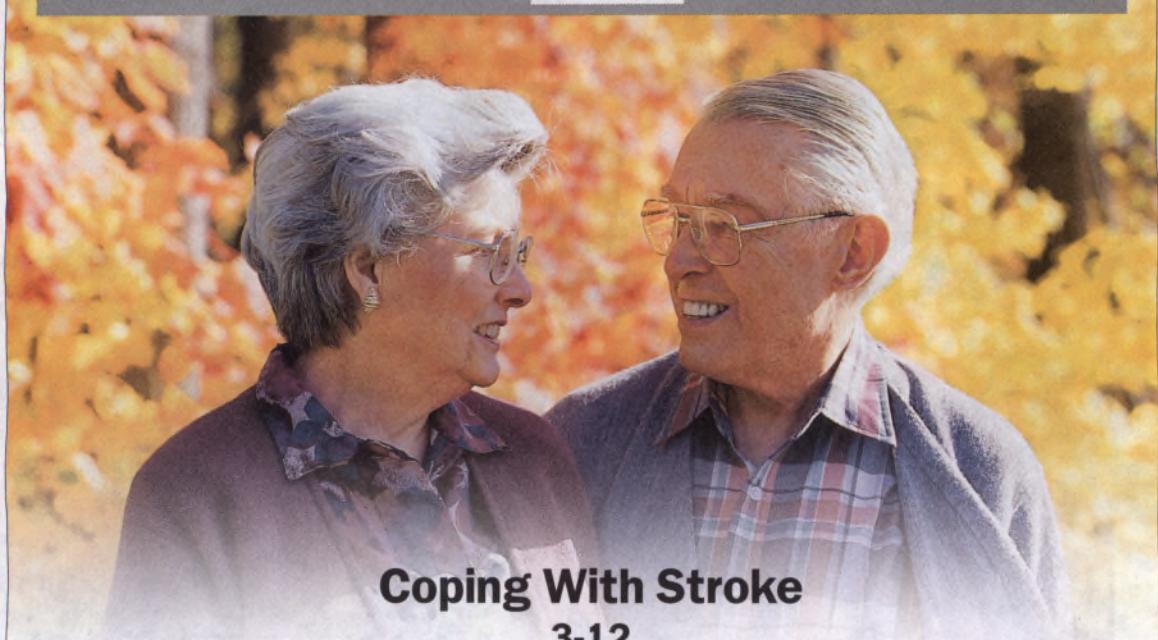


# Awake!

February 8, 1998



## Coping With **STROKE**



## Coping With Stroke

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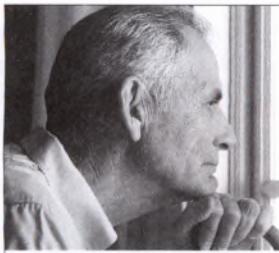


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# STROKE!

**A** LEADING cause of death and chronic disability in the Western industrialized world is stroke. The very word "stroke" implies the suddenness with which a "brain attack" occurs. One moment, you may be feeling fine, and the next moment, you feel as if you were hit by a bolt of lightning—a major stroke can abruptly and dramatically change your life. Cruelly maiming and crippling you, it may render you speechless, wreak havoc on your emotions, alter your personality and powers of cognition, and thrust upon you a seemingly endless struggle to regain the normal life you and your family once knew.

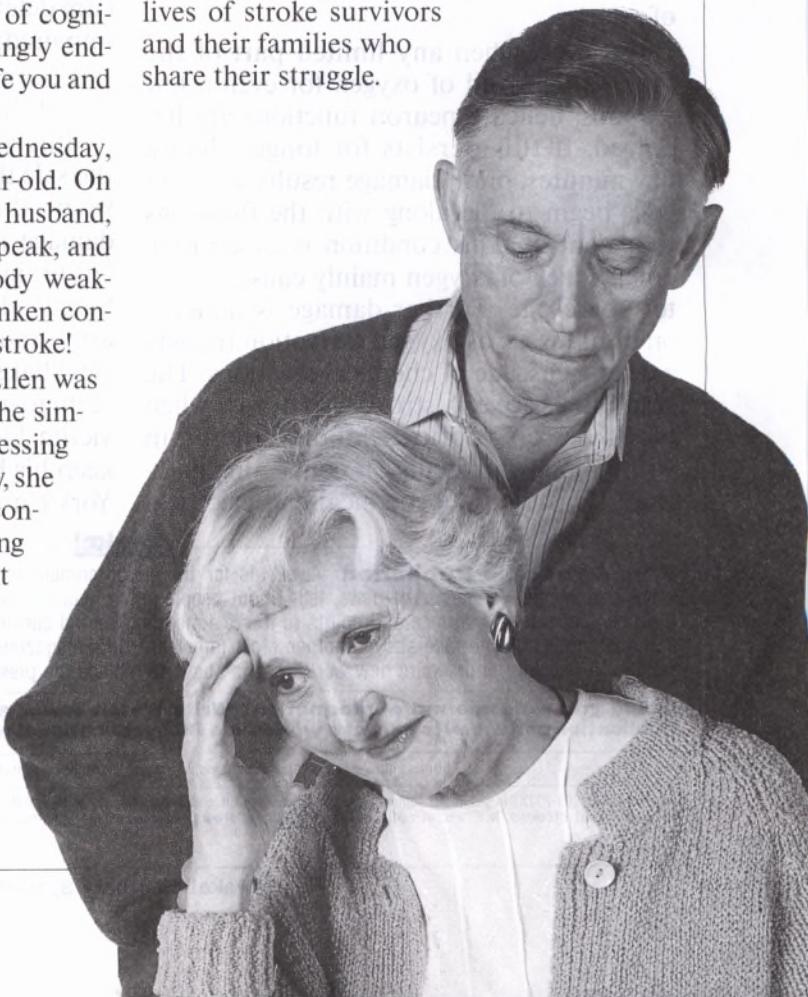
Consider Ellen Morgan.\* On Wednesday, Ellen was a healthy, active 64-year-old. On Thursday, while shopping with her husband, Ellen suddenly lost her ability to speak, and her face became distorted. Her body weakened, and she lurched as if in a drunken condition. Ellen was suffering a major stroke!

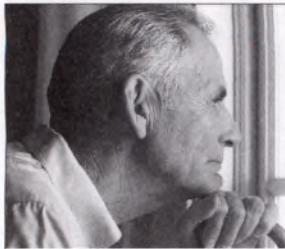
In the aftermath of the stroke, Ellen was so disabled that she could not do the simplest of things, like bathing or dressing herself. Unable to write, knit, or sew, she became plagued with bouts of uncontrollable weeping and overwhelming fatigue. In all of this, Ellen's thought processes were not impaired; however, feelings of embarrassment would arise when she felt that perhaps others looked upon her as a simpleton. Later, Ellen explained:

\* Some names have been changed out of consideration for the ailing ones and their families.

"Few realize how the shock of this sudden change affects one emotionally and psychologically. I almost felt as though it were the end of my existence as a person."

What causes a stroke? Is everyone who has a stroke affected in the same way? How have survivors coped with this disease? How do families of stroke survivors cope? What can all of us do to provide support? *Awake!* examines such questions and brings you in touch with the lives of stroke survivors and their families who share their struggle.





# STROKE

## Its Cause

**T**HE brain is the most delicate organ of the body," states neurologist Dr. Vladimir Hachinski, of the University of Western Ontario in London, Canada. At only 2 percent of the body's total weight, the brain contains more than ten billion nerve cells, which are in constant communication to produce our every thought, movement, and sensation. Dependent on oxygen and glucose for energy, the brain receives a steady supply via an intricate system of arteries.

However, when any limited part of the brain is deprived of oxygen for even a few seconds, delicate neuron functions are impaired. If this persists for longer than a few minutes, brain damage results, as brain cells begin to die along with the functions they control. This condition is called ischemia, a lack of oxygen mainly caused by artery blockage. Further damage is inflicted on brain tissue as oxygen starvation triggers a deadly cascade of chemical reactions. The result is a stroke. A stroke also occurs when blood vessels rupture, flooding the brain with blood, which cuts off connecting pathways. This disrupts chemical and electrical

flows to the muscles and causes injury to brain tissue.

### Its Effects

Every stroke is different, and strokes can affect individuals in ways that are almost limitless. Although no one suffers from every possible consequence of a stroke, the effects may range from mild and barely observable to severe and painfully obvious. The area of the brain in which a stroke occurs determines which bodily functions are impaired.

A common affliction is weakness or paralysis of the upper and lower limbs. Generally, this is limited to one side of the body, the side that is opposite the side of the brain where the stroke occurs. Thus, right-brain damage results in left-sided paralysis, and left-brain damage, in right-sided paralysis. Some individuals may retain the use of their arms and legs, only to find that their muscles shake to such an extent that their limbs seem to go off each in its own direction. The victim looks like a novice skater trying to keep his balance. Dr. David Levine, of New York University Medical Center, says: "They

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have lost the kind of sensation that tells them whether or not their limb is moving and where it is in space."

Upwards of 15 percent of survivors experience seizures, resulting in episodes of uncontrolled movements and, commonly, in periods of unconsciousness. Also, feeling pain as well as changes in sensations is common. A stroke survivor who experiences constant numbness in his hands and feet says: "There are nights when something touches my legs and I wake up because it seems as if I am receiving electric shocks."

Stroke outcome may include double vision and problems with swallowing. If the sensory centers of the mouth and the throat are damaged, further indignities can be suffered by stroke victims, such as drooling. Any of the five senses can be affected, causing disturbances in sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.

### Communication Problems

Picture yourself being followed down a dimly lit street by two huge strangers. Glancing back, you see them rushing toward you. You try to scream for help, but nothing will come out! Can you imagine the utter frustration you would feel in such a situation? That is what many stroke victims experience when they suddenly lose their ability to speak.

Being unable to communicate thoughts, feelings, hopes, and fears—figuratively be-

ing isolated from friends and family—is one of the most devastating consequences of stroke. One stroke survivor described it this way: "Every time I tried to express myself nothing came out. I was forced to remain silent and could not follow either verbal or written commands. Words sounded . . . as though the people around me spoke a foreign tongue. I could neither comprehend nor use language."

Charles, though, understood everything being spoken to him. But about making a reply, he writes: "I would frame the words I wanted to say, but they came out scrambled and garbled. At that point I felt I was trapped inside myself." In his book *Stroke: An Owner's Manual*, Arthur Josephs explains: "Over one hundred different muscles are controlled and coordinated during speech and each of those muscles is controlled by an average of over one hundred motor units. . . . An astounding 140,000 neuromuscular events [are] required for each second of speech. Is it any wonder an injury to a portion of the brain controlling these muscles may result in garbled speech?"

Many baffling phenomena in the speech area are produced by a stroke. For example, an individual who cannot speak may be able to sing. Another may say words on impulse but not on command or may, on the other hand, talk incessantly. Others repeat words or phrases over and over or use words inappropriately, saying yes when they mean

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to say no and vice versa. Some know the words they want to use, but the brain cannot prompt the mouth, lips, and tongue to say them. Or they may experience slurred speech because of muscle weakness. Some may punctuate their words with explosive outbursts.

Other stroke damage may be impairment of the portion of the brain that controls emotional tone. The result can be speech that sounds flat. Or there may be difficulty in comprehending the emotional tone of others. Communication barriers like these and those described above can drive a wedge between family members, such as husband and wife. Georg explains: "Because stroke affects facial expressions and gestures, indeed the whole personality, we suddenly did not get on with each other as before. It seemed to me as if I had a totally different wife, someone I had to get to know all over again."

### **Emotional and Personality Changes**

Inappropriate mood swings, outbursts of tears or laughter, extreme anger, unaccustomed feelings of suspicion, and overwhelming sadness are just part of the bewildering emotional and personality disturbances stroke survivors and their families may have to deal with.

A stroke victim named Gilbert relates: "At times, I get emotional, either laughing or crying over the slightest thing. Once in a while, when I laugh, somebody will ask, 'How come you're laughing?' and I really can't tell them." This, coupled with problems with balance and a slight limp, prompted Gilbert to say: "I feel as though I'm in some other body, as though I'm somebody else, not the same person I was before the stroke."

Living with mind- and body-altering impairments, few people if any escape feeling a sense of emotional upheaval. Hiroyuki,

whose stroke left him with impaired speech and partial paralysis, comments: "Even with time I just didn't get better. Realizing I would not be able to continue my work as before, I fell into despair. I began blaming things and people and felt as if my emotions would explode. I did not act like a man."

Fear and anxiety are common to stroke victims. Ellen comments: "I have feelings of insecurity when I experience pressure in my head that could warn of a future stroke. I become really fearful if I allow myself to think negatively." Ron explains the anxiety he deals with: "To arrive at correct conclusions is almost impossible at times. Sorting out two or three small problems at once frustrates me. I forget things so quickly that I sometimes cannot remember a decision made a few minutes before. As a result, I make some awful mistakes, and it's embarrassing to me and others. What will I be like in a few years? Will I be unable to converse intelligently or drive a car? Will I become a burden to my wife?"

### **Family Members Are Victims Too**

It can be seen, then, that victims of stroke are not the only ones who must grapple with devastating consequences. Their families also do. In some cases they must cope with the terrible shock of seeing a once articulate, capable individual suddenly deteriorate before their eyes, reduced to a state like that of a dependent infant. Relationships can be disrupted as family members may have to take on unfamiliar roles.

Haruko relates the tragic effects this way: "My husband lost his memory of almost everything important. We suddenly had to get rid of the company he had run and let go of our house and our possessions. What hurt most was no longer being able to talk freely with my husband or turn to him for ad-

## WARNING SIGNS

- Sudden weakness, numbness, or paralysis of face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden blurred or dimmed vision, especially in one eye; an episode of double vision
- Difficulty speaking or understanding even simple sentences
- Dizziness or loss of balance or coordination, especially when combined with another symptom

### Less Common Symptoms

- Sudden, unexplained, and intense headache—often described as “the worst headache ever”
- Sudden nausea and fever—distinguished from a viral illness by the speed of onset (minutes or hours rather than several days)

- Brief loss of consciousness or a period of decreased awareness (fainting, confusion, convulsions, coma)

### Do Not Ignore Symptoms

Dr. David Levine urges that when symptoms appear, the patient “go as quickly as possible to a hospital emergency ward. There is evidence that if a stroke is treated in the first few hours, the damage can be minimized.”

Sometimes symptoms may appear for a very short period of time and then disappear. These episodes are known as TIAs, or transient ischemic attacks. Do not ignore them, as they may indicate serious stroke risks, and a full stroke may follow. A doctor can treat the causes and help reduce the risk of a future stroke.

Adapted from guidelines provided by the National Stroke Association, Englewood, Colorado, U.S.A.



vice. Confused between night and day, he often removes protective diapers needed at night. Although we knew that the time would come when he would be reduced to this state, it is still hard for us to accept the reality of his condition. Our situation is completely reversed, in that now my daughter and I are my husband's guardians.”

“Caring for someone with a stroke—no matter how much you love them—can be overpowering at times,” observes Elaine Fantle Shimberg in *Strokes: What Families Should Know*. “The pressure and responsibility don't let up.” In some cases the high level of care some family members provide can

take its toll on the caregiver's health, emotions, and spirituality. Maria explains that her mother's stroke had a terrific impact on her life: “I visit her every day and try to build her up spiritually, reading and praying with her, and then lavishing love, hugs, and kisses on her. When I come

home, I'm drained emotionally—some days to the extent that I throw up.”

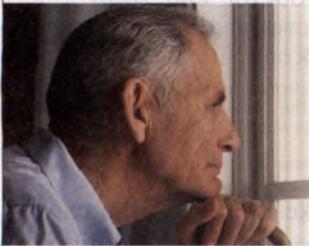
The most difficult thing for some caregivers to cope with is the change in behavior. Neuropsychologist Dr. Ronald Calvano tells *Awake!*: “When you have a disease that affects higher cortical functions—that is, how a person thinks, conducts his life, his

emotional reactions—we are dealing with the very essence of the person, so in certain ways the psychological impairments that occur really change the world of the family in a way that is quite dramatic." Yoshiko relates: "My husband seemed to change completely after his illness, flaring up over the slightest thing. I get truly miserable at those times."

Often, personality changes may not be recognized by those outside the family. Hence, some caregivers feel isolated and carry their burdens alone. Midori explains: "The strokes have left my husband with

mental and emotional disabilities. Although he has a great need for encouragement, he will not talk about it with anyone and suffers by himself. So it is left up to me to handle his emotions. Watching my husband's moods each day has made me uneasy and sometimes even afraid."

How have many stroke survivors and their families coped with the changes a stroke brings in their lives? In what ways may each of us support those who suffer from the crippling effects of stroke? Our next article explains.



## Coping With Its Effects

**L**YING in a hospital bed with paralyzed limbs, Gilbert asked his doctor: "Will I ever regain use of my arm and my leg?" Gilbert heard the challenging response: "The harder you work, the more you will get back, and the quicker you will do it." He replied: "I'm ready!" Physical therapy coupled with a positive outlook led him, at age 65, from a wheelchair to a walker, then to a cane and back to work.

"Most of today's poststroke rehabilitation supports the notion that if one area of the brain is damaged, other centers can assume the role of the injured tissue. One purpose of therapy is to both bring out the potential of these uninvolved centers and provide the stimulation to permit the brain to reorganize and adapt," state researchers Weiner,

Lee, and Bell. However, recovery is determined by other factors too, such as the site and the severity of the stroke, the general health of the individual, the quality of medical care, and the support of others.

### Support of Family and Friends

Erikka engaged in rehabilitative exercises for three years, learning to walk and to use her right hand to compensate for her disabled left hand. She tells what enabled her to cope: "The most important thing was that my husband and my friends remained loyal to me. To know that they loved me gave me strength, and when they encouraged me not to give up, that motivated me."

Family members become partners in the recovery process of their loved ones. They need to ask questions of medical person-

nel and observe therapies that may need to be continued at home so as not to lose the gains already made. The patience, kindness, understanding, and affection shown by family members and friends provide a secure emotional environment in which to relearn speech, reading, and other skills of daily living.

Striking a balance between pushing and coddling, John worked hard helping his wife Ellen with exercise and therapy. He describes his family's efforts: "We wouldn't let Ellen sink into the depths of self-pity. At times we were hard taskmasters, but we always monitored her limitations and gave assistance. She is more sensitive, so I make an effort not to cause her stress."

As Ellen learned how to speak again with the help of a speech therapist, John assisted her. "Doing things together was a means of encouragement, so we would read the Bible aloud to each other, which helped improve her speech. Also, taking it slowly at first, we engaged in the ministry, as we are Jehovah's Witnesses. In this way Ellen could share with others the hope we have for the future. This was a therapy in itself for Ellen." By the end of three years, Ellen had improved greatly.

The encouragement and strength that friends can impart should never be underestimated, as they can have a tremendous effect on a stroke survivor's recovery. The medical journal *Stroke* reported that higher "levels of social support were found to be predictive of a more rapid rate of recovery and a greater amount of overall improvement in functioning, even among patients with more severe stroke."

Bernie appreciated very much the support that his friends gave him. He reminds us: "The visits of friends are vital in coping. A sympathetic voice and a caring attitude lift the morale. Though one need not

dwell on the person's disability, recognition of any improvement is very encouraging." What might all of us do to lend support to those coping with the aftermath of a stroke? "Take some flowers," suggests Bernie, "or share a Scriptural thought or experience. That was of great help to me."

Melva, an elderly stroke survivor, found it helpful to have one of her spiritual brothers pray with her. Gilbert also recommends this, explaining: "It shows that you really care enough when you pray with someone." Peter, whose stroke left him with impaired vision, appreciates it when others understand his limitations and take the time to read to him.

Assisting one to and from rehabilitation is also a loving gesture. Making sure that the stroke victim's home is a safe place is necessary too. Falling is a constant threat when balance is a problem. Gilbert, for example, appreciated the kindly help of friends who, among other things, installed a grab bar in his shower for safety.

### **Learning to Render Support**

Mood swings and a heightened tendency to cry can be embarrassing for the stroke victim, as well as disconcerting to onlookers who may not know how to respond. However, learning to be supportive, friends can rescue a stroke victim from the isolation that may otherwise result. Usually, crying spells become less frequent. But when tears come, remain calm and stay by the person, saying what you would like to hear if your roles were reversed.

Above all, cultivate godly love for those whose impairments may have changed the personality you once knew. They sense how you feel, and that, in turn, affects their response to you. Erikka comments: "I may never be the same person again. But no one should demand that of

## STROKE PREVENTION

"THE best way to deal with stroke is to attempt to prevent it," states Dr. David Levine. And the number one factor associated with most strokes is high blood pressure.

For many people, high blood pressure can be controlled through a diet rich in potassium and low in salt, saturated fat, and cholesterol. Modifying alcohol consumption may be important too. A regular exercise program appropriate for one's age and fitness level can help shed excess pounds, which in turn may reduce blood pressure. Medicine may have to be taken—under a doctor's supervision, as there is a wide range of drugs available.

Carotid artery disease narrows the major blood-supply route to the brain and is a main contributor to stroke. Depending on the degree of blockage, surgery known as carotid endarterectomy to clear the blocked arteries may be indicated. Studies have shown that people who were exhibiting symptoms and whose arteries were severely narrowed benefited from surgery along with medical therapy. However, there can be problems re-

lated to the surgery, so it must be considered carefully.

Heart disease can increase the risk of stroke. Atrial fibrillation (irregular heartbeat), which can cause blood clots to form and travel to the brain, can be treated by anticoagulants. Other heart problems may require surgery and medication to reduce stroke risk. Diabetes accounts for a large proportion of stroke occurrences, so controlling it helps prevent stroke.

Transient ischemic attacks, TIAs, are clear warnings that a stroke may occur. Make sure that they are not ignored. See your physician, and deal with the underlying cause, as TIAs increase stroke risk manyfold.

A healthy, moderate life-style can do much to prevent stroke. A balanced diet and regu-

lar exercise as well as keeping consumption of alcohol to a minimum and eliminating smoking can help keep arteries healthy and may even promote healthy changes in already damaged ones. Increasing the intake of fresh fruits and vegetables and grains has, according to various studies, helped reduce the risk of stroke.



a stroke victim. Relatives and friends should learn to love the person as he or she is. If they carefully rummage around in his or her personality, they will discover that the most attractive qualities of the past are still there."

Self-respect dips to a low point when one is unable to talk or be understood. By mak-

and feel at heart has not changed. However, people tend to avoid contact with me because they can't hold a normal conversation with me. It's hard for me to approach people, but when someone comes up to talk to

me, it is a tremendous encouragement and makes me very, very happy!"

The following are some guidelines that can help all of us to support and encourage those who suffer speech impairments.

*Most strokes do not affect the intellect.* Most people who survive a stroke remain mentally alert, even though their speech may be difficult to understand. Never speak down to them or resort to baby talk. Treat them with dignity.

*Listen patiently.* They may need time to reorganize a thought or finish a word, phrase, or sentence. Remember, the most caring listener is not in a hurry to hear.

*Do not pretend to understand if you don't.* Kindly admit: "I'm sorry. I just can't seem to understand. Let's try again later."

*Speak slowly and clearly in a normal tone of voice.*

*Use short sentences and familiar words.*

*Use questions that elicit a yes or a no, and encourage response.* Keep in mind that they may be unable to comprehend your words.

*Keep background noise down.*

### **Coping, With Jehovah's Loving Support**

While it is important to know the cause of your stroke, as that enables you to take action and reduce your risk of future strokes, gaining control of the accompanying fear is also important. Ellen relates: "God's words at Isaiah 41:10 especially comfort me. There he says: 'Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not gaze about, for I am your God. I will fortify you. I will really help you. I will really keep fast hold of you with my right hand of righteousness.' Jehovah has become so real to me, making me feel unafraid."

The Bible also helps Anand cope with the despair he feels: "It provides me with extreme support, as it constantly revives and refreshes me." Hiroyuki's problem was how to benefit from the Scriptures, since he

could not concentrate. He says: "I found comfort in listening to the Bible books on audiocassettes."

The apostle Paul stated: "When I am weak, then I am powerful." (2 Corinthians 12:10) It was Jehovah's spirit that helped Paul accomplish what he could not do on his own. Those who survive a stroke can also rely upon Jehovah for spiritual strength. Erika explains: "When we are healthy and do everything in our own strength, we may not give Jehovah much opportunity to help us. But my handicap has enabled me to strengthen my relationship with him in a very special way."

### **Caregivers Find Support**

Caregivers need support in their crucial role. Where can they turn for support? One place is within the family. Each member needs to share the load of caregiving. Yoshiko tells how her sons gave her emotional support: "They would listen to my problems as if they were their own." Family members need to obtain all the information available to them in order to learn how to care for a stroke victim and also how to deal with the changes in their loved one's personality.

Who else might lend support to caregivers? David and his family reached out to their spiritual family within the congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses for help with Victor: "They responded to our need. Taking turns, they at times come and sleep at our place to attend to Victor throughout the night for us."

Every caregiver needs to feel the warm love and support of his spiritual family. But some may find it difficult to ask for help. Haruko explains: "I am often told: 'If there's anything you need help with, don't hesitate to let us know.' But knowing how busy everyone is, I cannot bring myself to ask for help. I would be very grateful if people offered help in specific ways: 'I can help you with

## **Family and friends can help the victim to cope until it is God's time to remedy all health afflictions**

cleaning. Which day is best for you? 'I can do your shopping, so will it be all right if I drop by now?'"

Kenji's wife had a stroke; however, he was able to provide the care she needed. He found that by prayer he could throw his burdens upon Jehovah. Eventually, his wife lost her ability to speak, and with that, Kenji lost a partner to talk to. But he reads the Bible every day. He says: "It reminds me of Jehovah's tender care for those crushed in spirit, and this has prevented me from becoming depressed and lonely."

Relying on Jehovah's spirit can help when it seems that emotions are about to get the best of us. Yoshiko, coping with her husband's personality change and temper flare-ups after his stroke, relates: "Sometimes I've felt driven by an urge to scream at the top of my voice. At those times I would always pray to Jehovah, and his spirit would bring me peace." In appreciation for Jehovah's loyalty to her, she lets nothing interfere with her Christian way of life. She regularly attends Christian meetings, engages in the ministry, and does personal Bible study. "By doing my part," Yoshiko says, "I know that Jehovah will never forsake me."

When anxieties creep in, Jehovah is always there to listen. Midori, whose husband is a stroke survivor, takes comfort in the fact that, figuratively, Jehovah has put all the tears she has shed into his "skin bottle."

(Psalm 56:8) She recalls Jesus' words: "Never be anxious about the next day." She says: "I've made up my mind to be patient until the new world comes."—Matthew 6:31-34.

### **Facing Severe Limitations**

It is true that in their rehabilitation some experience significant recovery, but others attain only a small amount of success in regaining prestroke abilities. What can help the latter to face the challenge of accepting their limitations, severe and long-lasting though they may be?

Bernie, who lost much of his mobility because of a stroke, answers: "The joy of my hope of eternal life on a paradise earth to come and prayer to my heavenly Father, Jehovah, helped me accept my limitations with calmness."

That hope helped Erikka and her husband, Georg, accept her limitations and still enjoy life. Georg explains: "We have God's promise of complete healing one day. So we don't concentrate on the disability. Of course, we still do all we can for Erikka's health. But you can learn to live with the imperfect coordination of muscles and concentrate on more positive things."—Isaiah 33:24; 35:5, 6; Revelation 21:4.

In cases where recovery is very limited, the support of family and friends is even more crucial. They can help the victim to cope until it is God's time to remedy all health afflictions.

Knowing that there is a grand future for stroke victims and their families when health will be restored enables them to deal with life one day at a time. They can thus patiently wait for relief from all suffering, in God's new world soon to come. (Jeremiah 29:11; 2 Peter 3:13) In the meantime, all who turn to Jehovah can be confident that even now he will help and support them in coping with the crippling effects of stroke.—Psalm 33:22; 55:22.

# Does Christian Unity Allow for Variety?

**U**NITY in the Christian congregation is vital. Disunity in doctrinal belief would give rise to fierce disputes, dissension, and even enmity. (Acts 23:6-10) The Bible says that "God is a God, not of disorder, but of peace." (1 Corinthians 14:33) Hence, Christians are admonished to speak in agreement and to be united in the same mind and in the same line of thought. —1 Corinthians 1:10.

Are these words and similar Bible passages encouraging strict uniformity among Christians in every respect? (John 17:20-23; Galatians 3:28) Does true Christianity as described in the Bible discourage variety when it comes to individual personalities? Are all Christians expected to fit into some sort of rigid mold?

### God Appeals to Us Individually

Some people strongly believe that the Bible is just another tool for arbitrary control of the masses. Granted, it has often been misused that way by some sects. Jesus, however, painted a very different picture of the Scriptures and their Divine Author. He described God as one who has an intense interest in each of his creatures.

At John 6:44, Jesus explained: "No man can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him." The verb used here does not suggest that God drags people, against their will. Instead, God gently attracts, appealing to the heart. There is, as one Bible scholar put it, 'an influence from God to incline the mind to believe.' The Creator does not view the human family as a faceless mass. He makes an evaluation of individuals and gently draws to himself those who have a heart that is rightly disposed. —Psalm 11:5; Proverbs 21:2; Acts 13:48.

Note how adaptable the apostle Paul was. He recognized the special needs of individuals and acknowledged that certain viewpoints were common to particular nationalities or backgrounds. Then he adapted his

approach accordingly. He wrote: "To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews . . . To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I have become all things to people of all sorts, that I might by all means save some." —1 Corinthians 9:20-22.

Clearly, Paul did not stereotype people or treat them all in the same way. He gave them this encouragement: "Let your utterance be always with



## The Creator does not view the human family as a faceless mass

graciousness, seasoned with salt, so as to know how you ought to give an answer to each one." (Colossians 4:6) Yes, Paul and the other Christians had to recognize and respect each person's uniqueness in order to help him.

### God's Original Design

This respect for a person as an individual continues after one becomes part of the Christian congregation. God's people do not drown in a sea of complete uniformity and absolute conformity to the preferences of those in authority. Rather, they enjoy a wide variety of personalities and have different abilities, habits, and opinions. The individuality of each one is not viewed as a bother or a nuisance. It is part of God's original design.

Hence, in the new world promised in the Bible for the righteous, perfection among humans will allow for great diversity. (2 Peter 3:13) Under the heading "Perfection," the Bible encyclopedia *Insight on the Scriptures*\* appropriately makes the following comments: "Perfection does not mean an end to variety, however, as persons often assume. The animal kingdom, which is the product of Jehovah's 'perfect activity' (Ge[nesis] 1:20-24; De[uteronomy] 32:4), contains enormous variety."

\* Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

*Insight* adds: "Perfection of the planet Earth is likewise not incompatible with variety, change, or contrast; it allows for the simple and the complex, the plain and the fancy, the sour and the sweet, the rough and the smooth, the meadows and the woods, the mountains and the valleys. It embraces the stimulating freshness of early spring, the warmth of summer with its azure-blue skies, the loveliness of autumn colors, the pure beauty of freshly fallen snow. (Ge[nesis] 8:22) Perfect humans will thus not be stereotypes of identical personality, talents, and abilities."

### Concern for Others

However, true Christianity does discourage a self-centered disregard for those around us. The apostle Paul watched closely every feature of his life and conduct in order to avoid stumbling others. He said in his letter to the congregation at Corinth: "In no way are we giving any cause for stumbling, that our ministry might not be found fault with." (2 Corinthians 6:3) Sometimes, we must control our personal desires and put the needs of others above our own preferences. For example, Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome: "It is well not to eat flesh or to drink wine or do anything over which your brother stumbles."—Romans 14:21.

Similarly today, a person may choose to refrain from consuming alcohol in the presence of one who has a problem controlling his drinking. (1 Corinthians 10:23, 24) This is done, not out of a compulsion to conform, but as a noble act of kindness and love. "Even the Christ did not please himself." Jesus was an individual, but he did not assert his preferences at the expense of others' feelings.—Romans 15:3.

Still, one of the most refreshing aspects of true Christianity is its respect for individual freedoms and preferences within the

bounds of Bible guidelines. It teaches that God made us to be distinct and unique. At 1 Corinthians 2:11, we read: "Who among men knows the things of a man except the spirit of man that is in him?" We try to understand others as much as possible. But this verse implies that we each have a uniqueness understood only by ourself and our Creator. We have a "secret person of the heart" that we reveal as we choose.—1 Peter 3:4.

#### **Unity and Variety—A Delicate Balance**

The apostle Paul set a good example of Christian balance. Although having authority as an apostle of Christ, he was careful not to impose his opinion on others.

For instance, Paul had a very strong opinion about the advantages of singleness in this imperfect world. He himself was single at the time he wrote: "Those who [marry] will have tribulation in their flesh," and, "[a widow] is happier if she remains as she is, according to my opinion." The fact that his words became part of the inspired Word of God indicates that there was nothing wrong with his opinion. Yet, he also explained: "Even if you did marry, you would commit no sin."—1 Corinthians 7:28, 40.

Evidently, most of the apostles were married men, as Paul acknowledged with the words: "We have authority to lead about a sister as a wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas, do we not?" (1 Corinthians 9:5) Christians knew that in this matter they could make choices different from Paul's and he would still respect them.

Worshippers of God have always been allowed to express their faith in harmony with their unique personality. In fact, God even allowed the Bible writers to use individual style when writing. For example, in all humility Nehemiah wrote his account in the first person. (Nehemiah 5:6, 19) On the

## **We each have a uniqueness understood only by ourself and our Creator**

other hand, out of modesty the apostle John never once used his own name in his Gospel account and rarely referred to himself. God approved of both styles and had them preserved in the Bible.

Similar examples of balance and reasonableness are found throughout the Scriptures. Clearly, Christian unity allows for variety. Of course, diversity of backgrounds and opinions can lead to disunity when spiritual qualities are lacking. (Romans 16:17, 18) But when we 'clothe ourselves with love, the perfect bond of union,' we learn to accept and enjoy the unique personalities of others.—Colossians 3:14.

"Therefore welcome one another," says the Bible, "just as the Christ also welcomed us, with glory to God in view." (Romans 15:7) With the help of God's spirit, Christians can achieve the delicate balance of maintaining unity while enjoying a variety of unique personalities in the congregation.

#### **IN OUR NEXT ISSUE**

##### **A World Without Crime—When?**

##### **What About Racial Pride?**

##### **Russian Press Praises Jehovah's Witnesses**

# Mountains of the Moon

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN KENYA

**I**T WAS a rumor that persisted for centuries: Somewhere in Central Africa, there were snow-covered mountains—the true source of the Nile. But the notion of snow near the equator in Africa seemed unlikely. Yet, early in the second century C.E., the Greek geographer Ptolemy had suggested the existence of these mountains, calling them *Lunae Montes*—Mountains of the Moon.\*

For centuries, efforts to locate these mountains proved futile. But then, one day in the late 1800's, explorer Henry Stanley—famous for finding Dr. David Livingstone—witnessed a fortuitous event. Cloud cover, which had concealed the mountains from previous explorers, dissipated briefly, giving Stanley a stunning glimpse of a group of snowcapped peaks. He had found the Mountains of the Moon. But he called them by the name then used by local residents: *Ruwenzori*, which means "Rainmaker."

Today, it is generally agreed that the Ruwenzoris play but a minor role in providing water for the Nile. Even so, they are still popularly called the Mountains of the Moon. And despite numerous exploratory expeditions, this awe-inspiring mountain range still maintains an aura of mystery. Lying just north of the equator, the Ruwenzoris are a natural boundary between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, stretching some 80 miles long and 30 miles wide.

\* According to the book *The Nile*, by Emil Ludwig, ancient native residents could not explain the snow on the mountains. They thus believed that "the mountains had drawn the moonlight down to them."



Unlike most mountains in East Africa, which are of volcanic origin, the Ruwenzori range is a huge block of the earth's crust that was thrust upward millennia ago by enormous geologic pressures. Although the Ruwenzoris reach a high point of 16,763 feet, they are rarely visible to viewers. Most of the time, the range is enshrouded in mists and clouds.

As the name suggests, the Ruwenzoris enjoy a superabundance of rain and snow, the "dry" season being only slightly drier than the "wet" season. Walking can therefore be hazardous; in some areas mud is waist deep! The heavy rains have carved out a number of exquisite small lakes, which provide moisture for





1

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the unusually thick vegetation that blankets the mountain slopes. In fact, the Ruwenzoris are the home of a number of unusual plants, some of which grow to enormous sizes.

For example, the giant hairy fingers called lobelia are usually less than a foot in length elsewhere, but in the Ruwenzoris they may reach 20 feet. The senecios, or giant ground-sels, look like large cabbages sitting on top of branched trunks. There are moss-covered heath trees 40 feet high. Flowers of all colors and fragrances add beauty to the scenery. There is also a diverse and beautiful population of birds, some of them unique to the Ruwenzoris. On the lower slopes live elephants,

1. ***Thick cloud cover usually conceals Ruwenzori***
2. ***"Rainmaker's" heavy rains moisten its moss-covered slopes***
3. ***Along the trail, flowers and fragrances are many***

chimpanzees, bushbuck, leopards, and colobus monkeys.

#### A Wonderful View

Those who hike up the mountain paths go through a tropical rain forest and cross the Bujuku River a number of times. When they reach an altitude of 11,000 feet, they can look back and see all the way down into the Rift Valley—a stunning view!

Farther up is the lower Bigo Bog, an area of tussock grass and heath trees. The mud here is often knee-deep. A steep climb to the upper Bigo Bog and Lake Bujuku, at the top of the Bujuku Valley, some 13,000 feet high, provides a wonderful view of Mount Baker, Mount Luigi di Savoia, Mount Stanley, and Mount Speke, the best-known peaks in the range.

Higher up is the permanent Elena Glacier. Here one must put on crampons, climbing irons, and use a rope and ice axes to climb up the glacier. Next comes a walk across the Stanley plateau on the way up to Margherita peak at the top of Mount Stanley, the highest peak in the Ruwenzori mountain group. Looking down from that height at a panoramic view of peaks, valleys, forests, streams, and lakes is truly awe-inspiring.

By no means, though, has this mountain range been conquered. The Ruwenzoris have only begun to yield their secrets. Much is still unknown about the range's geology, animal life, and plant life. The Ruwenzoris thus remain shrouded in mystery—secrets fully known only to their wise and all-powerful Creator. Yes, he is truly the One "to whom the peaks of the mountains belong."—Psalm 95:4.



3

# THE TROUBADOURS

## MORE THAN SINGERS OF LOVE SONGS



BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN FRANCE

**T**ROUBADOURS and wandering minstrels—what do those words bring to your mind? Perhaps songs of courtly love and chivalry. You are not wrong, but there was much more to the troubadours than that. While they are possibly best known for the *canso d'amor*, or love song—and thus are most often portrayed lute in hand, serenading some lady—love was not their only concern. The troubadours were involved in many of the social, political, and religious issues of their day.

The troubadours flourished during the 12th and 13th centuries, throughout what is now southern France. They were poet-musicians who wrote in what was the most

refined of all the vernacular Romance languages. It was called langue d'oc\*—the common tongue of roughly all of France south of the Loire River and of the bordering regions of Italy and Spain.

The origin of the word “troubadour” is much debated, but it appears to derive from the Occitan verb *trobar*, meaning “to com-

\* The Latin inherited from the Roman legions, called Roman, had by that time developed into two vernacular languages in France: Southern France spoke the langue d'oc (also known as Occitan, or Provençal), while northern France spoke the langue d'oïl (an early form of French sometimes called Old French). These two languages were distinguished, one from the other, by the word they used for yes. In the south it was *oc* (from Latin *hoc*); in the north, *oïl* (from Latin *hoc ille*), which became the modern French *oui*.

Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

*Purus fili acchille'*





Minature from a  
12th-century  
manuscript

Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

pose, invent, or find." Thus, troubadours could find the right word or rhyme to fit their elegant verse. Their poetry was set to music and sung. Traveling from town to town, often accompanied by professional minstrels called jongleurs, the troubadours performed their songs with harp, fiddle, flute, lute, or guitar. In the halls of the rich as well as in marketplaces or at tournaments, fairs, festivals, or feasts, a musical performance was usually a part of any formal entertainment.

#### Different Backgrounds

Troubadours were from various backgrounds. Some were born to prominent families; a few were kings; and others were of more humble birth and rose to the rank of troubadour. Some attained great status. Many were highly educated and widely traveled. All received extensive training in the rules of gallantry, polite decorum, poetry, and music. One source says that a good troubadour was expected "to know perfectly all the current tales, to repeat all the noteworthy theses from the universities, to be well informed on court scandal, . . . to be able to compose verses to a lord or lady at a moment's notice, and to play on at least two of the instruments then in favor at court."

The development of commerce in the 12th century brought great wealth to the southern regions of France. With prosper-

ity came leisure, education, and cultivated tastes for the arts and elegant living. The great lords and ladies of Languedoc and Provence were the troubadours' most devoted patrons. The poets were highly regarded and came to have great influence over aristocratic taste, fashion, and manners. They became the fathers of Europe's ballroom dance. *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* says, however, that "their great achievement was to create around the ladies of the court an aura of cultivation and amenity that nothing had hitherto approached."

#### A New Respect for Women

When a man opens a door for a woman, helps her on with her coat, or performs any of the many forms of "ladies-first" courtesies that have been observed for centuries in Western Europe, he is carrying on a custom that likely began with the troubadours.

Medieval attitudes toward womankind were greatly influenced by the teachings of the church, which viewed woman as responsible for man's fall into sin and his expulsion from Paradise. She was seen as a temptress, an instrument of the Devil, a necessary evil. Marriage was often considered a debased condition of life. Church law allowed wife-beating and repudiation, contributing to woman's humiliation and subjugation. In nearly all respects, woman was regarded as inferior to man. But with the coming of the troubadours, the minds of men began to change.

The first known troubadour was William IX, Duke of Aquitaine. His poetry was the first to contain the elements that characterized the troubadour's unique conception of love, which came to be called courtly love. Provençal poets themselves called it *verai'amors* (true love) or *fin'amors* (fine love). It was revolutionary, in that the woman was now no longer placed in a position of abject inferiority to the man.

Troubadour poetry bestowed upon the woman great dignity, honor, and respect. She became the embodiment of noble and virtuous qualities. Some songs lamented the lady's cold indifference toward the admiring bard. At least in theory, the troubadour's love was to remain chaste. His primary goal was not possession of the lady but, rather, the moral refinement that his love for her inspired within him. To make himself worthy, the aspiring poet was compelled to cultivate humility, self-control, patience, loyalty, and all the noble qualities that she possessed. Thus, even the most uncouth of men could be transformed by love.

The troubadours believed that courtly love was the source of social and moral refinement, that courteous acts and noble deeds had their origin in love. As this idea was expanded upon, it became the basis for a whole code of conduct, which was, in time, absorbed into the common classes of society. In contrast with feudal society, which was gross and brutal, a new way of life had begun. Women now expected their men to be self-sacrificing, considerate, and kind—to be gentlemen.

Soon, much of Europe was taking up the troubadours' art. Spain and Portugal embraced their themes. Northern France had its trouvères; Germany, its minnesingers; Italy, its *trovatori*. The troubadours' theme of courtly love, fused with the ideals of chivalry, gave birth to a style of literature known as romance.\* For example, mixing the courtly love ideal with legends of Celtic Brittany, the trouvère Chrétien de Troyes epitomized the virtues of generosity and protection of the weak in tales of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

\* Any work written in either the northern or southern vernacular was called a roman. Because many of these chivalric tales dealt with the sentiment of courtly love, they became the standard for all that is considered romance or romantic.

### Their Social Impact

While most troubadour songs praised the virtues of courtly love, others dealt with the social and political issues of the day. Martin Aurell, French author of *La viede et l'épée* (The Fiddle and the Sword), explained that the troubadours 'actively participated in the struggles separating their contemporaries and that through their compositions, the troubadours even contributed to the success of this or that faction.'

Commenting on the troubadours' unique position in medieval society, Robert Sabatier states: "Never before had poets been given such great prestige; never before did anyone have so much freedom of speech. They praised and rebuked, they made themselves the voice of the people, they influenced political policy, and they became the vehicle of new ideas."—*La Poésie du Moyen Age*.

### News Media of Their Day

It can well be said that long before the invention of the printing press, the troubadours and other wandering minstrels served as the news media of their day. Medieval minstrels were international travelers. Throughout the courts of Europe—from Cyprus to Scotland and from Portugal to Eastern Europe, wherever they went—they gathered news and exchanged stories, melodies, and songs. Spreading rapidly by word of mouth from jongleur to jongleur, the catchy tunes of the troubadours' songs were picked up by the people, greatly influencing public opinion and rallying the populace to one cause or another.

One of the many poetic forms used by the troubadours is called the sirvente, literally meaning "servant's song." Some exposed the injustice of rulers. Others celebrated deeds of valor, self-sacrifice, generosity, and mercy, while they criticized barbaric cruelty, cowardice, hypocrisy, and self-interest. The sirventes of the early 13th century give

historians a window into the political and religious climate of Languedoc at a time of great upheaval.

### Criticism of the Church

With the failure of the Crusades, many people began to doubt the spiritual and temporal authority of the Catholic Church. The clergy claimed to represent Christ, but their actions were far from Christlike. Their hypocrisy, greed, and corruption became common knowledge. Always seeking more wealth and political power, the church's bishops and priests catered to the rich. Their neglect of the spiritual needs of the poor and middle classes inevitably fomented dissent.

In Languedoc many people of the middle classes as well as the nobility were educated. Historian H. R. Trevor-Roper observed that a more literate laity was discovering that the 12th-century church "was very different from the ancient models which it professed to imitate." He adds that many men were beginning to think: "How even more different . . . was the unestablished Church before Constantine, the Church of the Apostles, . . . of the persecutions: a Church without pope or feudal bishops or rich endowments or pagan doctrines or new articles calculated to increase its wealth and power!"

Languedoc was a land of tolerance. The counts of Toulouse and other southern rulers allowed the people religious freedom. The Waldenses\* had translated the Bible into langue d'oc and were zealously preaching it, two by two, throughout the region. The Cathari (also called Albigenses) too were spreading their doctrine and gaining many converts from among the nobility.

Many of the troubadours' sirventes mirrored the people's disappointment in as well

as disrespect and disgust for the Catholic clergy. One by Gui de Cavaillon condemns the clergy for having "abandoned their primary vocation" for more worldly interests. The troubadours' lyrics ridiculed hellfire, the cross, confession, and "holy water." They mocked indulgences and relics and lampooned immoral priests and corrupt bishops as being "traitors, liars, and hypocrites."

### The Church's Fight Against Freedom

The Roman Church, though, considered itself supreme over every empire and kingdom. War became its instrument of power. Pope Innocent III promised the wealth of all of Languedoc to any army that could subdue the princes and crush out all dissent in France's southern domains. What followed was one of the bloodiest periods of torture and murder in French history. It became known as the Albigensian Crusade (1209-29).\*

The troubadours called it the False Crusade. Their songs expressed outrage at the church's cruel treatment of dissenters and the pope's offering the same indulgences for killing French dissenters as it offered for killing Muslims, considered infidels. The church enriched itself greatly during the Albigensian Crusade and the Inquisition that followed. Families were disinherited, their land and homes confiscated.

Accused of being Cathari heretics, most troubadours fled to less hostile lands. This Crusade marked the end of the Occitan civilization, its way of life, its poetry. Inquisition law made it illegal to sing, or even to hum, a troubadour song. But their legacy lived on. Indeed, their anticlerical songs set the mood for what would become the Reformation. Truly, the troubadours can be remembered for more than their love songs.

\* See *The Watchtower*, August 1, 1981, pages 12-15, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

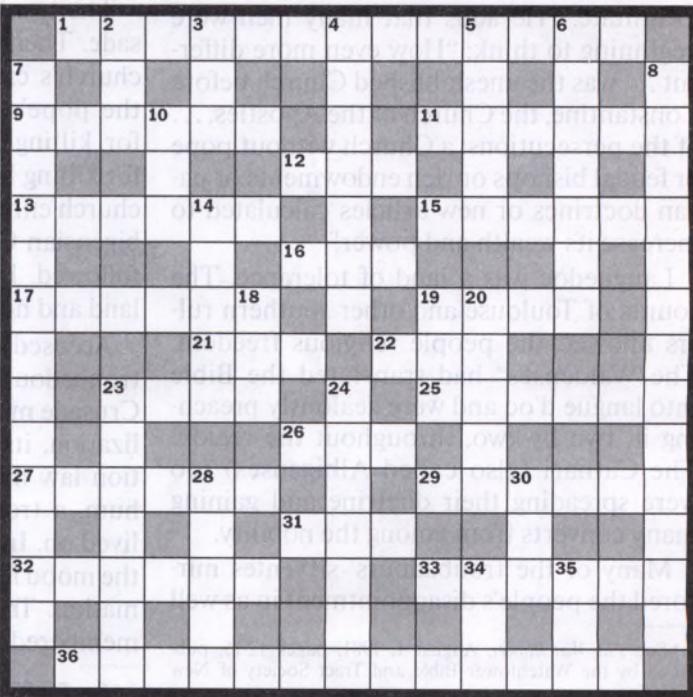
\* See *The Watchtower*, September 1, 1995, pages 27-30.

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE

### Clues Across

1. Jehovah's chief adversary [3 words] (See Revelation 20:2)
  9. Although "Jehovah" is the best-known English pronunciation of the divine name, this is favored by most Hebrew scholars
  11. What Abraham's firstborn son, Ishmael, became to sustain himself in the wilderness (Genesis 21:20)
  12. Short, coarse fibers of flax, which burn readily (Isaiah 1:31)
  13. The third son of Benjamin (1 Chronicles 8:1)
  15. A Levite founder of a family of temple gatekeepers (Ezra 2:42)
  16. This man's failure to show respect for his father resulted in a curse on his son (Genesis 9:22-25)
  17. A city of Judah in the Shephelah (Joshua 15:43)
  19. A raised ornamentation (Song of Solomon 1:11)
  21. The highest point (Deuteronomy 3:27)
  22. Both the insides and the outsides of Noah's ark were covered with this (Genesis 6:14)
  23. Grown old (Isaiah 9:15)
  25. What Paul said we must do to "every weight and the sin that easily entangles us" [2 words] (Hebrews 12:1)
  26. A family head of certain returned exiles from Babylon (Ezra 2:57)
  27. He performed the first recorded resurrection (1 Kings 17:21-23)
  29. Where Tola, who judged Israel for 23 years, was buried (Judges 10:2)
  31. Jesus said that this kind of wine will burst old wineskins (Mark 2:22)
  32. A grandson of Shem by his son Aram (Genesis 10:23)
  33. A Judean city in the Shephelah (Joshua 15:38)
  36. It begins in Genesis chapter 6 [3 words] (Genesis 6:9)
3. An animal imported by King Solomon (1 Kings 10:22)
  4. This man was stoned to death when he and King Rehoboam entered the territory of the seceding northern tribes, while the king escaped with his life (2 Chronicles 10:18)
  5. God's "footstool" (Acts 7:49)
  6. He became an orphan when his mother died at his birth, after hearing that her husband had been killed (1 Samuel 4:19-21)
  7. For those who lack this, God "makes full might abound" [2 words] (Isaiah 40:29)
  8. When presented to God, it could not contain leaven or "honey" [2 words] (Leviticus 2:11)
  10. Micah prophesied that no nation would learn this anymore (Micah 4:3)
  14. A stone mounted on the high priest's "breastpiece of judgment"
  17. A city of Judah in the Shephelah (Joshua 15:43)
  18. A son of Zophah of the tribe of Asher (1 Chronicles 7:37)
  19. The fluid part of a plant (Job 8:16)
  20. What Jesus said God's Word is (John 17:17)
  23. Jonah's father (Jonah 1:1)
  24. King Ahasuerus granted this to the jurisdictional districts of his domain in celebration of making Esther his queen (Esther 2:18)
  28. Watchful (Luke 11:35)
  30. Indicating his willingness to remain in servitude, a Hebrew slave's ear would be pierced with this (Exodus 21:5, 6)
  34. Where the neighborly Samaritan took the injured man so that he could be cared for (Luke 10:34)
  35. Seventh letter of the Greek alphabet

### Crossword Solutions Page 28



### Clues Down

2. A tree prophesied to flourish in the desert plain under paradisaic conditions (Isaiah 41:19)

# The Dancing Devils of Yare

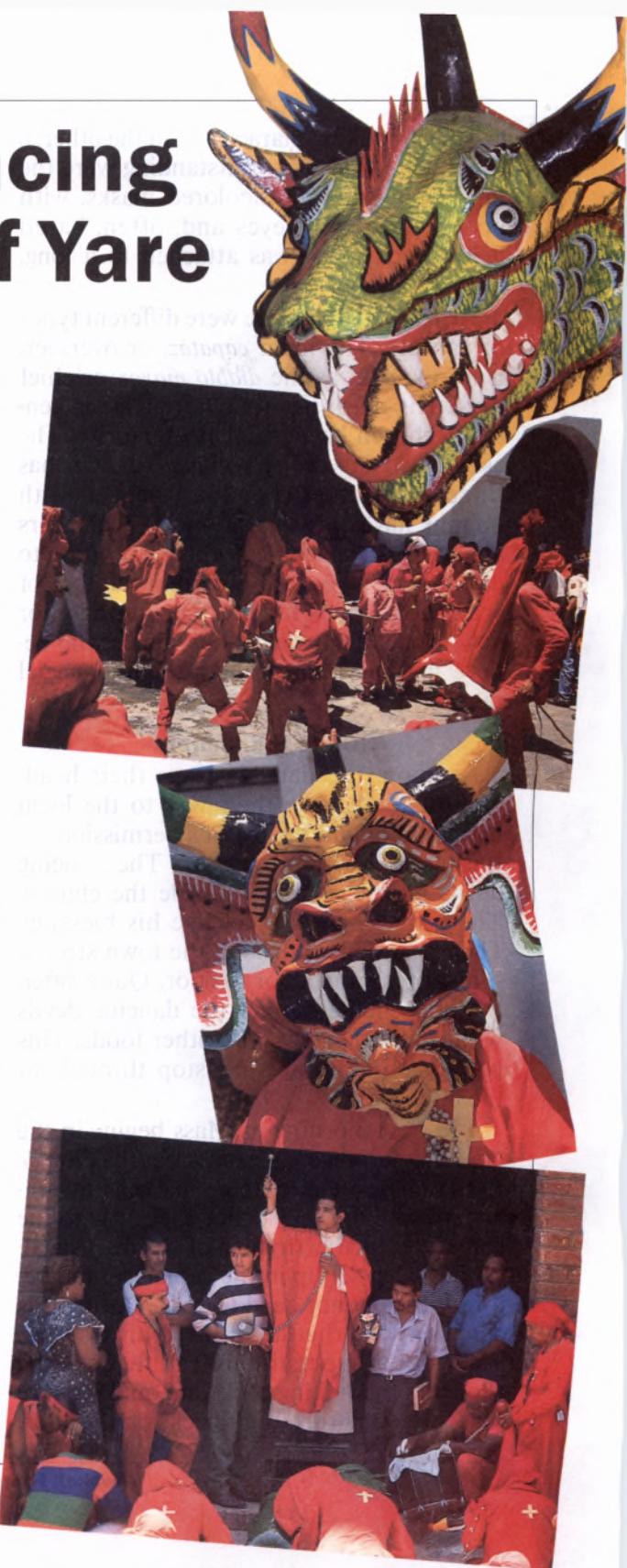
**I**T WAS only midmorning, but it was already very hot. As we watched a group of men dressed in full traditional costume, we wondered how they could stand the scorching heat! We were visiting the small agricultural town of San Francisco de Yare, Venezuela. The men in costume were the famous *Diablos Danzantes de Yare*, the Dancing Devils of Yare.

Most people in Venezuela are Catholic and confess belief in the Bible. However, for generations ritual dances that prominently feature the portrayal of demons have played an important part in local culture. The Catholic Church not only tolerates the dances but actually promotes them. This is the case with the Dancing Devils of Yare.

After arriving at Yare, we were surprised to see that the local headquarters of the Brotherhood of the Most Holy Sacrament, a Catholic organization, was also the headquarters of the dancing devils. The building is known as the *Casa de Los Diablos* (House of the Devils). It was Wednesday, the day before the Catholic feast of Corpus Christi, and there were a number of professional photographers positioned outside the building. Suddenly, there was a loud drumroll, and several men dressed up as demons started to dance.

## Devil Dancers' Costumes

Each dancer wore a red shirt, red trousers, red socks, and sandals. Each wore a rosary, a cross, and a Catholic medallion around his neck. Another cross was fastened to his costume. In one hand each held



a devilish-looking maraca and in the other, a short whip. But most outstanding were the huge, grotesque multicolored masks, with horns, prominent eyes and, often, bared teeth. Each mask was attached to a long, red, cloth hood.

We learned that there were different types of dancers. The main *capataz*, or overseer, is also known as the *diablo mayor*, or chief devil. His mask has four horns. He is generally chosen because of his seniority. The assistant overseer, or *segundo capataz*, has three horns, and the ordinary dancers with no rank have only two. Some of the dancers are *promeseros*, people keeping a promise to dance once a year for a certain number of years, or perhaps for life. This promise, or vow, is usually made by individuals who believe that God has granted them a special request.

#### On to the Church

At noon, the dancers leave their headquarters and make their way to the local church to obtain the priest's permission for the rest of their procession. The dancing devils meet the priest outside the church. There they kneel to receive his blessing. Then they dance through the town streets, sometimes from door-to-door. Quite often the householders greet the dancing devils with candies, drinks, and other foods. This procession continues nonstop throughout the afternoon.

The next morning as Mass begins in the church, the dancers meet back at the *Casa de Los Diablos*. Shaking their maracas in unison, from there they dance their way to the cemetery, to the rhythm of drums. An altar has been set up in the cemetery, and before it they honor dead friends. During this ceremony the rhythm of the drums is slow. Then, out of superstitious fear, they exit the cemetery by walking backward, making sure that they don't turn their backs on the altar.

From there they proceed to the church and wait for Mass to finish.

#### Priestly Blessing

At the end of Mass, the priest comes out and blesses the dancers, who kneel with bowed heads, their masks hanging from the hoods, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil. The priest takes a seat alongside the chief devil. The two of them listen to the vows of the new *promeseros*, who explain why they are promising to dance and for how many years.

The drum players begin to beat their drums faster, and the dancing devils follow by shaking their bodies and their maracas vigorously in rhythm with the accelerated tempo. Women dance too but not in devil costumes. They wear red skirts, white blouses, and white or red handkerchiefs on their heads. During a portion of the procession, some of the dancing devils carry an image of their patron saint on their shoulders. The dancers finish their procession by parading in front of the church, after rendering homage to a prominent cross in town.

#### Not for Jehovah's Witnesses

This proved to be an interesting experience for us as tourists. During our visit to the small town of Yare, we could not avoid observing the public events that took place with the dancing devils. Yet, as Christians we, like the more than 70,000 other Jehovah's Witnesses in Venezuela, do not join in the feast of the Dancing Devils of Yare or similar processions.

Why not? Because we heed the words of the apostle Paul: "I do not want you to become sharers with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and also the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and likewise the table of demons." (1 Corinthians 10:20, 21, *New American Bible*)—Contributed.

# Ecuador

## A Country Astride the Equator



AS VISITORS from Europe, the first thing my wife and I noticed about Ecuador was the equator. True, it is an invisible line, but its influence on Ecuador is unmistakable.

The name Ecuador is Spanish for "equator." Some might think that the equator governs Ecuador's climate. However, soon after arriving, we discovered that hot or cold weather had more to do with altitude

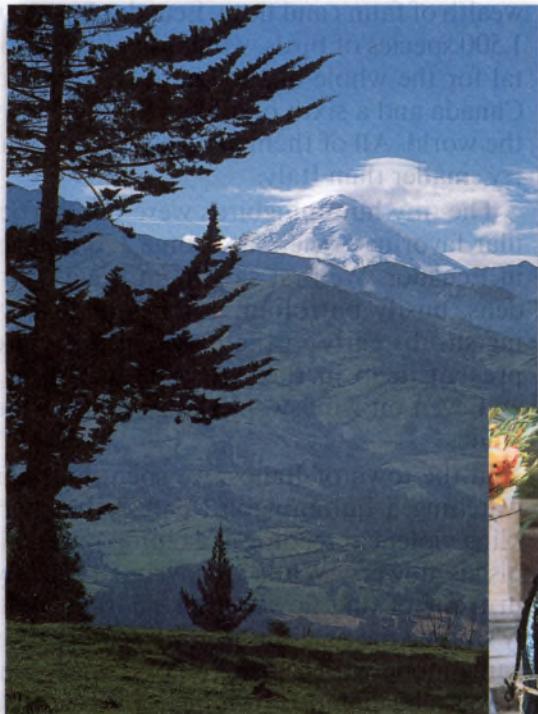
than with geographic location. Since the sun hovers almost overhead throughout the year in these latitudes, height above sea level is one of the best guides for determining how many layers of clothing to put on.

While the equator epitomizes Ecuador, the Andes give the country character. Traversing it like a backbone, these majestic mountains beget an infinite variety of landscapes.

### Variety of Color

Color was our second impression of Ecuador. One morning soon after our arrival, we sat in the shade of some large trees. We were welcomed by the flutelike serenade of orioles, the insistent bickering of wrens, and the strident chords of cheeky antpittas. But their colors were even more striking than the sounds.

In a flash of crimson, a vermillion flycatcher darted out from his perch to snatch



**Andean landscape, with  
Cotopaxi volcano in the background**  
—Zoom to distant — **Indian flower seller**



a mosquito. A flock of bright-green parakeets clamored for attention as they scolded a turkey vulture that was soaring overhead. The brilliant yellow-and-black orioles and the iridescent-blue morpho butterflies added their daubs of color to the unforgettable scene.

As we traveled through the country, we noticed that the bright colors of the birds and the butterflies were repeated in the clothing and the handicrafts of Ecuador. The crimson of the flycatcher, for example, was matched by the scarlet skirts of the Cañar Indian women. And the vibrant tapestries of the Otavalo Indians seemed to capture all the colors Ecuador has to offer.

#### **Varied Climate**

The equator and the Andes work together to produce a varied climate in Ecuador. Within a few miles—as the condor flies—the climate can change from the humid tropical heat of the Amazon to the snows of the mountain peaks.

One day, we traveled from the foothills near the upper Amazon to the high mountains around Quito. As our car climbed upward, we observed how the tropical rain

forest changed gradually to cloud forest, which finally gave way to wild moorland, or paramo. The dramatic changes of scenery gave us the impression that we had traveled from equatorial Africa to the highlands of Scotland within the space of a few hours.

Many Ecuadoran towns and cities are

located in valleys nestled among the mountains, where the climate is described as spring-like throughout the year. However, towns high up in the Andes can experience any of the four seasons at any time—and sometimes all four during the same day! As one experienced traveler put it, “the most predictable aspect of Ecuador’s weather is its unpredictability.”



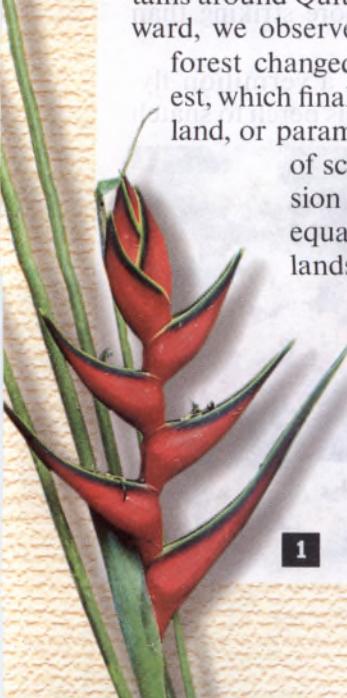
**2**

#### **Hummingbirds and Condors**

The variety of climates produces a wealth of fauna and flora. Ecuador has over 1,500 species of birds, which is twice the total for the whole of the United States and Canada and a sixth of all known species in the world. All of them are found in a country smaller than Italy.

The tiny hummingbirds were our particular favorites—there are some 120 species in Ecuador. We first saw them in city gardens, busily patrolling patches of flowering shrubs early in the morning. They are present deep in the Amazon rain forest and even on windswept slopes high in the Andes.

In the town of Baños, we spent an hour watching a hummingbird called the sparkling violet-ear feeding at a clump of red hibiscus flowers. While it hovered tirelessly in front of one flower after another, deftly sipping the precious nectar, a competitor came along with a more relaxed approach. It was a black-tailed trainbearer, named for its long black tail that makes it look like a black comet when it buzzes around its territory, chasing away rivals. Instead of hover-



**1**

- 1. Wild plantain**
- 2. Toucan barbet**

ing in the air, this hummingbird perched on the stem and pierced the flowers from behind in order to extract the nectar.

Not all Ecuadorian birds are so small. The majestic condor, the largest of all birds of prey, still soars over the Andes, although in greatly reduced numbers. We constantly scanned the lofty peaks, hoping to see its unmistakable silhouette, but to no avail. In the Amazon region, the harpy eagle—the world's most powerful bird of prey—is just as difficult to spot. Much of the day, it perches inconspicuously on a branch of an enormous tree in the undisturbed rain forest, waiting to swoop down on an unsuspecting sloth or monkey.

### **Curative Plants**

Many of the plants found in Ecuador are medicinal as well as decorative. During our visit to Podocarpus National Park, in the south of the country, our guide pointed out a small tree with red berries. "That is a cascarilla tree," he explained. "Its bark has been the source of quinine for centuries." Two hundred years ago, in nearby Loja, quinine saved the life of a Spanish noblewoman who was dying of malaria. Its reputation, long known to the Incas, soon spread throughout the world. Although the cascarilla tree seems insignificant at first glance, the drug extracted from its bark has saved many lives.

The cloud forest where that tree thrives also harbors many ancient trees, whose gnarled branches are festooned with spiky bromeliads, some of which have bright-red blossoms. These remote forests are also a refuge for the spectacled bear, the ocelot, and the puma, as well as countless species of plants that botanists are still trying to catalog.

Scientists are taking a closer look at a tiny Ecuadoran frog, in the hope of finding

better painkillers. The skin of this poison-dart frog exudes an analgesic said to be 200 times more powerful than morphine.

High in the Andes, we saw some plants unlike any we had ever seen before. The puya, a bromeliad that attracts hummingbirds, reminded us of a huge old-fashioned broom, just waiting for someone to pick it up and sweep the surrounding terrain. In sheltered hollows of the desolate paramo are dwarf forests of *quinua*, a hardy tree that shares the altitude record with Himalayan pines. These bushy trees, only six to ten feet high, form almost impenetrable thickets that are a welcome haven for birds and animals.

In the Amazon rain forest, however, the trees are tall and exuberant. During a visit to the Jatun Sacha Biological Station, we stood beneath a giant of the forest, well over a hundred feet tall. Suddenly, a small movement near its huge buttress roots startled us. Then we realized that one of the crevices in the roots was home to a family of tiny bats. That encounter reminded us that the forest depends on many of these symbiotic relationships. Bats, major seed distributors and pollinators of the rain forest, are an important ally of the trees that offer them protection.

### **Markets in the Mountains**

About 40 percent of Ecuador's population is made up of Indian tribes. The different ethnic groups—each with its own distinctive dress—are a feature of most Andean valleys. Frequently, we saw Indian women climbing precipitous paths on the mountain slopes, spinning sheep's wool as they walked. It seemed that hardly any slope was too steep for them to cultivate. We examined one field of corn, calculated to be on an incline of at least 45 degrees!

The markets of Ecuador, such as that of Otavalo, have become famous. They are

centers where local people can buy or sell animals and farm produce as well as traditional woven articles or other handicrafts. Since the local people go to the market in typical attire, the occasion is a spectacle that attracts many tourists. Jehovah's Witnesses also take advantage of market days to share the Bible's message with the people.

An attraction of the weaver's work is its antiquity and liberal use of traditional colors and motifs. The people of the Andes were weaving their celebrated ponchos long before the Spanish arrived. Although their technique has been modernized, these hardworking Indians still produce fine knitwear and tapestry.

### Mountains in the Mist

Driving through the Andes is not for someone who suffers from car sickness. The roads twist and turn, climb and plunge, as they hug the sides of tortuous valleys. The intrepid traveler is rewarded with an ever-changing panorama, which can only be described as awe-inspiring.

As we drove up into the Andes for the first time, mist—an almost constant companion—engulfed our car. Sometimes we emerged from the mist and could see stretching out into the distance wave after wave of mist-filled valleys. Traveling along the Andean chain, the mist seemed to play games with us. One minute, a village we passed through would be totally enshrouded. A few minutes later, the next village would be bathed in brilliant sunshine.

Sometimes the mist swirled up from below; sometimes it rolled down from the mountain peaks above. Although it was annoying to have a beautiful view blotted out, the mist did lend grandeur and mystery to the lofty peaks towering above it. More

important, it gives life to the cloud forest, which derives precious moisture from it.

On our final morning in Ecuador, the mist cleared. For several hours we had a magnificent view of Cotopaxi—an almost perfect snow-covered cone. This active volcano, the world's highest, has been made the centerpiece of a national park. When we got closer to the peak, we were astonished to see a large glacier that was inching down one of its upper slopes. At an altitude of nearly 20,000 feet, it successfully defies the powerful equatorial sun.

The following day, as our plane left Quito for our journey homeward, we had our last glimpse of Ecuador. In the early morning light, we saw Cayambe, another snow-capped volcano, thrusting above the mist and glistening almost like gold in the sunshine. This volcano, whose peak lies almost exactly on the equator, seemed to be a fitting farewell symbol of the fascinating country we had visited. Like Cayambe, Ecuador sits majestically astride the equator.

—Contributed.

### CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

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## FROM OUR READERS

**Religion and War** I am writing to express my appreciation for the informative series discussing religion in war. (April 22, 1997) The first article, "Killing in the Name of God," really caught my attention. It was short and to the point, especially when presenting reasoning on why Jehovah God approved the killing of Canaanites by ancient Israelites.

S. J., United States

**Ginger Klauss' Story** Let me tell you how much I was encouraged by Ginger Klauss' experience, "Now I'm Happy to Be Alive!" (April 22, 1997) Like her, I lost all self-confidence, feeling worthless and unloved. Being unable to cope with those emotions, I tearfully told God each day that I wanted to die. I saw death as a welcome relief. But one day I prayed, "If it is your will, please give me the encouragement to live." Right after praying that way, I received this issue of *Awake!* When I saw this article, it hit me that God had answered my prayer. I learned from Ginger that keeping a sense of humor and not taking myself too seriously can help me maintain a positive attitude. I can definitely say that this one magazine has given me the inspiration to live.

M. K., Japan

I have just finished reading the article for the sixth time, and it will not be the last! I am 21 years old and am a full-time evangelizer. I have great admiration for Ginger Klauss because of the zeal she has for the preaching work despite being confined to a wheelchair. Her experience motivated me to do all I can to serve Jehovah.

S. Z., Italy

Infinite thanks for the beautiful experience. Because of muscular dystrophy, I am confined to bed for a large part of each day, and I

experience no little difficulty in carrying out the preaching work in a wheelchair. Ginger's experience greatly encouraged me and helps me to face those moments when I am a bit depressed because of my illness.

M. R., Italy

**Why So Sick?** Thank you for the article "Young People Ask . . . Why Do I Have to Be So Sick?" (April 22, 1997) I am 21 years old and have sickle-cell anemia. I can relate to the feelings of the young people in this article. I often wonder if anyone will love me and want to marry me despite my having this health problem. But your article helped me because I now know that I'm not alone in feeling this way.

D. R., United States

**Inseparable Friends** Thank you for the experience of Anne-Marie Evaldsson. (April 22, 1997) I was filled with admiration for the way this sister continues forward spiritually despite her disability. The account made me reflect. Many of us don't appreciate what has been given to us to use in serving Jehovah. I'd like to commend the sister and her loyal friend. What a fine example!

R. A., Ecuador

To know that someone physically blind works, engages in the house-to-house ministry, conducts Bible studies, and attends Christian meetings each week is very encouraging. It made me feel that doing my utmost in the ministry, keeping it in first place, is worth the effort. The value of spiritual sight is indeed surpassing. I will remember Anne-Marie Evaldsson with deep love and appreciation.

J. O., Nigeria

## WATCHING THE WORLD

### Cholera Comeback

After an absence of over 100 years, cholera has made a dramatic comeback in South America. "Since 1991, 1.4 million cases have been reported there, leading to 10,000 deaths," states *The Times* of London. An added worry to health authorities was the emergence in 1992 of a new strain of the cholera bacterium in India, Bangladesh, and neighboring countries, which has so far affected 200,000 people. Cholera is an acute diarrheic disease, and death occurs in 70 percent of the cases unless adequate treatment is available. But prevention is better than a cure. Boiling drinking water and milk, keeping flies away, and washing uncooked foods in chlorinated water are basic safety factors.

### Talking About World Peace

Regional wars that once played a significant part in the Cold War seem to have ended, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's *Yearbook 1997*. In 1989, the last year of the Cold War, there were 36 "major armed conflicts." The number dropped to 27 in 1996, and all but one, the conflict between India and Pakistan, were internal, domestic wars. Furthermore, as measured by the number of deaths, most of these conflicts showed a decrease in intensity or continued at a low level. "No other generation has been so close to a world peace," concluded *The Star*, a newspaper of South Africa. Says *Time*

magazine: "American dominance... has given the world a Pax Americana, an era of international peace and tranquillity unseen in this century, rarely seen in human history."

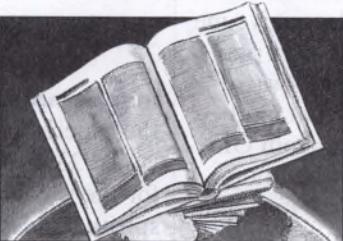
### Still Number One

"More copies of the Bible are still being printed than any other book," reports *ENI Bulletin*. The countries with the highest Bible distribution are China, the United States, and Brazil. According to a report from the United Bible Societies (UBS), 19.4 million copies of the complete Bible were distributed in 1996. This was a new record and an increase

don, heart disease, strokes, diabetes, and certain cancers are greatly increasing as developing nations adopt Western life-styles of smoking, high-calorie and fat-rich diets, and reduced physical activity. Although globally people now live longer, this is 'an empty prize, without quality of life,' says Dr. Paul Kleihues, a director of WHO. He adds: "Those who say we are truly messengers of death are right." WHO is advocating an intensified worldwide campaign to encourage healthy life-styles. Otherwise, it says, there will be a "crisis of suffering on a global scale."

### Buddhist Head Advises Seeking Truth

"Obstinacy is not good" when it comes to religion, says Eshin Watanabe, the supreme priest and head of one of Japan's oldest Buddhist sects. Asked whether he meant that loyalty to beliefs is good but obstinate beliefs are bad, *Mainichi Daily News* quoted his explanation: "You should ponder on whether your beliefs are right or wrong. It is important to review their relationship to other beliefs. You should also think whether they represent truth or not. We must examine these things again." Watanabe heads the Tendai sect of Buddhism, which was introduced to Japan from China 1,200 years ago.



of 9.1 percent over 1995. Despite the "breathtaking growth in distribution in particular parts of the world," said John Ball, publishing services coordinator at UBS, "there is still much more to be done if we are to provide everyone with easier access to the Scriptures."

### Messengers of Death

Rich Western countries are creating a "double burden" of disease for developing countries, says the 1997 report of the World Health Organization (WHO). As reported in *The Daily Telegraph* of Lon-

### Natural Antiseptic

Some people instinctively lick their wounds when they cut themselves, as do animals. Interestingly, researchers at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in

London have discovered that saliva is in fact a natural anti-septic. As reported in *The Independent* newspaper, pharmacologists asked 14 volunteers to lick both sides of their hands and found that levels of nitric oxide on the skin were greatly increased. Nitric oxide, a powerful chemical that can kill germs, forms when nitrite present in saliva comes into contact with the acidic surface of the skin. The reaction is helped by another chemical, ascorbate, which is also found in saliva.

#### Marijuana—A Hard Drug?

Marijuana users have long contended that the drug is relatively harmless. However, "new evidence suggests [that marijuana's] effects in the brain resemble those of 'hard' drugs such as heroin," reports the journal *Science*. Scientists from the United States, Spain, and Italy conducted the studies. Among their findings was that "the active ingredient in marijuana—a cannabinoid known as THC—results in the same key biochemical event that seems to reinforce dependence on other drugs, from nicotine to heroin: a release of dopamine in part of the brain's 'reward' pathway," which keeps users coming back for more. When long-term marijuana use is stopped, the level of another chemical, a peptide called corticotropin-releasing factor (CRF), rises in the brain. CRF has been linked to the emotional stress and anxiety that result from withdrawal from opiates, alcohol, and cocaine. Accordingly, one researcher said: "I would be satisfied if, following all this evidence, people would

no longer consider THC a 'soft' drug." Each year, about 100,000 people in the United States seek treatment for marijuana dependence.

#### Ice in Ancient Egypt

"Although the ancient Egyptians had no artificial refrigeration, they were able to produce ice by means of a natural phenomenon that occurs in dry, temperate climates," notes *The Countyline*, a newspaper of Bryan, Ohio. How did they do it? "Around sundown, Egyptian women placed water in



shallow clay trays on a bed of straw. Rapid evaporation from the water surface and from the damp sides of the tray combined with the nocturnal drop in temperature to freeze the water—even though the temperature of the environment never fell near the freezing point."

#### Sun Exposure

"Skin cancer has emerged in epidemic proportions in North America," says *The Vancouver Sun* newspaper, and Canadians "have a one in seven lifetime risk" of developing it. "Sun exposure is believed to account for 90 per cent of melanoma cases," adds the newspaper. Skin that is tanned is damaged, says the report, and

leads to premature skin aging as well as suppression of the immune system. A national survey of more than 4,000 Canadians reveals that 80 percent know the hazards of exposing their skin to the sun, yet nearly half rarely if ever take any protective action. University of British Columbia associate professor Dr. Chris Lovato, one of the principal investigators in the survey, warns that "we need to make sun safety a habit" and instill "sensible and safe ways to enjoy being in the sun."

#### Costly Habit

Smoking costs money. How much? According to the *University of California Berkeley Wellness Letter*, in the long run, it could amount to \$230,000 or \$400,000—depending on whether you smoke one or two packs of cigarettes a day. "Say you are young and start smoking today and continue for 50 years, assuming it doesn't kill you first," says the *Wellness Letter*. "At a pack a day at \$2.50 (to keep things simple, let's leave out increases in price), that would add up to more than \$900 a year, or \$45,000 over 50 years. Put that money in the bank each year at 5% interest, and the total could easily quadruple." Adding in extra life-insurance costs and extra cleaning expenses (for home, clothes, and teeth) brings the totals up to those mentioned above. The letter adds: "And that doesn't count the smoking-related medical expenses you'll face if your health insurance doesn't cover everything."

# A Russian Girl's Hope

A 15-year-old girl in Ukhta, Russia, a city of over 100,000 population more than 800 miles northeast of Moscow, expressed an earnest desire for better conditions on earth. She explained this in the following letter to the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia:

"My friend told me that the book *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived* describes the life of Jesus Christ. I am very interested in your books, magazines, and brochures. Let me explain how this interest developed. It came about at the telegraph office when I went to pay the radio and telephone bills. There I found a tract on the floor. I picked it up, shook off the dirt, and began to read the tract, which was entitled *Why Is Life So Full of Problems?*

"I read about the troubles and suffering that people have, and the cover of



the tract illustrated the promise of a new life in Paradise. I hope that someday it will come.

I really want to see all people happy, satisfied, and healthy and also to see dead relatives. . . . I

would like to know what I should do in order to have the hope of living in the earthly Paradise. I beg you to send me some information or books. I would pay for them and the cost of mailing."