride a snowboard, or travel around the world. However, some action games, such as those called shoot-em-up games, are often criticized because of their violent content. A common objective for the player is to choose a weapon and then shoot and kill different human or nonhuman enemies.

On-Line Games—A New Trend

The land of Britannia has about 230,000 citizens. They are people of all sorts—soldiers, tailors, blacksmiths, and musicians. They

wage war, build cities, open shops, get married, and die. Yet, this particular Britannia does not exist in reality. It is a virtual medieval world, a place where network players compete and interact with one another simultaneously—a form of computer game, called an online game, that has become increasingly popular and is expected to be the "next big thing" in computer gaming. Launched in 1997, Ultima Online—which includes the fantasyland Britannia—was the first Internet-based game. Since then, many other Internet games have arisen, and more are in the works.

What is different about this type of game? The various characters you meet in the game are controlled, not by a computer, but by other players acting simultaneously over the Internet. Thousands of people can participate in the same game. For example, Ultima Online is said to have had players from 114 countries participating at the same time. The popularity of these games may depend a lot on the social contact involved. Players can chat with each other and thus feel that they are part of a global community.

Big Business

The electronic-game industry is very optimistic about its future. By 1997 the annual

income from the American computer- and video-game industry reached \$5.3 billion, and the worldwide sales were at least \$10 billion. This trend shows no signs of losing momentum. The market is expected to increase by 50 to 75 percent during the coming five years.

Every day, according to *Forrester Research*, over a million people log on to different Internet-based games, and it is said that interest in on-line games will increase with the

spread of broadband, a type of high-speed Internet connection. Children who have grown up playing computer games show no sign of stopping when they get older. One long-time player says: "Playing computer games has become a way of associating with friends from all over the world."

Are all such games harmless entertainment, or are there risks involved? Let us see.

Are Game Players at Risk?

The 12-year-old boy "cornered an unarmed opponent and held the gun to his head at point-blank range. 'You can't get away!' the boy said with a maniacal sneer, taunting the character on the screen. 'You're mine!' The boy pushed the button and shot the character in the face. Blood splattered the lab coat of the character as he whirled and fell. 'You're down!' the boy said, laughing."

THIS example of a certain computer game situation, quoted from the article "Computer Violence: Are Your Kids at Risk?" by Stephen Barr, raises the question in our title. There are over 5,000 different computer and video games on the market. A segment of them are considered to be both educational and harmlessly entertaining.

One such game teaches geography; and another, how to fly an airplane. Others train the player in logical thinking and problem solving. There are even games that are intended to have a therapeutic effect on the player. For example, one is designed to help those with a reading disorder. Some games may also help

Awake!®

THIS JOURNAL IS PUBLISHED for the enlightenment of the entire family. It shows how to cope with today's problems. It reports the news, tells about people in many lands, examines religion and science. But it does more. It probes beneath the surface and points to the real meaning behind current events, yet it always stays politically neutral and does not exalt one race above another. Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things.

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young people to become more computer literate, which is increasingly important in this technology-driven era.

Experts Point Out the Dark Side

"A segment of games features anti-social themes of violence, sex and crude language," says David Walsh, president of the National Institute on Media and the Family. "Unfortunately, it's a segment that seems particularly popular with kids ages eight to 15."

One study in the United States showed that almost 80 percent of the video games young people preferred contained violence. Rick Dyer, president of Virtual Image Productions, says: "These are not just games anymore. These are learning machines. We're teaching kids in the most incredible manner what it's like to pull the trigger. . . . What they're not learning are the real-life consequences."

Public outcry against violent games was made as early as 1976 in response to the arcade game Death Race. The idea of the game was to run over pedestrians walking back and forth across the screen. The player who ran over the most pedestrians won. The new, more sophisticated games have better graphics and allow the player to participate in even more realistic violent acts.

In the game Carmageddon, for example, the player will have driven over and killed up to 33,000 people by the time all levels are completed. A description of the sequel to the game says: "Your victims not

only squish under your tires and splatter blood on the windshield, they also get on their knees and beg for mercy, or commit suicide. If you like, you can also dismember them."

Is all this simulated violence harmful? Approximately 3,000 different studies have been conducted on this subject. Many have suggested that there is a connection between violence in games and increased aggressiveness in the players. Incidents of violence among youths are often seen as evidence of a connection.

Some specialists downplay the influence of the games, saying that other factors must be taken into consideration, such as the possibility that kids who already have violent tendencies are choosing such games. But could it be that violent games still play a contributing role? It seems unrealistic to insist that people are not influenced by what they see. If that were true, why would the corporate world spend billions of dollars annually for television advertising?



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ELECTRONIC GAMES—A Summary of the Risks

Playing violent computer and video games may encourage aggressive behavior.

Electronic games can make you more than a spectator of violence; they are designed to make you feel like a participant.

For the impressionable, games may blur the distinction between reality and fantasy.

Like an addiction, game playing can lead to neglect of important obligations and relationships.

Games can consume time that children should spend on other important activities, such as studying, interacting with others, and playing creatively.

Prolonged staring at the screen can cause eyestrain.

Lack of exercise, a possible result of game playing, can lead to obesity.

Games can rob you of money and time.

"The Skill and the Will to Kill"

Military psychologist David Grossman, author of the book *On Killing*, claims that violence in computer games trains children in the same way that military training teaches soldiers to overcome their inborn resistance to killing. For example, the military discovered that it was possible to break down this reluctance in a large percentage of people in the infantry simply by replacing the normal bull's-eye targets with man-shaped targets during shooting practice. In a similar fashion, claims Grossman, violent games teach children "the skill and the will to kill."

According to research appearing in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, video- and computer-game violence may be even more dangerous than violence shown on television or in films, since the player identifies himself with the characters carrying out the violence. Television can make us spectators of violence; computer games can make us feel like participants. Furthermore, a movie may take a child only a couple of hours to watch, but a child may spend up to 100 hours mastering a typical video game.

Some countries have implemented a classification system de-

signed to point out that brutally violent games are only for adults. But such a system is useful only to the extent that it is enforced. One study in the United States showed that 66 percent of the parents surveyed were not even familiar with the rating system. The director of the Entertainment Software Rating Board says that the system is not primarily designed to prevent children from getting certain games. He explains: "Our role is not to dictate taste. We give parents the tools to determine what they do or don't want for their children."

Addictive Games?

The new on-line games, played on the Internet with people around the globe, let each player choose to play the role of a certain character, which can advance through various challenges, making the player feel increasingly successful. The time that a player spends on his character becomes an investment and gives the player a sense of reward that draws him back for more. For some, playing can seem almost addictive—perhaps this is one reason why an on-line game can continue for months or even years.

Some say there is a connection between game violence and aggressiveness in the players





An Internet game room in Seoul, Korea

Time magazine reported that lately in South Korea there has been great interest in the online game called Lineage. In this game the participants fight for victory in a medieval environment. The player progresses through various levels, seeking to achieve special rank. Some youths play all night long and have trouble staying awake during school the next day. Parents worry but do not always know how to handle the problem. One young player explained in an interview: "When people meet me online they think I'm sharp, but when they meet me off-line, they advise me to lose weight."

The Korean psychologist Joonmo Kwon offers his explanation of why Lineage has won such popularity: "In the real world, in Korea, you have to repress your drives and hidden desires. In the game they come out." Young people thus flee from reality into a fantasy world. One astute commentator describes game players this way: "For the gamer, the game world is much more attractive than reality. Reality is only a space in which he makes a small amount of necessary money for continuing the game."

Effects on Health

Statistics from the United States show that the average sixth-grade student watches four hours of television per day—and that does not

even include the time he spends playing games while staring at a computer or a TV screen. In a 1995 survey, more than 60 percent of the children admitted that they often played longer than they intended. Neglect of schoolwork can easily result. A Japanese study showed that computer games stimulate only a limited part of a child's brain. According to the study, children need more reading, writing, and arithmetic. But for their brains to develop fully, they also need the stimulation of playing outside with other children and interacting with others.

Reportedly, some 40 percent of U.S. children between five and eight years of age are clinically obese. Likely contributing to the problem is a lack of exercise because of too much time spent in front of the TV or computer screen. One company has even developed exercise equipment that can be used while playing computer games. Obviously, though, it would be far better to limit the time spent playing such games, leaving ample time for other activities that help a child to develop a well-rounded personality.

Another health issue: Eye problems may result from staring at a screen for great lengths of time. Surveys show that at least a quarter of all computer users experience visual problems. One reason is that the blink rate may slow

down, causing dryness and irritation of the eye. Blinking clears the eye, stimulating tear production and washing out contaminants.

With their limited measure of self-awareness, children can play computer games for hours on end, with few breaks. This may cause eyestrain and focusing problems. Experts suggest taking regular breaks of several minutes after each hour of computer use.*

A Global Business on the March

Interest in on-line games seems to be on the

* Additionally, some recommend that all computer users relax their eyes every 15 minutes by looking away from the screen at objects farther away. Others suggest sitting at least two feet from the screen and avoiding computer use when feeling tired.

One Way of Kicking the Habit

Thomas, a 23-year-old Christian, recalls: "When I was a schoolboy, my homework suffered a lot because of my game playing. Later in life it affected other things. I continued playing, even after I became a full-time volunteer minister. I finally realized that it was taking up too much of my time and energy. Sometimes when I had played before going out in the ministry or to a Christian meeting, I found it very difficult to concentrate. I was almost always thinking about how I would solve a certain game problem after getting home. My personal study and regular Bible reading suffered. My joy in serving God began to decline."

"Late one night when in bed, I felt that I just couldn't go on like that. I got up, turned on my computer, selected all the games, and pushed the delete button. Gone in a second! That was really tough. I realized that I was more attached to games than I had thought. But I also experienced a great feeling of victory because I knew that I had done it for my own good. I admit that I have bought a few games since then. But now I am far stricter with myself. As soon as I find it difficult to keep my playing at a balanced level, I just push the delete button again."



rise all over the world. In more and more places, Internet cafés are being opened. They are furnished with a number of computers, and the guests pay to play network games. It is not unheard of for youths to spend \$200 a month at such cafés.

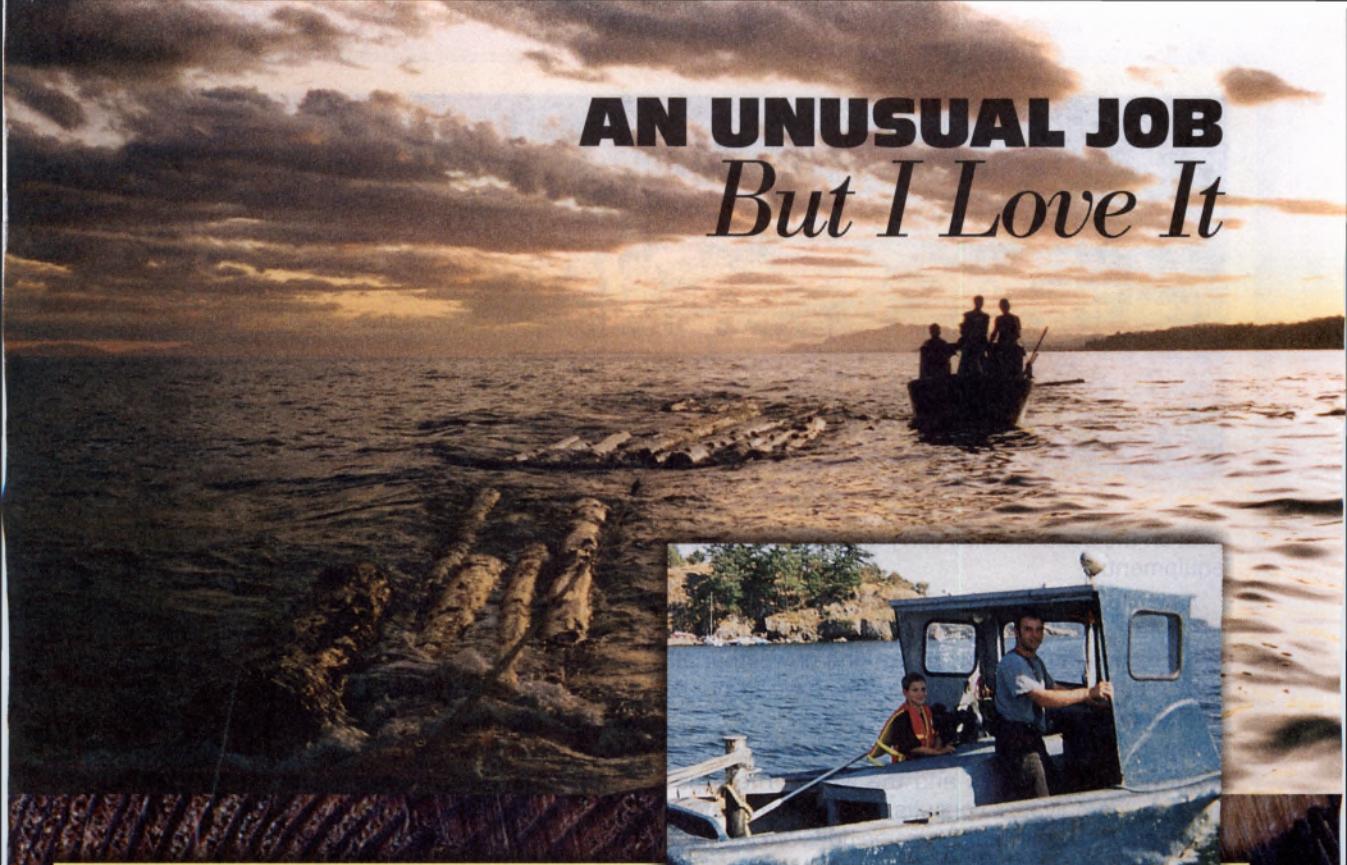
No doubt about it, the gaming industry is on the march. It is expected that the market for on-line games will increase by over 70 percent in the next five years.

Clearly, though, this booming industry has its dark side. The risks are real. None of us can afford to endanger our health, waste inordinate amounts of time and money, or become accustomed to violence and killing. Our children are even less able to afford such costs. So it can hardly be said that computer games are always educational or harmless entertainment. David Walsh, quoted earlier, warns: "The media are probably more powerful than we realize." He adds: "If parents are responsible for caring for their children, then our definition of caring has to keep pace with a changing media world."

Indeed, as the Bible says, "the scene of this world is changing." (1 Corinthians 7:31) And nothing, it seems, changes faster than the entertainment media. More than a few parents feel overwhelmed just trying to keep up with the ever-shifting trends and influences that bombard their children from day to day. Do not lose heart, though. Many parents are finding success in raising their children by helping them to focus on what truly matters. Children, like the rest of us, need to know that our greatest needs can never be filled by entertainment—whether through the computer, TV, or any other medium. True happiness, as Jesus once said, comes to those "conscious of their spiritual need."—Matthew 5:3.

AN UNUSUAL JOB

But I Love It



THE morning quiet is broken by the hum of my specialized boat as I leave Gibsons' sleepy harbor behind. It is daybreak—time for me to set out in search of my "quarry."

On the west coast of Canada, many jobs are associated with forestry and logging, as mine is. Few jobs, though, are as unusual as mine. I salvage logs. It is not a new occupation. In fact, some of us doing this work are fourth-generation salvagers. You might say that we were recycling before it was fashionable! I work in the area of Howe Sound and the Strait of Georgia, between Vancouver Island and the coastline of British Columbia. This region is just a part of the Vancouver Log Salvage District.

One of the principal ways in which logging companies move felled trees, called logs, is by gathering them together within floating lines, or booms, or by using barges. Transporting timber via water is economically efficient. And thanks to the Pacific Ocean, water is plentiful here. There are many factors, however, that make the process a little tricky. The wind and tides change quickly, and



storms come up quite suddenly. Thus, many logs are lost. That is where log salvagers come in.

Reclaiming Lost Logs

Only licensed marine log salvagers can salvage marketable logs that have escaped from booms or barges. Salvagers pay annually for the license, which when first issued comes with a stamp hammer bearing the unique license number. Any log found floating or resting on the beach below the high-water mark is salvageable. First we stamp it with our identification number.

A well-equipped boat is also necessary. This is not your average pleasure boat. We use rough, tough little vessels ranging from outboards to tugs—but with very thick hulls. Iron teeth on the bow are used for pushing logs around, and we always have a good supply of dog lines. What is a dog line? Approximately 15 feet of strong rope with a metal spike, called a dog, attached to the end. When we find a salvageable log, we drive the dog securely into the log and attach the dog line to a tow



A salvager securing a beached log

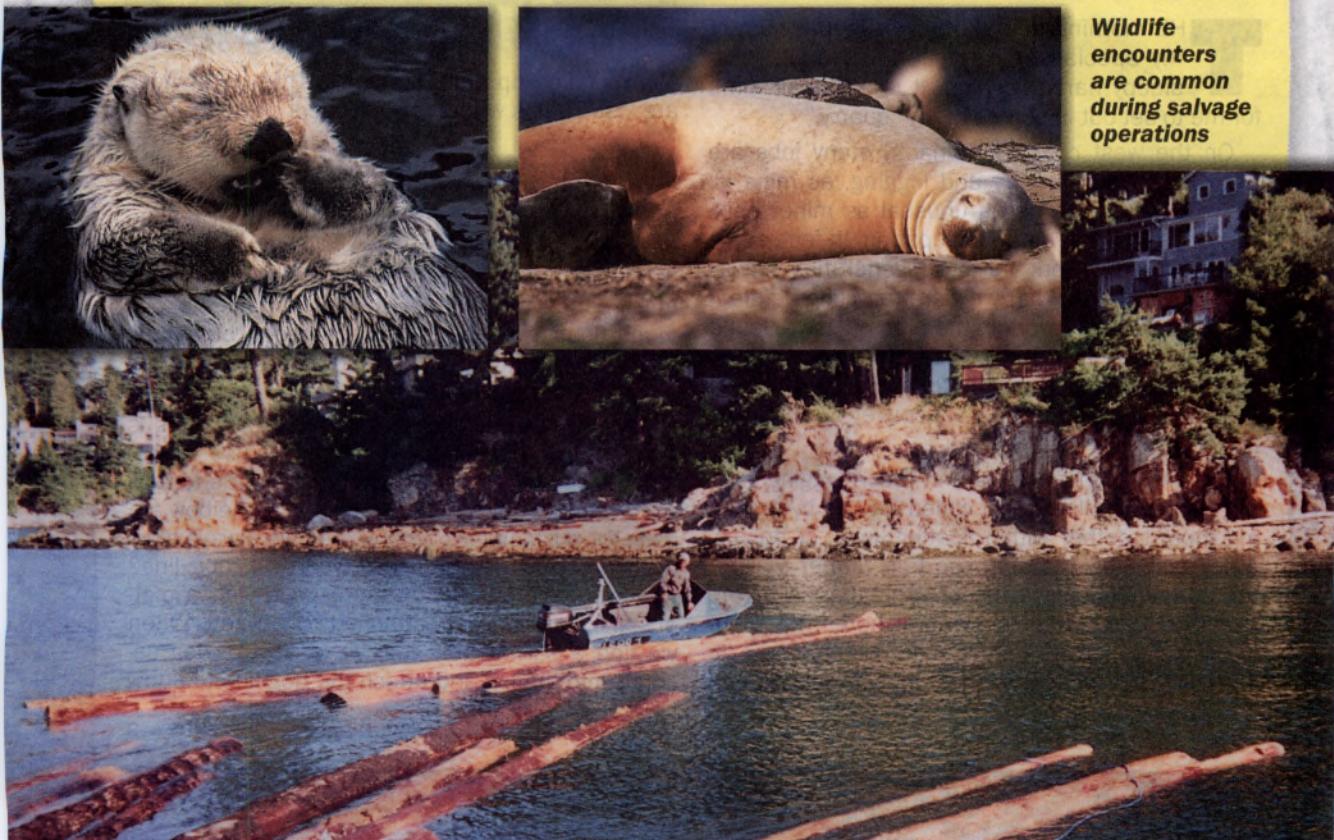
post on the boat. We also carry all necessary safety equipment.

A new log salvager will quickly find that there is a lot more to this occupation than first meets the eye. Work begins at daybreak in any kind of weather all year round. In the winter we might have to break some ice just to get out of the harbor.

Where do we find logs? Much depends on two main factors: the tides and the winds. The experienced log salvager consults a tide chart before going out in the morning. Extreme tides are the best

because they bring us more logs. Besides, logs are easier to pull off the beach when tides are high.

It is always important to keep an eye on the weather. We are constantly gauging the wind, watching the sky and the movements of the clouds, and checking the color of the water. A southeast wind brings rain, while westerly winds most often mean clear skies but rougher water. A northeast wind, locally known as a Squamish wind, will in winter portend freezing temperatures, rough water, snow, and—we hope—lost logs.



**Wildlife
encounters
are common
during salvage
operations**

Dogging on to a floating log is always exciting, but the real thrill comes with pulling the logs off the beach. Hidden rocks just below the water's surface could tear at the hull of our boat and cause a great deal of damage. We need to keep alert.

As we collect the logs, we tow them to various sheltered tie-up areas. There they sit until the weekly tow-up day. That is when we collect and deliver all our salvaged logs—anywhere from 50 to 100—to receiving stations where they are weighed and assessed for their market value. Then we are paid according to the value of our salvaged logs.

This may sound like a pleasant way to make a living, but beware! This job is not for the faint of heart. There are many dangers and risks. Failure to take the weather seriously can prove costly. Fortunately, the area of Howe Sound has many sheltered spots for us to hide in while waiting out a storm. Another risk: If a careless log salvager should fall overboard in the winter, only a few minutes in the frigid water could be fatal. And remember those dog lines described earlier? Well, if the dog is not driven securely into the log, it can pull free and slingshot toward the boat. Happily, only a few salvagers have been struck by dogs—but it is an experience that one does not forget.

Personal and Environmental Rewards

Why do I love my job? The Howe Sound waterway is a popular vacation area, where people race their sailboats and outriggers. And with so many islands, there are hundreds of summer homes and therefore lots of motorboats. Ferries run constantly throughout the day to transport commuters and visitors. Because of the dangers that logs present, it is easy to see the importance of our work.

We contribute to the safety of boat traffic when we pick up stray logs. Some logs that are in the water for a long time begin to sink. Perhaps only a few inches of a log protrudes from the water, making it a serious menace to boaters. Nonetheless, it is a viable log for us to salvage and sell. By doing so, we make the waterways safer—and help to clean up the environment as well.

I find this work both exciting and fascinating. No two days are the same. When I am out on the water, the 360-degree panoramas around me change minute by minute. I have seen breathtaking winter sunrises turn the snow on the mountains a daz-

zing pink. At such times, I love the nip in the cold, salty air.

Wildlife encounters are fairly common. I have seen otters, marten, sea lions, and multitudes of seals. I have watched eagles fishing and deer swimming to and from the islands off the coast. How awe-inspiring it is to see a porpoise frolicking in the wash of my boat's propeller, gray whales sliding by, or pods of killer whales slicing through the waves!

My grandfather started salvaging in the 1930's. He passed his love of the water and beachcombing on to his sons. By the way, a beachcomber can be defined as "one who searches along a shore for useful or salable flotsam." My dad, in turn, passed his love and respect for this occupation on to his children. When I was old enough, I chose this work as well. Of course, it is not the most important work in my life. My service to God comes first—and is far more rewarding. But I have also been fortunate enough to enjoy my secular job—and that for almost 50 years now. I still look forward with eager anticipation to going to work in search of logs.

My own family works along with me too. Sometimes on a warm summer evening, we all go out and work a beach. Towing our logs back into the harbor with a breathtaking sunset at our backs, sea gulls crying overhead, a glistening wake following our boat, and the lights beginning to twinkle on the shore—well, it all gives one a sense of peace and oneness with the Creator. I can think of no better reason why I love my job.—Contributed.

The Howe Sound log receiving station continues to operate even in winter





MAGNA CARTA AND MAN'S QUEST FOR FREEDOM

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN BRITAIN

THROUGH the picturesque landscape of the English county of Surrey flows the river Thames. In one of the meadows lining its banks stands a monument with an inscription that commemorates a 13th-century event. Here, at Runnymede, English King John (reigned 1199-1216) met with opposing barons, powerful landowners disgruntled by royal excesses. The barons demanded that the king appease their grievances by conceding certain rights. Under tremendous pressure the king finally affixed his seal to a document that later became known as Magna Carta (the Great Charter).

Why has this document been described as "the single most significant legal document in the history of the West"? The answer reveals much about man's quest for freedom.

The Articles of the Barons

King John was in trouble with the Roman Catholic Church. He defied Pope Innocent III by refusing to recognize Stephen Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury. As a result, the church withdrew its support and, in effect, excommunicated the king. John, however, attempted a reconciliation. He agreed to hand over to the pope his kingdoms of England and



King John

From the book *Illustrated Notes on English Church History* (Vols. I and II)

Ireland. The pope then returned these to John on the basis of the king's profession of loyalty to the church and his payment of an annual tribute. John was now the pope's vassal.

Financial difficulties compounded the king's problems. During his 17-year reign, John levied extra taxes on the landowners 11 times. All the strife over church and financial matters led to a widespread belief that the king was untrustworthy. John's character evidently did little to allay such concerns.

Finally, unrest boiled over when barons from the north of the country refused to pay further taxes. They marched on London and renounced their allegiance to the king. Much haggling between the parties ensued, with the king in his palace at Windsor and the barons camped to the east in the nearby town of Staines. Behind-the-scenes negotiations brought them face-to-face between the two towns, at Runnymede. Here on Monday, June 15, 1215, John sealed a document listing 49 articles. It begins: 'These are the articles that the barons seek and the king concedes.'

Freedom Under Law

Mistrust of John's intentions, however, surfaced



From the book *The History of Protestantism* (Vol. I)

quickly. Amid much antiroyal and antipapal feeling, the king dispatched envoys to meet with the pope in Rome. The pontiff promptly issued papal bulls declaring the Runnymede agreement null and void. Back in England civil war quickly erupted. The next year, though, John died suddenly, and his nine-year-old son, Henry, acceded to the throne.

Young Henry's supporters arranged for the Runnymede agreement to be reissued. According to the booklet *Magna Carta*, this revised edition had been "hastily converted from an instrument for the suppression of tyranny into a manifesto by which men of moderate views might be rallied to his [the king's] cause." The agreement was reissued several more times during Henry's reign. When his successor, Edward I, confirmed *Magna Carta* once again on October 12, 1297, a copy was finally placed on the statute roll, a listing of documents of special public significance.

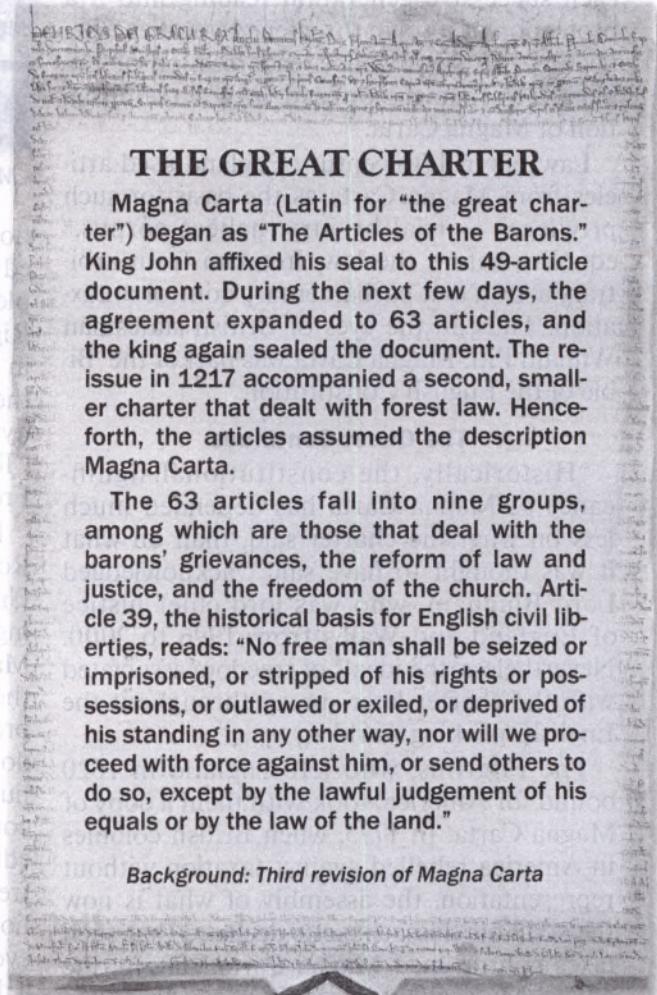
The charter curbed the monarch's powers. It stipulated that he, like all his subjects, was now subject to the rule of law. According to Winston Churchill, a renowned 20th-century historian and prime minister of England, *Magna Carta* provided

ed "a system of checks and balances which would accord the monarchy its necessary strength, but would prevent its perversion by a tyrant or a fool." Noble sentiments, indeed! But what did this document mean to the average man? At the time, very little. *Magna Carta*



King John meets with his barons and agrees to seal the Magna Carta, 1215

From the book
The Story of Liberty, 1878



THE GREAT CHARTER

Magna Carta (Latin for "the great charter") began as "The Articles of the Barons." King John affixed his seal to this 49-article document. During the next few days, the agreement expanded to 63 articles, and the king again sealed the document. The reissue in 1217 accompanied a second, smaller charter that dealt with forest law. Henceforth, the articles assumed the description *Magna Carta*.

The 63 articles fall into nine groups, among which are those that deal with the barons' grievances, the reform of law and justice, and the freedom of the church. Article 39, the historical basis for English civil liberties, reads: "No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgement of his equals or by the law of the land."

Background: Third revision of Magna Carta

By permission of the British Library,
46144 Exemplification of King Henry III's
reissue of Magna Carta 1225



detailed only the rights of "free men"—actually, a somewhat exclusive group, who were then in the minority.*

"Quite early in its history," observes the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Magna Carta "became a symbol and a battle cry against oppression, each successive generation reading into it a protection of its own threatened liberties." Reflecting this significance, each session of England's Parliament opened with a reaffirmation of Magna Carta.

Lawyers in 17th-century England used articles from Magna Carta as the basis for such privileges as trial by jury, habeas corpus,[#] equality before the law, freedom from arbitrary arrest, and parliamentary control of taxation. Thus, in the eyes of British statesman William Pitt, Magna Carta was part of the 'Bible of the English Constitution.'

The Quest Continues

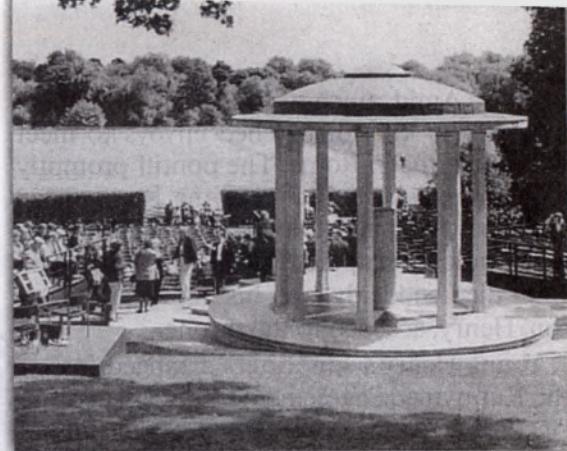
"Historically, the constitutional significance of Magna Carta has depended much less on what the charter said, than on what it was thought to have said," acknowledged Lord Bingham, who was lord chief justice of England and Wales from 1996 to 2000. Nevertheless, the ideals of freedom associated with the charter later spread throughout the English-speaking world.

The Pilgrims, who left England in 1620 bound for America, took with them a copy of Magna Carta. In 1775, when British colonies in America rebelled against taxation without representation, the assembly of what is now the state of Massachusetts declared that such taxes contravened Magna Carta. Indeed, the official Massachusetts seal in use at that time depicted a man holding a sword in one hand and Magna Carta in the other.

When representatives of the fledgling na-

* "While in 1215 the word 'freeman' had a limited meaning, by the seventeenth century it signified almost everyone."—*History of Western Civilization*.

[#] From the Latin "you should have the body," a writ of habeas corpus is a legal document that orders inquiry into the lawfulness of a person's detention in custody.



Magna Carta Memorial at Runnymede, England

tion met to draft a constitution for the United States of America, they upheld the principle of freedom under the law. The U.S. Bill of Rights descends from this acceptance. Thus, in 1957 and in recognition of Magna Carta, the American Bar Association erected at Runnymede a monument bearing the inscription, "To Commemorate Magna Carta—Symbol of Freedom Under Law."

In 1948, American stateswoman Eleanor Roosevelt helped to draft the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, hoping that it would become "the international Magna Carta of all men everywhere." Indeed, the history of Magna Carta shows just how profoundly the human family yearns for freedom. Despite noble aspirations, today basic human rights remain under threat in many countries. Human governments have repeatedly shown themselves unable to guarantee freedom for all. That is one reason why millions of Jehovah's Witnesses now cherish an even higher form of freedom under the law of a different government, God's Kingdom.

The Bible says something remarkable about God: "Where the spirit of Jehovah is, there is freedom." (2 Corinthians 3:17) If you are interested in knowing about the kind of freedom God's Kingdom offers mankind, why not ask Jehovah's Witnesses about it the next time they visit you? You may well find the answer fascinating and liberating.



Abrolhos

An Eye-Opener

*The Abrolhos lighthouse,
built in 1861*

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN BRAZIL

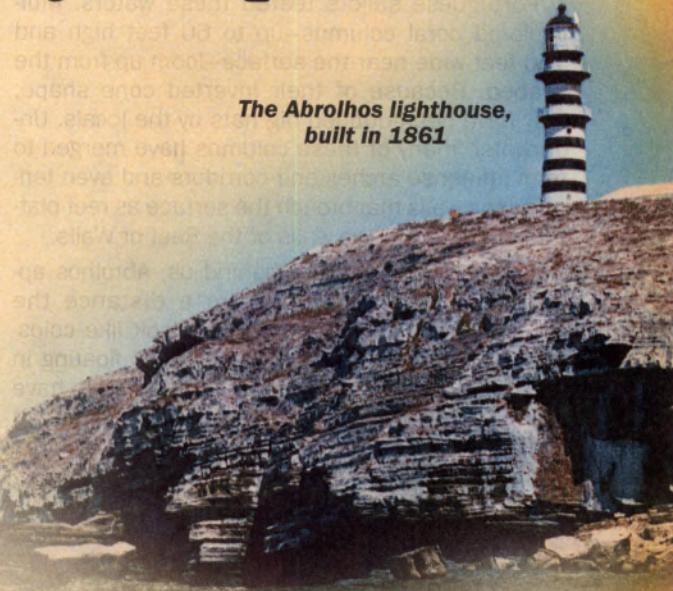
IN THE 16th century, sailors near the coral reefs off the coast of the state of Bahia, Brazil, alerted fellow sailors: "Abra os olhos!" (Keep your eyes open!) Tradition has it that this much-repeated warning became the name of a group of five small islands in the region—the Abrolhos archipelago.

Abrolhos is located in the South Atlantic, only 50 miles from the coastal towns of Caravelas and Alcobaça. However, it is surrounded and isolated by coral reefs. Uncharted reefs as well as violent Atlantic storms would have been enough to deter most sailors from venturing into these waters were it not for a big economic attraction, the humpback whale.

Hunting and Watching Humpbacks

The whales of Abrolhos became a major source of income for coastal fishing towns during the 19th century. After attending a special Mass at which a local priest blessed their boats, hunters would row or sail over to the archipelago in small open vessels. How did they manage to kill such a massive creature? They took advantage of the whale's maternal instincts. Whalers would first harpoon a whale calf and then use it as a decoy to bring the mother within range. The whales they killed were towed back to the mainland so that their valuable oil could be extracted in one of Caravelas' six whale-processing factories.

However, with the collapse of the local whale-oil market in the mid-19th century, the whaling industry went into decline. By the 20th century, after being hunted for decades, the humpback had practical-



ly abandoned Abrolhos as a breeding ground. As a result, whaling around the islands finally ground to a halt. The last time a whale was harpooned there was in 1929.

A new chapter in the history of Abrolhos began in 1983 when the archipelago's five islands and the Abrolhos reef—a total area of 350 square miles—were declared a marine national park. Little had been heard of the whales for 50 years, but in 1987, researchers reported whale sightings in the park's waters and decided to investigate further. They were amazed to discover that the humpbacks were once again breeding around the islands.



ABROLHOS
ARCHIPELAGO

Sueste

News of the whales' return along with the growing reputation of Abrolhos as a lost paradise began to attract small numbers of visitors. On one bright summer morning,

**Masked
booby**

a certain family boarded a small fishing boat in Caravelas and headed for Abrolhos, a six-hour journey. This is how one of them described his visit to the islands.

A Wall of Big Hats

"As Manoel, our boatman, negotiated his way through the Reef of Walls, I understood why early Portuguese sailors feared these waters. Multicolored coral columns—up to 60 feet high and 150 feet wide near the surface—loom up from the seabed. Because of their inverted cone shape, they have been dubbed big hats by the locals. Underwater, many of these columns have merged to form immense arches and corridors and even ten-mile-long walls that broach the surface as reef platforms. These are the walls of the Reef of Walls.

"After we left the reef behind us, Abrolhos appeared on the horizon. From a distance the five islands look like colossal door wedges floating in the ocean. Geologists have suggested that in the distant past, the pressure of ris-

ing lava forced these huge slabs up from the ocean floor. As a result, the islands all have similar topography—a steep cliff jutting out of the water on their southeastern side and a gentle slope tapering into a narrow beach on the southwestern side.

"We could now make out the lighthouse and a straggling line of two-story dwellings on the largest island, Santa Bárbara. The staff from the Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) as well as the Brazilian Marines who live on the island depend on a supply boat that arrives every two weeks. It is easy to imagine that its arrival is also eagerly awaited by the local goat population—the islanders' emergency food reserve. No boarding houses, hotels, bars, or restaurants are allowed. Tourists who want to stay overnight have to endure sleeping on boats moored around the islands.

"As Manoel carefully dropped anchor, keeping an eye out for the coral reef, two IBAMA wardens boarded our boat and explained some of the park's rules. Tourists visit only the two islands Siriba and Redonda, follow marked trails, and are always accompanied by a warden. There is no fishing and no souvenir taking—not even a pebble off the beach.

Frigate bird

Brain coral

Enrico Marcovaldi/Abrolhos Turismo

French angelfish



Whale watching is also strictly regulated. No more than three boats may approach the whales, and they may not move in closer than 300 feet. If a whale draws near a boat, the engine must be switched off and only turned on again when the whale surfaces. Boats must leave the area if a whale shows any signs of distress."

Eye-Catching Bird Population

"Birds thrive here. The tropic bird, the masked booby, the brown booby, the magnificent frigate bird, and the sooty tern all have breeding colonies on Abrolhos.

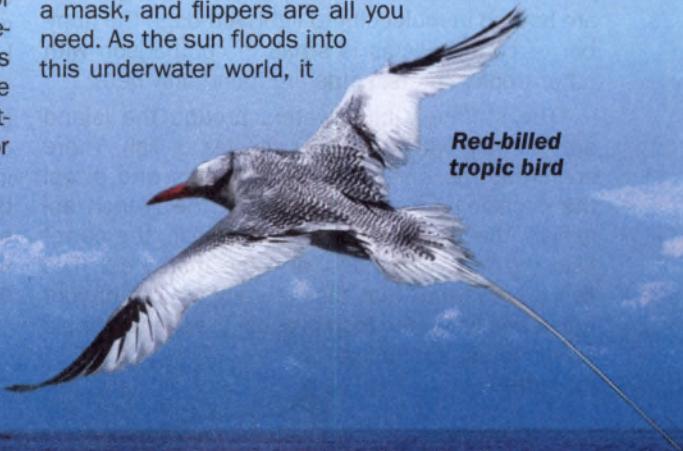
"As we clambered over Siriba's rocky shoreline on the first day of our visit, Jordan, an IBAMA researcher, pointed out nests of boobies and red-billed tropics. The booby is happy to nest on open ground, but the red-billed tropic prefers rocky crevices, which offer protection against strong gusts of wind that could easily throw it off balance.

"The star of the bird population is without a doubt the frigate bird, which is about the size of a hen. During the mating season, the male's eye-catching throat pouch turns bright red and swells to the size of a football. Paradoxically, the frigate depends on the sea but is afraid of water. It has little preening oil for its feathers, so it cannot dive for fish without getting waterlogged.

"What the frigate bird lacks in waterproofing it makes up for in flying ability. With an impressive seven-foot wingspan, it catches warm air currents and remains almost motionless in the air, while keeping an eye open for its reluctant fishing partner, the booby. As soon as the booby makes a catch, the frigate swoops down and attacks with its long hooked bill, sometimes snatching the fish right out of the booby's beak. If the terrified booby drops its catch, the frigate plunges down and skillfully retrieves it before it hits the water. What if the booby swallows the fish first? The bullying frigate has even been known to pursue the booby and force it to regurgitate its meal!"

The Underwater Scene

"Day two of our visit was spent exploring underwater. Water temperature in the archipelago never drops below 75 degrees Fahrenheit, and visibility can be up to 50 feet. No expensive diving equipment is necessary to explore the calm, shallow waters near the islands. A snorkel, a mask, and flippers are all you need. As the sun floods into this underwater world, it



**Red-billed
tropic bird**

Redonda

Foto da Ilha: Maristela Colucci



Surgeonfish

Moray eel





A humpback and calf

utes, Manoel suddenly exclaimed: 'Whale ahoy! Whale ahoy!' Three humpback whales—two adults and a calf—had appeared about 700 feet away. We could clearly make out the white underside of their huge flippers. Perhaps curious, one drew closer and swam alongside us for a few minutes. I could not believe my eyes as the whale breached. It raised its huge body halfway out of the water and then crashed down on its back. It created a huge furrow in the ocean! As the islands dwindled in the distance behind us, we could still see the whales' tail fins as well as occasional spouts of spray shooting up from the surface. We were happy to see that the humpback was making a comeback."

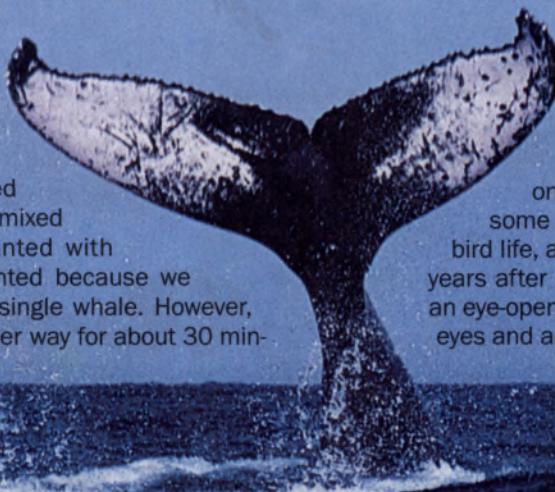
Uncertain Future

The threat from whale hunters may be gone, but other threats remain. It would be unrealistic to think that these islands can be kept isolated from environmental problems. One oceanographer put it this way: 'It is not enough to preserve an archipelago and restrict access to it if everything around it is being destroyed.'

Many scientists believe that a rise in global temperatures is responsible for a whitening of the Reef of Walls, a sign that its tiny algae are disappearing. It seems inevitable that mainland deforestation and soil erosion, which increase the amount of silt that rivers take out to sea, will eventually affect the islands' corals. And, of course, as the number of visitors increases annually, conservationists

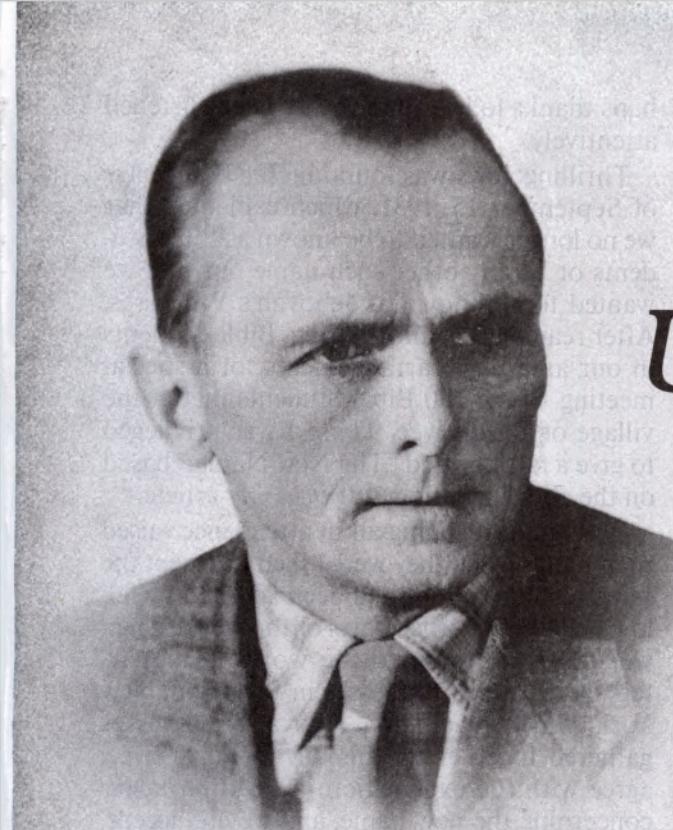
will have to remain vigilant to prevent Abrolhos from falling victim to its own unspoiled beauty.

So far, however, none of these clouds on Abrolhos' horizon have cast a shadow on its pristine beauty—its awesome acrobatic whales, fascinating bird life, and unique corals. Nearly 500 years after its discovery, Abrolhos is still an eye-opener. Visiting it is a feast for the eyes and an unforgettable experience.



A Comeback

"On the afternoon of our third day in the archipelago, we headed back to Caravelas with mixed feelings. I was enchanted with Abrolhos but disappointed because we had not yet sighted a single whale. However, when we had been under way for about 30 min-



Faith Under Trial in Slovakia

AS TOLD BY JÁN BALI

I WAS born December 24, 1910, in Záhor, a village now in eastern Slovakia. At that time our village was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1913, Mother took me to the United States to join my father, who had left Záhor earlier. Two years after Mother and I arrived in Gary, Indiana, my sister, Anna, was born. Then Father became ill and died in 1917.

I became an ardent student, especially taking an interest in religion. At the Calvinist Church where I attended Sunday school, the teacher noticed my interest in spiritual things. To satisfy my hunger, he gave me a Holman Edition of the Bible, which contained some 4,000 questions and answers. That provided a lot of thinking material for my 11-year-old mind.

'This Is the Truth'

During those early years, some of the Slovak immigrants in the area where we lived became Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses

were then known. One of them was my uncle Michal Bali, who shared Bible truths with us. In 1922, however, Mother returned to Záhor with my sister and me, which by then had become part of eastern Czechoslovakia.

Shortly afterward, Uncle Michal sent me the complete set of *Studies in the Scriptures*, by Charles Taze Russell, as well as reprints of *Watchtower* magazines back to the very first issue of July 1, 1879. I read them through, some portions several times, and became convinced that I had found the Bible truth for which I was searching.

About that time some Bible Students of Slovak origin returned from the United States to their homeland. They formed the first Slovak-speaking groups of Bible Students in Czechoslovakia. My mother and I attended these early meetings in our village of Záhor as well as in other nearby places.

Those meetings resembled Christian meetings held in the first century. We usually met in a home of one of the Bible Students, where we sat around a table with a petroleum lamp in the middle. As the youngest, I would sit a bit behind, listening in the dark. Sometimes, however, I was invited to participate. When others were somewhat uncertain about a reading

in the Slovak language, they would say: "Well, Ján, what does the English say on that?" I was eager to come near the lamp and interpret into Slovak what the English publication said.

Among those who became Bible Students in the United States and returned to what had become Czechoslovakia was Michal Šalata. He returned to the nearby village of Sečovce, where he once lived, and he helped organize the preaching work in Czechoslovakia. Brother Šalata took me with him on preaching tours. Then, in 1924, at the age of 13, I asked him to baptize me. Although Mother considered me rather young for such a serious step, I convinced her that it was my firm decision. So, that July during a one-day convention held near the Ondava River, I symbolized my dedication to Jehovah by baptism in the waters of that river.

Cherished Privileges of Service

When I was 17, I heard that a funeral was to be held a few miles away from the village where I was preaching. It was the first to be conducted by the Bible Students in that area. On arriving, I made my way through the curious villagers to the speaker. When I reached him, he turned to me and said: "I am going to speak first, and then you will continue."

I built my talk on the scripture found at 1 Peter 4:7, which reads: "The end of all things has drawn close." I showed from the Scriptures that even the end of suffering and death is near, and I explained the resurrection hope. (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15) Despite the fact that I looked even younger than I was—or per-

haps thanks to it—all in the audience listened attentively.

Thrilling news was found in *The Watchtower* of September 15, 1931, which explained that we no longer wanted to be known as Bible Students or by any other such name but that we wanted to be known as Jehovah's Witnesses. After reading this information, Bible Students in our area made arrangements for a special meeting. Some 100 Bible Students met at the village of Pozdišovce. There I was privileged to give a talk entitled "The New Name," based on the above-mentioned *Watchtower* article.

With great rejoicing all in attendance raised their hands when they were asked to accept the same resolution that had been adopted by fellow believers in other parts of the world. Then we sent a telegram to the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York, which read: "We, Jehovah's Witnesses gathered together on this day in Pozdišovce, agree with the explanation in *The Watchtower* concerning the new name, and we are accepting this new name, Jehovah's Witnesses."

The vast region of Slovakia and Transcarpathia, which before World War II was part of Czechoslovakia, provided a fertile field for our Christian ministry. We covered this large territory on foot and also by train, bus, and bicycle. At that time the "Photo-Drama of Creation," a motion picture and slide presentation that included synchronized sound, was presented in many cities. After each presentation, addresses of interested people were collected. I was given a lot of these addresses and was asked to organize Witnesses to visit interested ones. In some cities, we rented an auditorium where I gave a special follow-up talk.

In the 1930's, I was privileged to be a delegate to larger conventions in the capital city, Prague. In 1932 the first international convention in Czechoslovakia was arranged. We met at the Varieté Theatre. The theme of the public lecture, "Europe Before Destruction," caught the attention of the people, and about 1,500 attended. Another international conven-

In Our Next Issue

- **U.S. Supreme Court and Free Speech**
- **Making Your Pregnancy Safer**
- **Freed From the Chains of Hate**

tion was held in Prague in 1937, and I had the privilege of giving one of the talks. Delegates from many European countries were present, and all of us received the needed encouragement to carry us through the trials that soon followed during World War II.

Marriage, and Severe Tests

After we returned to Czechoslovakia, Mother and I closely cooperated in the preaching work with fellow Bible Students in nearby Pozdišovce. There I came to notice an attractive girl named Anna Rohálová. When we had grown a bit older, we realized that our feelings were more than simply Christian brotherly and sisterly affection. In 1937 we married. From that time on, Anna supported me, even during the 'troublesome seasons' that were about to come.—2 Timothy 4:2.

Shortly after our wedding, it became clear that Europe was preparing for World War II. By November 1938, southern parts of Transcarpathia and Slovakia were annexed by Hungary, which was collaborating with Nazi Germany. Our meetings were forbidden by the Hungarian police, and regularly we had to report to the police station.

After World War II began in September 1939, a number of us from Záhor, both men and women, were taken into custody and moved to an old castle near Mukacheve, now in Ukraine. There we found many fellow Witnesses from Transcarpathian congregations. After being interrogated for three or four months and beaten often, we were tried by a special army court. We were all asked just one question: "Are you willing to fight for Hungary against the U.S.S.R.?" Since we refused, we received sentences and were eventually sent to a prison in Budapest, Hungary, at 85 Margit Boulevard.

All of the prisoners were on a starvation diet. Soon diseases spread and prisoners started to die. How heartwarming it was when my



With Anna, one year after our marriage

wife traveled all the way from Záhor to see me! Although we could speak for only about five minutes through the iron bars, I was thankful to Jehovah for such a faithful companion.*

From Prison to a Labor Camp

From prison I was taken directly to Jászberény, Hungary, where some 160 Witnesses had been taken. While we were there, a Hungarian officer gave us the last offer from the Hungarian government: "If you are willing to serve in the army, step out." No one did. The officer said: "Although I do not agree with what you are doing, I admire your resolve to keep your faith."

A few days later, we boarded a ship on the Danube River and started on our way to a labor camp near the Yugoslav city of Bor. While we were on the ship, the soldiers and their commander repeatedly tried to make us compromise our faith. The commander had the soldiers beat us with their rifles, kick us with their boots, and use other methods of torture.

When we were handed over to Lieutenant Colonel András Balogh, the commander of the labor camp at Bor, he told us: "If what I was told about you is true, you will soon die."

* See the story of Andrej Hanák in *Awake!* of April 22, 2002, pages 19-24. There, conditions in this prison are described as well as the events at Cservenka, mentioned later in this article.

But after reading the sealed message from government officials, he treated us with respect. Balogh granted us relative freedom of movement and even allowed us to build a barrack for ourselves. Although food was scarce, we had our own kitchen, so food was distributed fairly.

In March 1944, Germany started to occupy Hungary. At that time a pro-Nazi commander named Ede Marányi replaced Balogh. He imposed strict discipline, much like that in concentration camps. Soon, though, Russian armies approached, and the camp at Bor was evacuated. Later, during our march, we were eyewitnesses of the massacre of Jews at Cservenka. It seemed a miracle that we were spared.

When reaching the border between Hungary and Austria, we received an order to dig nests for machine guns. We explained that the very reason we were prisoners was because we had refused to become involved in military activities. Since I was at the front of the group, a Hungarian officer grabbed me and started to beat me. "I'll kill you!" he screamed. "If you don't work, the others will follow your bad example!" Only the courageous intervention of András Bartha, an older Witness who had taken the lead in our preaching work, saved my life.*

* See *The Watchtower*, July 15, 1993, page 11, for more information about András Bartha.

A few weeks later, the war ended and we started on our way home. Other inmates, who had been released earlier from Bor, had reported that all of us who were taken on to Cservenka had been killed. So for about six months, my wife considered herself a widow. How surprised she was one day to see me on the doorstep! Tears of joy ran from our eyes as we embraced after years of separation.

Reorganizing the Work

After World War II, Slovakia was reunited with Czechia to form Czechoslovakia. However, Transcarpathia, a large portion of which had been part of Czechoslovakia before the war, became part of Ukraine in the Soviet Union. In 1945, Michal Moskal and I went to Bratislava, now the capital of Slovakia, where we met with responsible ones to reorganize the preaching work. Although exhausted physically and emotionally, we were eager to get on with fulfilling our commission to preach the good news of God's Kingdom.

—Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20.

After the war, conventions were a great impetus to our work. In September 1946 the first one for the whole country was held in the city of Brno. I was privileged to deliver a talk on the theme "The Harvest, the End of the World."

In 1947 another national convention was held in Brno. There, Nathan H. Knorr, Milton



With Nathan H. Knorr
at the 1947 convention in Brno



G. Henschel, and Hayden C. Covington, who were visiting from the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York, gave encouraging talks. I had the privilege of serving as interpreter for their presentations. Although we had about 1,400 Kingdom proclaimers in Czechoslovakia at the time, some 2,300 attended the public talk.

Persecution Under the Communists

In 1948 the Communists took over the country, and soon a ban that lasted 40 years was imposed on our preaching work. In 1952 many of us who were considered leaders by the authorities were put in prison. Most were accused of subversion, but a few of us were accused of high treason. I was imprisoned and interrogated for 18 months. When I asked in what way I was a traitor, the judge said: "You were speaking about the Kingdom of God. And you say that it will take over the rule of the world. This also includes Czechoslovakia."

"In that case," I replied, "you would have to judge as traitors all those who pray the Lord's Prayer and ask for 'God's Kingdom to come.'" Nevertheless, I was sentenced to five and a half years and was sent to the infamous Communist prison in Jáchymov, Czechoslovakia.

After serving most of my prison term, I was released. My wife, Anna, had faithfully supported me through letters and visits as well as her care of our daughter, Mária. Finally, we were reunited as a family, and we resumed our Christian activities, which we carried on underground.

A Rich Life of Serving Jehovah

During the past 70 years and more, Jehovah's Witnesses in our area have served under various conditions, most of the time under Communist rule. True, I have grown old and physically weak, yet I am still able to serve as a Christian elder in Záhor, along with such faithful ones as Ján Korpa-Ondo, who is still alive at age 98.* My dear wife, a true gift to me from Jehovah, died in 1996.

I still have a vivid mental picture of an imaginary scene described on pages 228 to 231 of the book *The Way to Paradise*, published in 1924. The reader was asked to imagine himself in Paradise overhearing two people who had been resurrected. They were wondering just where they were. Then a person who had survived Armageddon had the privilege of explaining to the two that they had been resurrected into Paradise. (Luke 23:43) If I survive Armageddon, I would like to explain such things to my wife, my mother, and other loved ones when they are resurrected. But if I die before Armageddon, I am looking forward to the time when someone in the new world will tell me about the events that transpire after my death.

Now I continue to appreciate the unique and absolutely awesome privilege of talking to the Sovereign Lord of the universe and of being able to draw close to him. My resolution is to keep living in harmony with the apostle Paul's words at Romans 14:8: "Both if we live, we live to Jehovah, and if we die, we die to Jehovah. Therefore both if we live and if we die, we belong to Jehovah."

* See his life story in the September 1, 1998, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 24-8.

THE Eye OF AN Eagle

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN SPAIN

SPANIARDS describe a sharp-sighted man as having the eyesight of an eagle (*vista de águila*). Germans have a similar expression (*Adlerauge*). Not without reason, the eagle's keen eyesight has been proverbial for centuries. The book of Job, written over three thousand years ago, says of the eagle: "Far into the distance its eyes keep looking."—Job 39:27, 29.

How far into the distance can an eagle actually see? "Under ideal conditions a golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) can detect the slight movements of a rabbit from more than [1 1/4 miles] away," explains *The Guinness Book of Animal Records*. Others have estimated that the eagle can see even farther!

What gives the eagle such acute vision? First of all, the golden eagle has two huge eyes, which occupy a large portion of the head. The *Book of British Birds* notes that in the case of the golden eagle, its eyes "are, in fact, as large as they could be without becoming so heavy as to impair flight."

Furthermore, an eagle's eye has approximately five times the number of light-receptor cells that we have—some 1,000,000 cones per square millimeter compared to our 200,000. Practically each receptor is connected to a neuron. As a result, the eagle's optic nerve, which carries messages from the eye to the brain, contains double the number of fibers found in that of a human. Little wonder that these creatures have keen color perception! Finally, birds



Golden eagle

of prey, like other birds, have eyes equipped with a powerful lens that can change its focus quickly from objects an inch away to those at a great distance. Their eyes far outmatch ours in this respect as well.

The eagle's vision excels during broad daylight, but at night the owls have the advantage. These nocturnal raptors have eyes with abundant light-

sensitive rods and a large lens surface. As a result, they can see 100 times better at night than we can. On those rare occasions when there is total darkness, however, owls must depend exclusively on their acute hearing to locate prey.

Who gave these birds such attributes? God asked Job: "Is it at your order that an eagle flies upward?" Obviously, no man can claim credit for this marvel of creation. Job himself humbly admitted: "I have come to know that you [Jehovah] are able to do all things." (Job 39:27; 42:1, 2) The eye of the eagle is just one more testimony to the wisdom of our Creator.



Snowy owl

Young People Ask . . .



How Can I Deal With Peer Pressure?

"Peer pressure is everywhere."—Jesse, 16 years old.

"Peer pressure from my schoolmates was one of the most difficult things I had to deal with while growing up."—Johnathan, 21 years old.

PEER PRESSURE certainly is a force to be reckoned with. Be assured, though, that you *can* resist it. What is more, you can manage it and even make it work for you. But how?

In a previous article in this series, we discussed an essential first step: Recognize the power of peer pressure and your own vulnerability to its influence.* What further positive steps can you take? The helpful guidance you need is in God's Word. Proverbs 24:5 says: "A man of knowledge is reinforcing power." What knowledge can reinforce your power over peer pressure? Before we answer that, let us first discuss a problem that can give peer pressure power over you.

Lack of Confidence—A Danger

Youths who are Jehovah's Witnesses sometimes find peer pressure a special challenge because their way of life involves telling others about their faith. (Matthew 28:19, 20) Do you find, at times, that it is difficult to share your faith with other youths you meet? You are not alone. Says an 18-year-old named Melanie: "When it came to telling the kids I was a Witness, it was harder than I thought." She adds: "As soon as I mustered up enough courage to speak up about being a Witness, I would become afraid again." Negative peer pressure, it seems, held her back.

The Bible reassures us that even men and women of outstanding faith have hesitated to speak to people about God. For example, young Jeremiah knew that he would face ridicule and persecution if he obeyed God's

* See the article "Peer Pressure—Is It Really All That Powerful?" in the November 22, 2002, issue of *Awake!*



**"Bad associations
spoil useful habits."**
—1 Corinthians 15:33

**"He that is walking with wise
persons will become wise."**
—Proverbs 13:20

command to speak out. Further, Jeremiah lacked confidence. Why? He said to God: “Here I actually do not know how to speak, for I am but a boy.” Did God agree that Jeremiah’s youth made him unqualified to speak? No. Jehovah reassured the prophet: “Do not say, ‘I am but a boy.’” Jehovah went ahead and gave the hesitant young man an important assignment.—Jeremiah 1:6, 7.

When we lack confidence, feeling unsure of ourselves, peer pressure can be very hard to resist. Research studies have suggested as much. For example, back in 1937 a scientist named Muzafer Sherif conducted a famous experiment. He put people in a dark room, showed them a single point of light, and then asked them how far the point of light moved.

In fact, the light had not moved at all; this was merely an optical illusion. Tested individually, people gave their own unique estimates regarding this apparent movement. However, in groups they were asked to make their estimates aloud. What happened? Lacking confidence in their own perception, they influenced one another. With repeated tests, their answers got closer together until a “group norm” was established. Even when tested alone again later, individuals were still influenced by the collective opinion of the group.

Seek out good friends, who share your love for God and his standards

That experiment illustrates an important point. A lack of sureness or confidence makes people more susceptible to peer pressure. Sobering, is it not? After all, peer pressure can affect people when it comes to very important issues, including their view of premarital sex, drug abuse, and even the goals they will pursue in life. If we allow ourselves to adopt the “group norm” when it comes to such issues, we could drastically affect our own future. (Exodus 23:2) What can be done?

Well, how do you think you would have performed on the test if you knew for a fact that the point of light was motionless? You probably would not have been influenced by the group. Yes, we need confidence. But what kind of confidence is involved, and how can we come by it?

Make Jehovah Your Confidence

You may hear a lot of talk about building self-confidence. But when it comes to how to gain it—and how much you need—there are conflicting views. The Bible contains this balanced counsel: “I tell everyone there among you not to think more of himself than it is necessary to think; but to think so as to have a sound mind.” (Romans 12:3) Another translation of this verse reads: “I would say to every one of you not to estimate himself above his

real value, but to make a sober rating of himself.”—*Charles B. Williams*.

“A sober rating” of your “real value” rules out becoming vain, cocky, or conceited. On the other hand, such a balanced outlook would include some measure of confidence in your real ability to think, reason, and make sensible decisions. Your Creator endowed you with the “power of reason,” and that is no small gift. (Romans 12:1) Keeping that in mind can help you to resist the urge to let those around you make your decisions for you. However, there is a type of confidence that will do even more to protect you.

King David was inspired to write: “You are my hope, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah, my confidence from my youth.” (Psalm 71:5) Yes, David placed absolute confidence in his heavenly Father, and he had done so since he was young. He was “but a boy”—perhaps a teenager—when the Philistine giant Goliath challenged any soldier of Israel to meet him in single combat. The soldiers cowered. (I Samuel 17:11, 33) Perhaps some negative peer pressure arose among them. No doubt they talked gloomily of Goliath’s size and prowess and asserted that any man would have to be crazy to accept such a challenge. David proved immune to any pressure of that kind. Why?

Note David’s words to Goliath: “You are coming to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I am coming to you with the name of Jehovah of armies, the God of the battle lines of Israel, whom you have taunted.” (I Samuel 17:45) David was not blind to Goliath’s size, strength, or weaponry. But he knew something, as surely as he knew that the sky was above him. He knew that Goliath was nothing compared to Jehovah God. If Jehovah was on David’s side, then why should he fear Goliath? Such confidence in God made David secure. No amount of peer pressure could sway him.

Do you have similar confidence in Jehovah? He has not changed since David’s time. (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17) The more you learn about him, the more sure you will be of everything he tells you in his Word. (John 17:17) There you will find fixed, reliable standards to guide you

in life and to help you resist peer pressure. In addition to making Jehovah your confidence, there is something else you can do.

Select Good Advisers

God’s Word highlights the need to seek out good guidance. “A man of understanding is the one who acquires skillful direction,” says Proverbs 1:5. Your parents, who care deeply about your best interests, can be a source of guidance. Indira knows this well. She relates: “It is because my parents constantly held the Scriptures before me and made Jehovah real in my life that I am walking in the way of the truth right now.” Many youths feel similarly.

If you are a member of the Christian congregation, you have a wonderful resource there—the appointed overseers, or elders, as well as other mature Christians. Young Nadia reflects: “I really looked up to the elders in my congregation. I can remember a talk by the presiding overseer that was specially tailored for youths. After the meeting my friend and I were excited because what he had mentioned was what we felt we were going through.”

Another powerful weapon against negative peer pressure is *positive* peer pressure. If you choose your friends wisely, they can help you to cling to good goals and right standards. How can we choose well? Keep this counsel in mind: “He that is walking with wise persons will become wise, but he that is having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly.” (Proverbs 13:20) Nadia was careful to choose wise friends at school—her fellow believers, who held to the same moral standards. She recalls: “When the boys in school came around to ‘talk’ to us, we leaned on each other for support.” Good friends can help bring out the best in us. They are worth the effort it takes to find them.

Be assured, then, that if you build your confidence in Jehovah, seek guidance from mature Christians, and choose your friends wisely, you can meet the challenge of peer pressure. In fact, you can become part of the positive peer pressure among your friends and help them to stay on the road to life with you.

Watching the World

Natural Cooling Agent

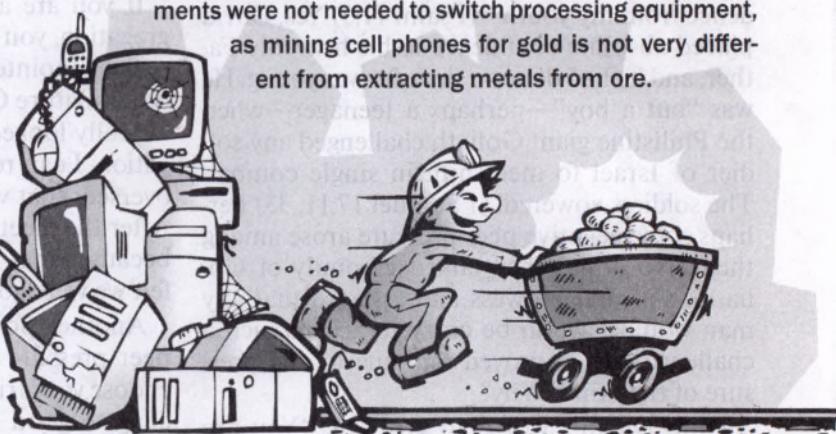
A research team in Germany has isolated a natural chemical that has 35 times the cooling power of menthol, yet without the minty taste. The chemical, which occurs naturally in beer and whiskey, was discovered at the German Research Centre for Food Chemistry in Garching, Munich. *New Scientist* magazine quotes Thomas Hofmann, the director of the research team, as saying: "It could bring a supercool freshness to a wide range of products, including beer, bottled water, citrus drinks, chocolate and confectionery." And because the substance feels cool to the skin in concentrations 250 times lower than mint, it could add zest to cosmetics or skin lotions.

Manure and Superbugs

"Fields across Europe are contaminated with dangerous levels of the antibiotics given to farm animals," reports *New Scientist* magazine. More than 10,000 tons of antibiotics are given to farm animals each year in the European Union and the United States to promote growth and prevent disease. "But recent research has found a direct link between the increased use of these farm-yard drugs and the appearance of antibiotic-resistant bugs that infect people," states the magazine. "The drugs, which are in manure sprayed onto fields as fertiliser, could be getting into our food and water . . . , [and they] contaminate the crops, which are then eaten," *New Scientist* says.

Turning Trash Into Gold

A mining company in Japan has found an easy and more profitable method of acquiring precious metals. Rather than spend much time and money in the search for ore, a smelting and refining company in Akita Prefecture is now melting down scraps from discarded cell phones and computers to retrieve precious metals, reports the newspaper *IHT Asahi Shimbun* of Tokyo. According to the president of the company, "1 ton of used cell phones—minus batteries—can generate several hundred grams of gold." Compared with traditional methods of mining, the yield per ton of this "metropolitan mine" can be about ten times greater than that from ore. Moreover, additional investments were not needed to switch processing equipment, as mining cell phones for gold is not very different from extracting metals from ore.



Grandparents for "Adoption"

Some families in Spain have arranged to "adopt" 66 elderly people who have no relatives, reports the Spanish newspaper *El País*. "The object of this program . . . is to offer those who can no longer live alone an alternative to going to a home for the elderly," the newspaper states. Among the applicants desiring to take in the elderly are married couples in their 50's who want to share their life with an elderly person. Other families with small children say that they would like to

have a grandparent at home. Even though the adopting families receive a subsidy, "what really motivates them is not the money," explains the general director of the program, Marisa Muñoz-Caballero. "If such were the case, they would soon get fed up because caring for the elderly is a laborious task."

Domestic Violence in Europe

"One European woman in five experiences violence by her male partner at some point in her life," stated Anna Dia-

mantopoulou, the European commissioner responsible for employment and social affairs. At the Ministerial Conference on Violence against Women that was held in Spain earlier this year, Diamantopoulou noted: "Globally, women aged between 15 and 44 are more likely to be maimed or die as a result of male violence, than through cancer, malaria, road accidents or war combined." In the United Kingdom, "a woman dies every 3 days as a result of domestic violence," while "in Ireland, over half of women murdered are killed by their partners or husbands." And in Austria, reports the French daily *Le Monde*, "half of all divorce cases are based on wives' complaints of ill-treatment by their husbands."

Preventing Childhood Drowning

In 26 of the world's richest nations, drowning is the second most frequent cause of death among children up to 14 years of age, reports *BMJ* (formerly *British Medical Journal*). According to the journal, "infants are most likely to drown in the home (usually in a bathtub); toddlers in bodies of water close to the home such as swimming pools or ponds; and older children in natural bodies of water such as lakes and rivers." For the prevention of such accidents, experts recommend the following: Have constant supervision of infants in the bathtub or around any body of water; surround a garden pond or swimming pool with fencing that does not allow for access from the home; do not allow

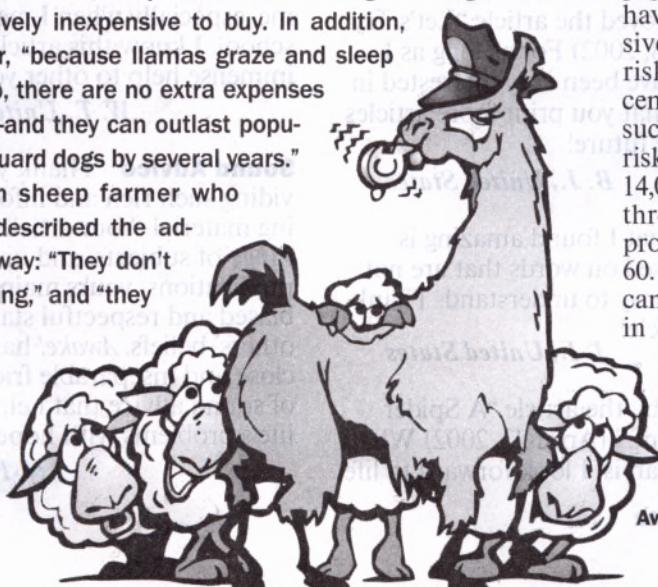
children to swim alone or in isolated areas; obtain training in resuscitation techniques.

Early Puberty

"Puberty is starting ever earlier," reports the German newspaper *Berliner Zeitung*. It is no longer uncommon for childhood to end, at least biologically, when young ones are between the ages of 10 and 12 or even earlier. Researchers the world over have observed this tendency but are not sure of the reasons. Improved nutrition and a decrease in infectious diseases are mentioned as possibilities. Others blame environmental toxicants, especially those substances that mimic the effects of the female hormone estrogen. Whatever the cause, early sexual maturity can lead to early sexual activity. "Often, from playing in the sandbox to one's first sexual experiences takes just a few years," states the newspaper.

Llamas on Guard

In order to guard their sheep, North American ranchers are turning to llamas. According to *The Globe and Mail*, of Canada, llamas "strongly identify with other animals with which they spend time." They aggressively guard their flock by sounding an alarm call, herding the sheep, chasing intruders away, and kicking or pawing at predators. Some farmers even prefer llamas over guard dogs because they are relatively inexpensive to buy. In addition, says the paper, "because llamas graze and sleep with the sheep, there are no extra expenses for their care—and they can outlast popular breeds of guard dogs by several years." One Canadian sheep farmer who owns llamas described the advantages this way: "They don't cost you anything," and "they don't bark."

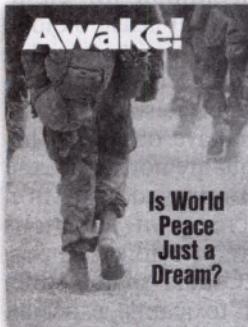


A Bad Temper Can Kill You

"People who have a bad temper are more prone to suffer a stroke," notes the Spanish newspaper *Diario Médico*. Doctors have long associated aggressive behavior with increased risk of coronary illness. Recent research has shown that such behavior also increases the risk of stroke. In a survey of 14,000 adults, stroke risk was three times as high for anger-prone people under the age of 60. Why? It appears that anger can cause a "major increase" in blood pressure, in vascular constriction, and in blood-clotting substances, which "in time, can affect blood circulation in the brain," states the report.

From Our Readers

World Peace The series "Is World Peace Just a Dream?" (May 8, 2002) is excellently written. All the politicians should read it. Your publications convey very well what a person should know and how he should live.



J. S., Czech Republic

A Youth's Initiative I've always wanted to tell you how much I appreciate the magazines, and I finally decided to do so after reading the article "Her Initiative Was Reward-ed." (May 8, 2002) I recently had an experience similar to Stella's. It brings joy to my heart to know that there are young ones worldwide like myself who are putting Jehovah first in their life. Experiences like these are encouraging to everyone, both young and old.

L. P., United States

Animals I just finished reading the article "Meet the Mysterious Snow Leopard." (May 8, 2002) I love every one of the creatures that Jehovah made, especially the fuzzy ones! It angers me to read about how few snow leopards are left. Think of how Jehovah must feel about this.

D. R., United States

Hankul I am 13, and I enjoyed the article "Let's Try Writing in Hankul!" (May 8, 2002) For as long as I have been able to read, I have been very interested in foreign languages. I hope that you print more articles on foreign languages in the future!

B. J., United States

I am 11 years old, and what I found amazing is that Hankul can even be used on words that are not Korean. The concept was easy to understand. Thank you for publishing this article!

J. I., United States

Spiders I was fascinated by the article "A Spider That Masquerades as an Ant." (April 22, 2002) What a marvelous Creator Jehovah is! I look forward to life

in the new world, when I will be able to learn more about the things he has created.

P. P., Sri Lanka

Convict Ships I have been enjoying your magazines for more than 50 years. I recently read the article "Australia's Infamous Era of Convicts." (April 22, 2002) On page 13, you mention the loss of the British convict ship *Amphitrite* in 1883. I believe this is an error. According to my research, the ship was actually lost in August 1833. That would be well within the convict period discussed in the article, which ended in 1868.

D. B., Scotland

"Awake!" responds: The source for our article does state that the "Amphitrite" was lost in 1833. We apologize for the error.

Young People Ask Thank you for publishing the article "Young People Ask . . . What if I Meet Someone From School?" (February 22, 2002) Many years ago I was a painfully shy teenage boy with a stuttering problem. The ministry was difficult for me, especially when I met kids from school. I know this article will be of immense help to other youths.

W. T., United States

Sound Advice Thank you for providing such rich and informative reading material. Your articles cover a vast range of subjects, and unlike many publications, yours maintain an unbiased and respectful stance toward others' beliefs. *Awake!* has become a close and inseparable friend, a source of sound advice that helps me to face life's problems with hope.

N. P., Brazil

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"I REDISCOVERED A FORGOTTEN JESUS"

After reading the book *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived*, a woman from Saint-Jérôme, Quebec, Canada, wrote: "It was with great interest that I rediscovered a forgotten Jesus, who is often drawn in an unrealistic manner by artists."

The woman noted regarding the book's artwork: "I was deeply impressed by the drawings in your book. The characters appear to me as real and authentic, like those who lived at the time Jesus was alive and preaching." She concluded: "Congratulations for preparing this book. It is a compass that guides those who are seeking to grow in Jesus' truth."

The Greatest Man book endeavors to present every event in Jesus' earthly life mentioned in the four Gospels, including the speeches he delivered and his illustrations and miracles. To the extent possible, everything is related in the order in which it is believed to have occurred. And, as noted above, the book features beautiful, authentic illustrations that are designed to convey the feelings of Jesus and his contemporaries.

