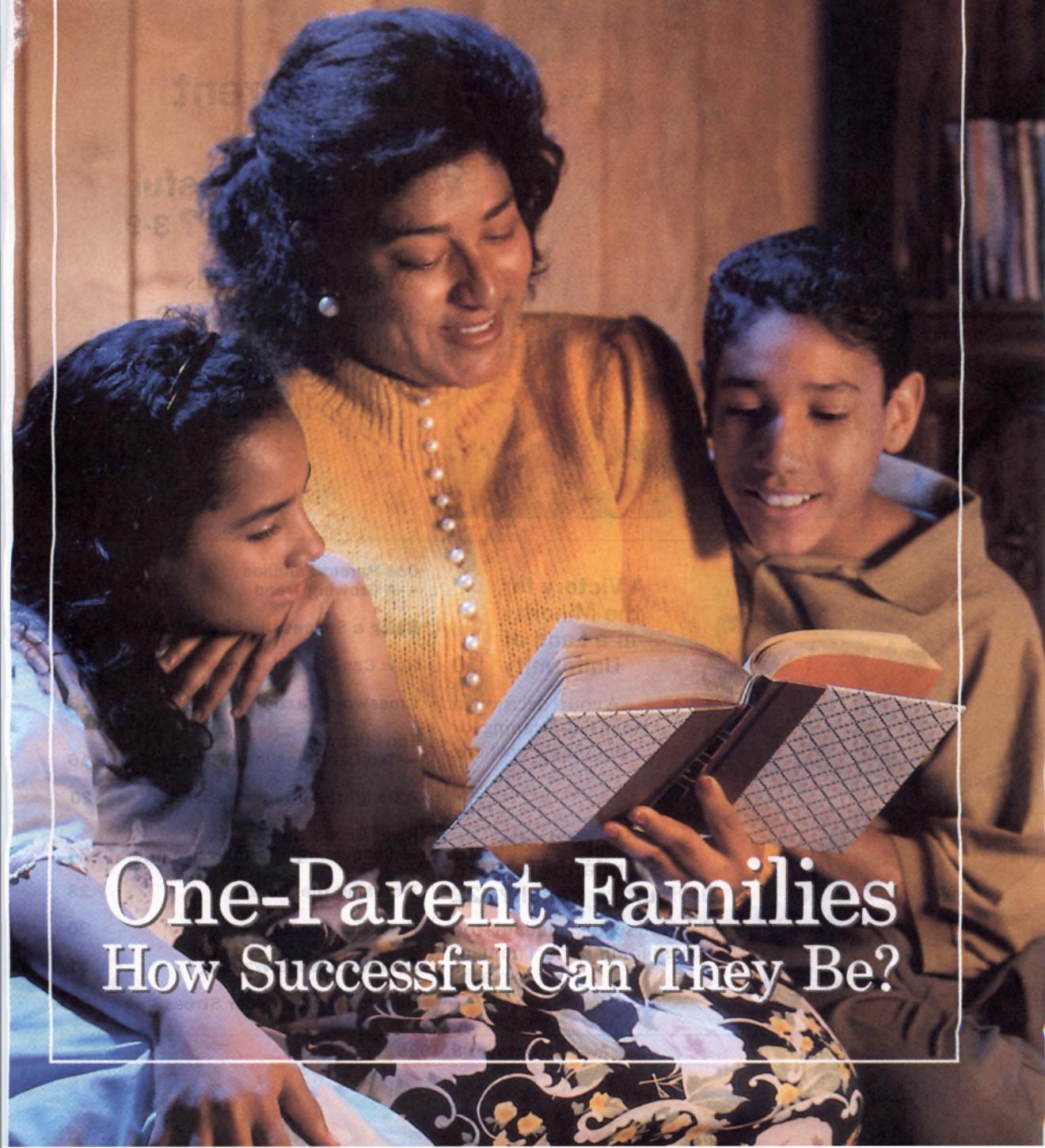


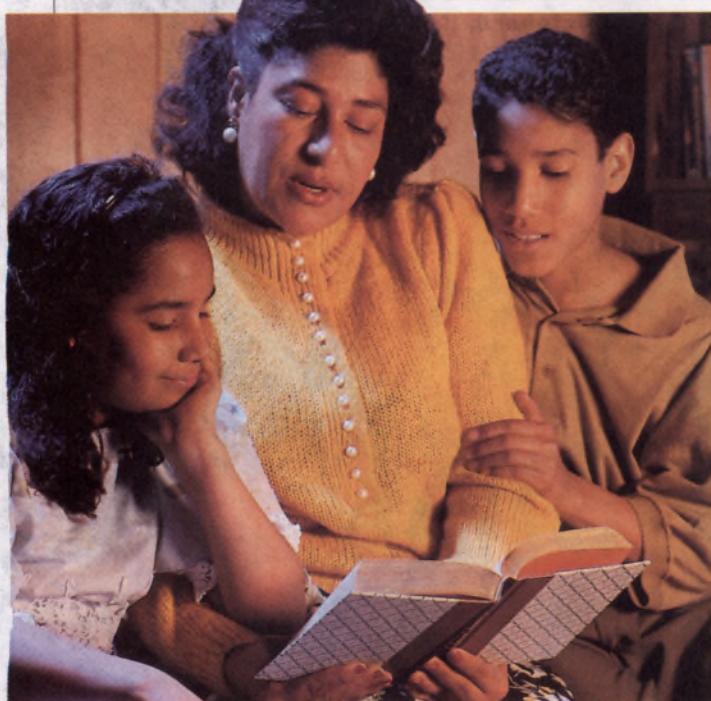
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October 8, 1995



**One-Parent Families
How Successful Can They Be?**



One-Parent Families How Successful Can They Be? 3-9

Many households today have only one parent to raise the children. How can they be helped?



A Victory for the Minority—In a Land of Uniformity 10

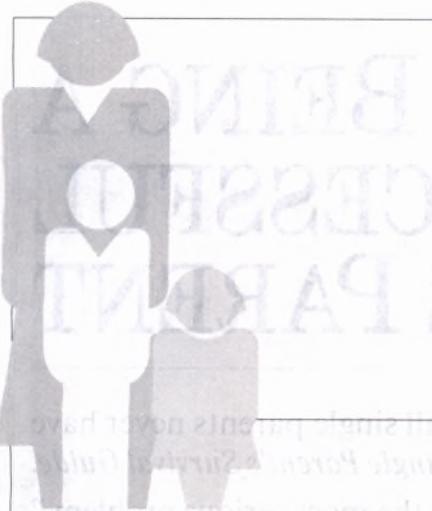
A court decision in Japan has meaning for people everywhere.



Are God's Standards Too Difficult to Reach? 22

Has God set his standards too high for imperfect humans to reach?

One-Parent Families —A Growing Trend	3
Being a Successful Single Parent	4
How Can You Help Single Parents?	8
Crossword Puzzle	15
The Iditarod —Ten Centuries in the Making	16
A Delightful International Fruit	20
River Blindness —Conquering a Terrible Scourge	24
Watching the World	28
From Our Readers	30
Scientists Issue Warning	31
Help for Youths Under Stress	32



ONE-PARENT FAMILIES A GROWING TREND

BY A WAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN BRITAIN

THREE are more lone-parent families in the UK than any other country in Europe," reports *The Times* of London. "Single parents . . . now head almost one in five UK families with children under 18, compared with one in seven Danish families and one in eight in Germany and France."

Of every ten lone parents in Britain, nine are women. The traditional, or so-called nuclear, family that consists of a father and a mother together with their children now seems to be just one "family concept" among others. But why is the one-parent variety more prevalent than before?

Divorce and separation head the list of causes. Here Britain follows the trend in the United States, where about half of all marriages end in divorce. Also, what people expect of marriage has changed. According to Zelda West-Meads of Relate, a marriage guidance organization, 20 or 30 years ago, "the gender roles were much more clearly defined. Man was the breadwinner; woman the carer." But what of the present? "Today's marriages may be more stimulating and fun, but they can also be more difficult. Women want more from marriage than their mothers and grandmothers expected. They want equality, a good lover, a good

friend, career possibilities for themselves—and children as well."

Casual sex featured throughout the entertainment world breeds contempt for the traditional family. Youths who have sexual experiences at a very early age are often unaware of the possible consequences. To them matrimony represents a hardship, a reduction of their personal freedom, an unnecessary complication in life.

Some are lone parents by choice; others become so by circumstance. When forced into a one-parent situation, many married persons are unhappy with their autonomy. Among these are folk who were happily married but have lost their partner in death.

On the other hand, there are those whose marriages have been marked by bitter hostilities. They find relief bringing up their children alone. Many of these comment on the close relationship they have developed with their children.

Although there are numerous causes of the growing trend toward one-parent families, when it comes to the responsibilities and challenges of everyday living, single parents have particular concerns. What are they? And how can lone parents successfully shoulder their responsibilities?



BEING A SUCCESSFUL SINGLE PARENT

"The one thing that all single parents never have enough of is time."—*The Single Parent's Survival Guide*.

"A lack of money is the most serious problem."

—*The London Times*.

'Loneliness is a major source of stress for the lone parent.'

—*Give Us a Break*, a survey of leisure opportunities for single parents.

ALL parents face challenges, joys, and problems. But single parents do so without a partner. Consequently, time, money, and loneliness often feature prominently in their lives.

Harsh though the reality of their life may be, single parents can succeed in their family life, and many do. Much depends on which standards they adopt and how strongly they are committed to these.

Interestingly, the Bible long ago predicted the present moral and social turmoil. Notice how the Christian apostle Paul alerted the young disciple Timothy to

this. "But know this," he warned, "in the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, . . . disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement."—2 Timothy 3:1-3.

The Bible is not simply a book that accurately prophesied today's attitudes. It contains the very principles that, when followed, assure success in family life. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) Consider how some of these can help single parents cope with problems of time, money, and loneliness.

Awake!

Why Awake! Is Published Awake! is 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 before the generation that saw the events of 1914 passes away.

Would you welcome more information? Write Watch Tower at the appropriate address on page 5. Publication of Awake! is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations.

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Buy Out Time

No matter how organized you are, time is an elusive commodity. To use your time well, you first of all need to identify what really happens to it. Then you will be able to decide which activities are most important to you. "Keep a 'time diary,'" suggests one single-parent organization. "In this you keep a record of everything you do throughout a day or a week, and see how much time it takes you. After that, you look to see where time could be saved, or used better, by changing things around or by not doing certain things."

Such sound advice reflects the Scriptural wisdom behind the apostle's instruction: "Keep strict watch that how you walk is not as unwise but as wise persons, *buying out the opportune time for yourselves*, because the days are wicked."—Ephesians 5:15, 16.

For example, does TV viewing figure prominently in your daily routine? Reducing this will give you extra time to talk with your children and to do things together. That can help to build good relationships with them.

"My attempts to sit down and talk with my children simply lead to long stony silences," you may say. Possibly so, but do not let that deter you. Counselors of lone parents recommend that you listen for feelings in your children's everyday conversations, such as the comments they make about their school friends or what they plan to do. But you can't do that when the TV grips your attention.

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¹ Audiocassettes also available.

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tion, can you? Even if you allow it to play in the background, distraction may rob you of vital information about your youngsters' innermost thoughts and emotions. So make time for your children. Do the household chores together, and as you do, talk with them—and listen when they speak!

Read with them too. Research shows a strong relationship between a child's literacy at age five and his subsequent achievement. All the more reason to buy out time for reading together. A few minutes before bedtime, or earlier in the evening before you feel too tired, will be time well spent.

Be Content With Necessities

Many single parents find themselves trapped in a vicious financial circle. Somehow they must gain enough money to pay for adequate housing, food, and clothing. But going out to work raises the question of proper care for the children.

Child-care facilities are not always easy to come by, nor are they inexpensive. Some lone parents succeed by enlisting the help of their relatives—grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Others rely on infants' schools, play areas, and child-care facilities provided by their employers. Government grants, if available, do not always cover the fees that may be required for such child care. In some lands, single parents with infants may be able to choose not to seek employment but to stay at home and exist on money the government provides.

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With an increasing number of lone parents to care for, the governments, in turn, look to those whom they hold responsible. In Britain this has already led to a clampdown on absent fathers who fail to provide financially for their children. Child-support agencies pursue the errant fathers to recoup the missing payments. If single mothers refuse to help agencies trace the father, they stand to lose some financial benefits. "In Sweden it is estimated that 40 per cent of defaulters are caught through local social insurance agencies, and in France the courts enforce maintenance orders and pursuit of defaulters," reports *The Times* of London.

Courts or no courts, government aid or no government aid, many single parents find ways of helping themselves to survive

Fathers Who Are Also "Mothers"

Men who head one-parent families are in a minority. But as more marriages break up, more and more men are deciding to care for their children alone. "One of the greatest difficulties men in this situation seem to face is that of the adolescent daughter," explains *The Single Parent's Survival Guide*. Embarrassment causes some fathers to avoid discussing sexual matters. Others arrange for a trustworthy female relative to talk with their daughters. All single parents, male as well as female, will benefit greatly by reading with their children the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*.* This publication contains sections entitled "Sex and Morals" and "Dating, Love, and the Opposite Sex." Each chapter concludes with a feature called Questions for Discussion, designed to ensure a proper review of even the most intimate matters.

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

on less money than they were formerly used to. How? By budgeting differently.

Learning to budget differently is a skill. It usually means changing spending priorities—for example, putting aside money for housing and heating bills first, then for buying food, and then for paying off loans. "Having sustenance and covering," explained the apostle Paul, "we shall be content with these things."—1 Timothy 6:8.

Have you considered sharing costs with others? Buying food and household goods in bulk with other parents can save you money. Whatever way you budget, remember you need to sit down and calculate your expenses. (Compare Luke 14:28.) Why not enlist your youngsters' assistance in working out the budget? Then they may count it a privilege to help you stick to it. You may even find you will be able to put money aside as savings.

To Win Friends, Be Friendly

"Practice giving, and people will give to you," counseled Jesus. "With the measure that you are measuring out, they will measure out to you in return." (Luke 6:38) The same is true in personal relationships. Your interest in others can win a friendly response. The best way to conquer loneliness is to take the initiative to make friends. Perhaps you can find reliable friends who will mind your children so that you can go out to visit. Better still, why not ask friends over to visit you?

But here a word of caution is necessary. Remember, "bad associations spoil useful habits." (1 Corinthians 15:33) Loneliness can only be satisfactorily conquered when the friendships you make truly buildup and bring contentment.

Acting as Mother and Father

Single parents have to be both mother and father to their children—no easy task for

Spending time with your children builds good relationships

anyone. And do not forget, children are born imitators. They learn how to be responsible adults by watching what responsible adults do. Much depends, then, on what kind of role model you provide for your children. Commenting on the absence of fathers for large numbers of boys growing up in America's inner cities, *The Sunday Times* of London states: "The violence and social chaos . . . tells us how a generation of males behaves when about half of them grow to adolescence without a constraining sense of what it means to be an adult male."

When children are reared by single parents, their health and schoolwork and even their economic prospects can be adversely affected, says Duncan Dormor in *The Relationship Revolution*. Other researchers dispute these findings. Poverty and social deprivation are what they blame. Nevertheless, many agree with social scientist Charles Murray's assessment: "A child with a mother and no father, living in a neighbourhood of mothers with no fathers, judges by what he sees. You can send in social workers and school teachers and clergy to tell a young male that when he grows up he should be a good father to his children. But he doesn't know what that means unless he's seen it." Yes, boys need both a mother and a father, and girls do too.

**Whatever way you budget,
sit down and calculate
your expenses**



At Psalm 68:5, the Bible describes Jehovah God as "a father of fatherless boys." Mothers who look to God for guidance find in him the best example for their children. Fathers who bring up their children alone value help from responsible, mature women. Yes, what all single parents need is loving support. Here is perhaps where you can help.





HOW CAN YOU HELP SINGLE PARENTS?

SINGLE parents, male or female, merit consideration. Today's social workers place a high value on support for the one-parent family.

"Supportive friendship networks, relatives who care, teachers who take a warm and personal interest, special community and religious activities designed with such families in mind," explain sociologists Letha and John Scanzoni, "can make a tremendous difference in the emotional well-being of solo parents and their children at a time in their lives when encouragement is especially needed." How, then, can you help?

Be Supportive

First, try to understand how single parents view things. Put yourself in their place. *Awake!* interviewed Margaret, who has two children, aged 7 and 14. She was divorced five years ago, and so far she is coping successfully. You will no doubt find her comments most revealing.

Awake!: "As a single parent, what problems have you had to face?"

Margaret: "First and foremost, I found it very difficult to come to grips with the fact that I had become a single parent, something I hadn't planned. It irritated me to be labeled as a 'single parent' because many view one-parent families as depressed and

dreary looking, with children who have a bad reputation. Because that was not my view, at first I refused to take advice. But I've come to realize that being a single parent is not all negative."

To support single parents, you need to be aware of their sensitivities. Persevere in showing them kindness.

Awake!: "You receive no maintenance from your ex-husband. How have you managed financially?"

Margaret: "I've had to make a lot of sacrifices. I used to enjoy buying new clothes for get-togethers. Well, we do buy new things still, but we cannot spend as much as we used to. Of course, I want to make the children look their best, so I have to budget well. I started to save a little each week, giving it to a trusted friend for safekeeping, for I knew if I kept it, I might use it."

Will you be such a trustworthy friend who helps single parents budget their resources?

Awake!: "How have you coped with loneliness?"

Margaret: "I'm always kept busy during the daytime. Evenings, when the children have gone to bed, I feel it most. I call a relative or a friend on the telephone. Sometimes I have a tearful chat. I talk about what has happened during the day. Just having someone who will listen is such a help."

To be of real help to single parents, spend time with them

Perhaps you can take the initiative and call the lonely one. Your listening ear can then provide much comfort.

Awake!: "What do you find to be most difficult as a single parent?"

Margaret: "Bringing up the children in a morally upright way. Deteriorating social and moral standards make people question my wish to instill good values in my children."

Your setting an example in upholding godly standards will surely encourage others to do the same.

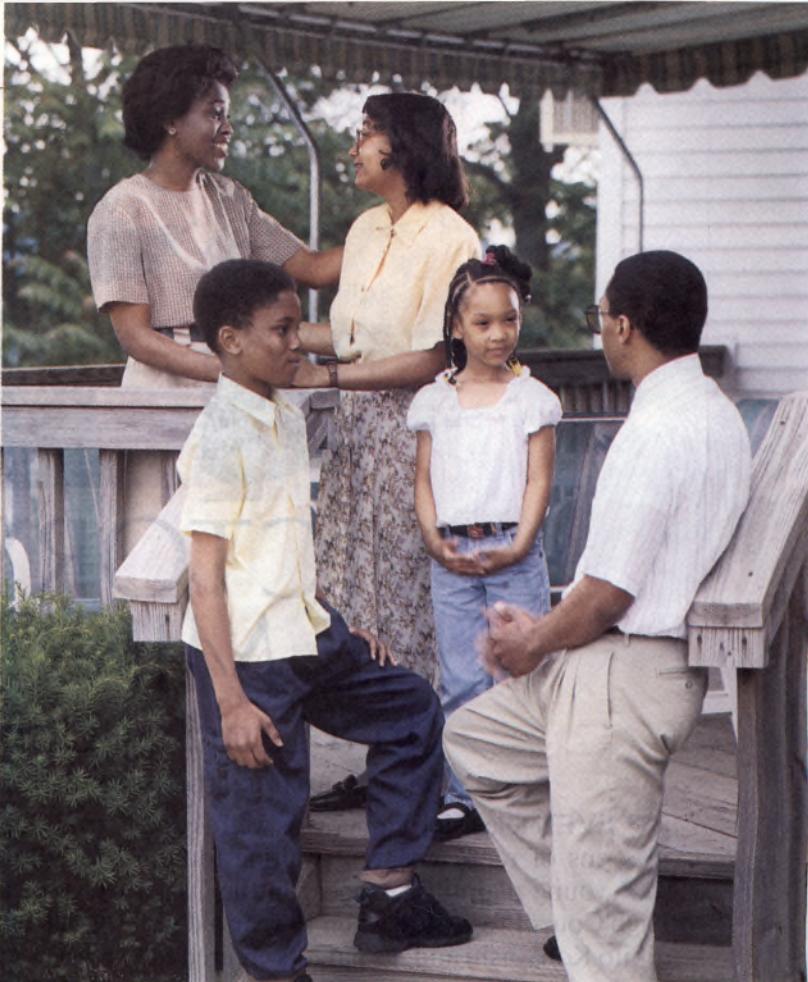
Awake!: "Bringing up two youngsters takes a lot of your time. How do you find time to do what you want to?"

Margaret: "I try to save some time for myself. For example, when a friend gives the children music lessons, that gives me an hour to myself. I sit down and leave the TV off. I'll just be silent, thinking about what I've done during the day. I'm always very conscious of what is right or what is wrong, and so I like to think back over what I've done to see if I could have done better."

If you offer to care for her children from time to time, the single parent will have valuable moments for such reflection.

Offer Practical Help

Awake!: "What help have you found the most practical?"



Margaret: "I enjoy being invited to the home of another family. When you realize others are concerned about you, that helps a lot. Sometimes you think you're the only one with problems. Also when someone commands me on the way I'm bringing up my children, that means so much! Then there's the practical side of things, like decorating, gardening, shopping. . . . Oh, I could go on and on!"

When there is only one parent, things take longer and seem much harder. So don't underestimate the value of the gift of your time. To single parents it is one of the most precious gifts of all.



A VICTORY FOR THE MINORITY

In a Land of Uniformity

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN JAPAN

SEVEN television cameras as well as dozens of reporters were waiting for the young plaintiff to appear in the Osaka High Court Press Club when 19-year-old Kunihito Kobayashi and his parents entered the conference room with broad smiles on their faces. Camera flashes were frequent in the room as they answered reporters' questions.

"I am very happy to have received an impartial judgment for my case," said Kunihito. "I would like to see a world where anyone can be admitted to, promoted in, and graduated from any high school regardless of his or her religious beliefs."

The Osaka High Court had reversed the decision of the lower Kobe District Court and granted Kunihito what he had been seeking, the right to receive an education regardless of his religious beliefs.

The Issue

What was at issue in this lawsuit was his expulsion from the Kobe Municipal Indus-

trial Technical College (called Kobe Tech for short) for not participating in kendo (Japanese swordsmanship) drills, for religious reasons. Following the decision of the Osaka court revoking the school's actions in denying his promotion and then in expelling him, Kunihito expressed his wish to resume his study in electrical engineering. The first three years of this five-year college are equivalent to three years of high school.

Kobe Tech had insisted that Kunihito take kendo drills as a part of his physical education class. However, because he was one of Jehovah's Witnesses, his Bible-trained conscience did not permit him to participate in martial arts drills. For the reporters at the press conference, Kunihito opened his Bible and explained his stand: "They will have to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore."—Isaiah 2:4.

Why, then, did a young student have to

turn to the law to secure freedom of religion and the right to be educated? Professor Koji Tonami of Tsukuba University observed: "There can be unexpected restrictions laid upon the faith of believers as a result of apathy and lack of understanding." Although the government or community may not intentionally oppress a religion, there may be cases where religion is unwittingly suppressed.

Why were such "unexpected restrictions" imposed upon the right of the minority? "Because the Japanese society has esteemed a social system that forces the minority to conform to the majority," answers Professor Hitoshi Serizawa of Aoyama Gakuin University. The pressure to conform to society as a whole is indeed strong in Japan.

It is not easy for young ones to be in a school system that ostracizes those who are different. This, however, is not just a matter of concern for a religious minority. Let us follow the case from its beginning and see what was at issue and how this decision affects the general public.

Establishing the Right of the Minority

Until 1990, Kobe Tech did not require its students to take martial arts. But after the completion of a gymnasium with a martial arts drill hall, the school started to require kendo drills of its students. In 1990 the physical education faculty of the school took a tough stand toward Jehovah's Witnesses who entered Kobe Tech at the age of 16. At their petition to be exempted from kendo drills, one teacher said: "Quit school if you can't do what the school tells you to do!"

For the Witness youths who stood firm for their belief, the prospect of being promoted to the next grade was bleak. Another teacher said: "You won't get any credit even if you work hard in other [physical education] events." Five students stuck to their belief in the Bible's teaching by not taking

the sword even if it was made of bamboo. Three of them were baptized Witnesses of Jehovah, and two were unbaptized, but all affirmed their belief in the Bible. They were willing to accept whatever alternative activities the teachers would require of them.

As a result of their stand, they were denied promotion to the next grade. When the next school year started in 1991, the physical education teachers gathered the five students who refused to participate in kendo drills and nine freshmen who shared the same belief and said: "You're going to have to get ridiculously high marks if you want to be moved up a grade. Hardly any of you will get such marks." The teachers further told them: "This is not compulsory education. [In Japan, compulsory education is from the first grade through the ninth grade.] We can tell you to 'get out of here.'"

The five students filed a suit against the school in the Kobe District Court contending that the school's action infringed upon their constitutional rights of freedom of worship and to receive an education. At the same time, the five students petitioned the Kobe District Court and then the Osaka High Court to stop enforcement of the action denying promotion so that they could take lessons while the case was being heard. However, the petitions were denied by both courts.

Two of the five students were again denied their credits for physical education for the following school year and were threatened with expulsion. As a result, one of them quit school upon the school's persuasion. The other refused to accept the school's suggestion that he quit. That student, Kunihito Kobayashi, was expelled from the school.

The school rules stated that a student who failed a grade twice should be subject to an immediate expulsion as "one who

is inferior in learning with no prospect of graduation." But was Kunihito "inferior in learning"? Even including physical education, which, because of the kendo issue he failed with a score of 48 points out of 100, his average for all subjects was 90.2 points. He was at the very top of his class of 42 students! He was well behaved and was willing to learn.

Petitions were made to the Kobe District Court and then to the Osaka High Court to stop the enforcement of this expulsion action. But both courts denied the petition.

The District Court's Decision

On February 22, 1993, almost two years after the five students filed the lawsuit, the Kobe District Court handed down its decision in favor of the school. "It cannot be denied that the plaintiffs' freedom of worship was somewhat restricted by the school's requirement to participate in kendo drills," admitted the presiding judge, Tadao Tsuji. But he concluded that "the actions taken by the school did not violate the constitution."

The students promptly appealed the case to the Osaka High Court. The district court decision, however, disturbed many a thinking mind. One person expressed himself in the readers' column of the *Mainichi Shimbun* newspaper and said: "The decision this time centered around the judgment that 'it infringes on religious neutrality to tolerate nonparticipation in kendo lessons on religious grounds.' However, neutrality means not taking sides with either party at issue. And when it comes to religious neutrality, what is at issue is protecting the faith of the minority against the majority. Therefore, this decision virtually denies freedom of religion, and the court itself has infringed on religious neutrality."

Many were alarmed and were moved to give their opinions. Dr. Takeshi Kobayashi, a professor of Constitution at Nanzan Uni-

versity, sent his opinion on this case to the Osaka High Court and said: "This case in dispute is definitely asking the courts of our country how they will handle the challenge of protecting the rights of the minority.... The college, under the veil of the separation of religion and the State as well as the neutral stand of public education, flatly refused to tolerate the religious stand of a minority on the basis of the common view of the majority. The lower court decision blessed such actions as being lawful and constitutional. However, even if the beliefs of a minority may not be understood from the viewpoint of what is commonly accepted as religious, if such beliefs are sincere, they must be respected. The court is especially required to judge with the awareness of being the ultimate defender of the minority."

Another law specialist, Professor Tetsuo Shimomura of Tsukuba University, said: "What is disturbing in this case is the still deep-rooted tyrannical tendencies on the part of the school." He said in a television interview that it reveals a shortcoming on the part of educators to oust a student without giving him any alternative measures and reveals a lack of consideration for the welfare of students.

On February 22, 1994, the Kobe Bar Association made an official recommendation to the principal of Kobe Tech to reinstate Kunihito. It declared that the school's action in denying promotion for Kunihito and in expelling him were infringements on his freedom of worship and his right to receive an education.

Impartial Decision

While the appeal hearings were proceeding, the four plaintiffs other than Kunihito decided to drop their case. This was because three had already been promoted to the next grade and one had been forced to

quit. This resulted in the point of dispute being focused on the school's handling of Kunihito.

The four ex-classmates of Kunihito, however, gave him moral support by always trying to be at the hearings. By saving his meager earnings from his part-time job, the student who was forced to quit school donated a total of 100,000 yen to help Kunihito keep up the legal battle.

On December 22, 1994, Kunihito together with the other students awaited the words of Chief Judge Reisuke Shimada of the Osaka High Court.

"The original decision is revoked," ruled Judge Shimada.

Judge Shimada, in his epoch-making decision, ruled that Kunihito's reason for refusing kendo drills was sincere. The judge stated that as an educational institution open to the public, Kobe Tech has the obligation to give educational consideration to its students. He also stated that the disadvantage to Kunihito for refusing to take kendo drills was extremely great and that the action to expel him was none other than robbing him of all opportunity to receive an education.

Judge Shimada ruled that the school was to provide for alternative measures. Providing such alternative measures, he said, is in no way promoting or assisting the appellant's religion, nor does that oppress other students. "There is no evidence on the part of the Appellee [the school] to have carefully considered the alternative measures," the judge stated. "Rather, . . . the Appellee stubbornly maintained the policy of not tolerating the refusal of kendo drills and did not even start to consider the possibilities of providing alternative measures."

How the Decision Affects You

Why should you be interested in this victory of a young man belonging to a minority

group? In his book *The Court and the Constitution*, former Watergate special prosecutor Archibald Cox asked a similar question, about Jehovah's Witnesses in the flag-salute issue in the United States: "Why should we worry about the spiritual liberty of that tiny minority?"

In answering this question, Cox said: "Part of the answer lies in the premise of individual dignity on which our society rests, a dignity belonging to both orthodox and nonconformist. Part lies in the awareness that if the State may silence the speech of Jehovah's Witnesses. . . , our own may be next."

Professor Takeshi Hirano of the Ryukoku University concurred with Cox and said this about the kendo case: "Thinking people consider that they owe the freedom of worship as enjoyed in the United States now to Jehovah's Witnesses, who fought for their rights in many court cases. In our country [Japan] too, it is hoped that freedom of worship will be established and enhanced through cases like this one."

Jehovah's Witnesses have spared no effort in legally defending their beliefs, and they have contributed greatly to the establishment of basic human rights in the 20th century. In many countries Jehovah's Witnesses have spearheaded legal battles championing the patients' right to informed choice, the people's right to decide how to show respect for the national flag, and the individual's right to express his own beliefs to others. The victory at the Osaka High Court adds another chapter to the record of Jehovah's Witnesses' contributions to the establishment of the rights of the minority.

Respecting Others With Different Values

In addition to the benefit of promoting human rights, the issue of tolerating the beliefs of the minority has a bearing on your

**Kunihito (center)
and the four other
original plaintiffs**



life in another way. Professor Kaname Saurya of the Komazawa Women's University referred to this case and said: "Freedom of religion that is recognized by the constitution was ignored just because of [the student's] being heterogeneous. The exclusion of what is heterogeneous is widespread in Japan."

In today's society the pressure to root out the heterogeneous, or what is different from the norm, is very strong. Bullying, so prevalent in schools in Japan as well as in other countries, is an example of this tendency to ostracize what is different from the community. Commenting on the problem of school bullies, Hiroshi Yoshino, the superintendent-general of the Metropolitan Police of Tokyo, said that according to a survey conducted by the National Research Institute of Police Science, an overwhelming proportion of the reasons for bullying, from the bullies' side, involved personalities and actions of the bullied that were

different. He concluded: "I think a morbid element hidden deep down in the Japanese society, that of rejecting idiosyncrasies or what is heterogeneous physically and mentally, is now spouting out."

The tendency to exclude what is different from society is seen everywhere, not just in Japan. Yet the capacity to tolerate different values is the key to peaceful coexistence. In this regard an editorial in the *Asahi Shimbun* stated that the decisions of the Kobe District Court and the Osaka High Court "made a stark contrast." "The two decisions," said the newspaper, "seem to symbolize two ways of thinking," one of management-oriented tyranny and the other of tolerating different values.

Are you ready to tolerate different values? Are you willing to look into the validity of the stand of others? Interestingly, Archibald Cox, mentioned earlier in this article, added another reason for concern about the minority: "Part lies in the awareness that some far-out minority may hit upon the truth—a truth postponed or forever lost by its suppression."

Apparently, Kobe Tech is not interested in the truth that they might have suppressed, nor have they shown a tolerant view. Rather, they have appealed the case to Japan's Supreme Court. How will the Supreme Court rule on this case? We have to wait and see.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Clues Across

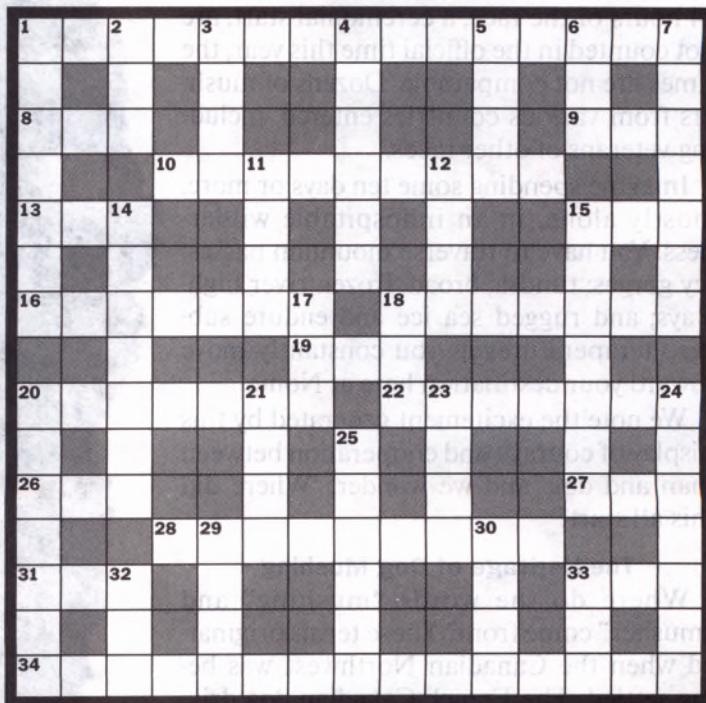
1. Lack of mental oppression and apprehension [3 words] (Psalm 122:7)
8. This prophet and Bible writer gave David a choice of three punishments when David presumptuously took a census (2 Samuel 24:11-14)
9. To make a survey of (Joshua 18:4)
10. Used in the Bible to represent governmental powers (Revelation 17:9)
13. A rodent (Leviticus 11:29)
15. Without this gift from God, life on earth would be impossible (Matthew 5:45)
16. One of the sons born to King David in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:15)
18. Jaziz, who tended David's flocks, was of this lineage (1 Chronicles 27:31)
19. Although a Jairite, he was listed as "a priest of David" (2 Samuel 20:26)
20. Under the Mosaic Law, an incorrigible son accused of being this could be stoned to death (Deuteronomy 21:18-21)
22. Contrary to God's instructions at Joshua 23:7, the Jews began making sworn oaths by this false god (Zephaniah 1:5, *King James Version*)
26. Plant used in medicine and for flavoring food (Luke 11:42)
27. Spoil (2 Kings 3:19)
28. The prophet in 8 across was also called this because of the means by which he received some messages from God (1 Chronicles 21:9)
31. Deed (Philemon 14)
33. The shape of a rainbow
34. What "the good-for-nothing slave," who did not make use of the money entrusted to him, was to be thrown into [2 words] (Matthew 25:30)

Clues Down

1. Plant that Jesus cursed because it was unproductive [2 words] (Mark 11:21)
2. This will occur after the "good news of the kingdom" has been preached earth wide (Matthew 24:14)
3. The grandfather of Tola, who judged Israel for 23 years (Judges 10:1)

4. Moved by Paul's eloquent speech, he exclaimed: "You are going mad, Paul! Great learning is driving you into madness!" (Acts 26:24)
5. David's men were treated inhospitably by Nabal, an inhabitant of this city (1 Samuel 25:2)
6. Intention (1 Thessalonians 4:11)
7. God called it heaven (Genesis 1:8)
11. Official language of Pakistan
12. The ninth letter of the Greek alphabet
14. One of the "dues" that should be paid by Christians (Romans 13:7)
15. One of the cities that became an inheritance of the tribe of Judah (Joshua 15:32)
17. A place that formed part of the eastern boundary of the Promised Land (Numbers 34:11)
18. This son of Noah did not show the respect for his father that his brothers did (Genesis 9:22, 23)
20. An ornamental wreath worn on the head (Isaiah 28:5)
21. To be in debt (Philemon 18)
23. Following Babylonian exile, Benjaminites from this city returned with Zerubbabel to Jerusalem (Nehemiah 11:31)
24. Jehovah knew that Pharaoh would demand that Moses and Aaron produce one (Exodus 7:9)
25. A youth in Greek mythology renowned for his beauty
29. The Messiah was prophetically said to dash nations to pieces with a scepter made of this metal (Psalm 2:9)
30. The coating that can form on iron utensils (Ezekiel 24:6)
32. Noah waterproofed the ark with this substance (Genesis 6:14)
33. A family head of certain returned exiles included among "the sons of the servants of Solomon" (Ezra 2:55-57)

Crossword Solutions Page 26



THE IDITAROD

Ten Centuries in the Making

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN ALASKA

CRANING our necks, we peer down the main street in town. There is a crowd of people here, along with media cameras and equipment. All of us look toward the end of the street. We await the first glimpse of the winner of "The Iditarod—The Last Great Race" here at the finish line in Nome, Alaska.

The world's most famous sled dog race, of some 1,100 miles, has actually lasted more than ten days. Last year the time was listed as a few hours over nine days. Since the first 24 hours of the race, a ceremonial start, are not counted in the official time this year, the times are not comparable. Dozens of mushers from various countries entered, including veterans of other races.

Imagine spending some ten days or more, mostly alone, in an inhospitable wilderness. You have to traverse mountain passes; icy gorges; tundra; broad, frozen river highways; and rugged sea ice and endure sub-zero temperatures as you constantly move toward your destination here at Nome.

We note the excitement generated by this display of courage and cooperation between man and dog, and we wonder, 'Where did this all start?'

The Heritage of Dog Mushing

Where do the words "mushing" and "musher" come from? These terms originated when the Canadian Northwest was being settled. The French-Canadian dog driv-





Photos: © Jeff Schultz/
Alaska Stock Images

ers shouted: "Ma-a-r-r-che!" To the English settlers in Canada, the word sounded like "Mush!" A dog driver then became known as a musher.

While modern sled dog racing is a relatively new pastime, sled dogs have been used for at least a thousand years. Originally, dogs and sleds were used primarily to transport goods over the snowy, barren northern expanses of the earth. The first written record of dogs being used to pull sleds is found in Arabian literature dating to the tenth century. Some authorities feel that it was the Chukchi people in Siberia who first relied on dog and sled to any extent.

It was gold that paved the way of the original Iditarod Trail. In 1908 gold was found in an area where Athapaskan Indians hunted caribou. They called this area Haiditarod, meaning "the distant place," later Anglicized to Iditarod. As a result, a 1,100-mile trail to Nome was developed, running through the town of Iditarod. In time, it became known as the Iditarod Trail.

During the gold rush in Alaska and Canada, dog sleds moved equipment, mail, and gold through the immense wilderness. One report has it that late in 1911, four dog teams transported 2,600 pounds of gold in one shipment along the Iditarod Trail, arriving at Knik, Alaska, on January 10, 1912.

Modern Sled Dog Racing Born

In the gold rush era, with so many dog teams operating, it was common for dog punchers, as handlers were called, to believe that their team or lead dog was perhaps the strongest, the fastest, or the smartest. As a result, competitions were frequent. Then, in Nome, in 1908, the first organized sled dog race was held, the All-Alaska Sweepstakes. This forerunner of modern sled dog racing prepared those mushers for

yet another race—not to win a prize of gold but to save lives.

The 1925 Nome Serum Run

The historic Nome Serum Run was a sled dog race against death. In January 1925, diphtheria broke out in Nome. Because of the threat of an epidemic, a supply of serum had to reach Nome promptly. A relay of 20 dog punchers and their teams was organized. The first team departed from Nenana with the temperature registering minus 50 degrees Fahrenheit, thus starting a relay of runs between villages that were usually 30 to 50 miles apart. Most of this was in the dark, as Arctic daylight at that time of year is only three or four hours long.

The more than 674 miles to Nome was covered in 5 1/3 days—a trip that normally required 25 days. The mushers drove through raging blizzards with windchill factors of minus 70 degrees Fahrenheit or lower. So great was this feat that U.S. president Calvin Coolidge issued a medal and a certificate to each participant.

Lead Dogs

The lead dog of a team is very important. Very few dogs qualify as leader. You must remember that depending upon the number of dogs in a team, the lead dog may be from 50 to 70 feet or even more in front of the musher. In the dark or in whiteout conditions, or when going around corners, the lead dog may be totally out of the sight of the musher. Therefore, it is up to this dog to sniff out the trail and follow it or select the safest route and to make other moment-by-moment choices, independent of its master.

Last year, musher DeeDee Jonrowe from Alaska, the number two finisher the year before, had to drop Barkley, her most reliable lead dog. That was a serious blow to her team. Two years ago, Lavon Barve, a ten-time Iditarod musher, had to leave the race

229 miles short of Nome, hoarse from constantly yelling commands to his pair of inexperienced lead dogs.

To praise the lead dog is not to say that the musher does little to direct his team. On the contrary, he is very much in command, directing by means of shouted orders, "gee" (right), "haw" (left), or "whoa" (stop). The "mush" of yesteryear has generally been replaced with the common football term "hike" or simply "let's go." These or similar phrases put the team into motion and direct its actions. Such commands, supplemented by a rather impressive snow hook, a type of anchor pressed into the snow to prevent overly anxious dogs from starting before it is time, usually keep the team under control.

The word "usually" is employed here because musher Mark Nordman from Minnesota might momentarily argue about lead dog dependability or team responsiveness to commands. In a recent race, just short of a checkpoint, he stopped his team to straighten out some tangled lines. As he worked, the dogs twisted in their lines, freeing the gangline, the metal tow cable from the sled to which each dog is attached, and the dogs started to run. As the team moved out, Mark made a dive for the line, catching it just behind the last dogs. (To lose your team in the wilderness can be a very serious matter.) For the next quarter of a mile, he was both snowplow and water-skier as his team dragged him through snowdrift and river overflow. His parka scooped up water, and ice accumulated under his chin as he slid along behind his team, all the time yelling commands to stop. The dogs finally heeded, and he walked back to retrieve his abandoned sled. So much—at that moment—for lead-dog obedience!

However, circumstances exist when there are happier outcomes for lead-dog depend-

ability. During the Iditarod, sleep is at a premium. When the trail is straight and flat, there are times that the musher may turn the team over to the lead dog while the musher catches a nap in the sled. All the while, the dogs continue at a lively pace toward their destination, Nome.

At times, on a good trail, a team can easily trot at between 11 and 12 miles per hour or can speed at 20 miles per hour for shorter periods. The average is much less, but they often cover 100 miles in a day. One champion team averaged about 4.5 miles per hour over the full ten-day race.

The Alaskan Sled Dog

Some wonder if the sled dogs are not perhaps mistreated, being exploited by man. Recognizing the abuse that at times man has heaped upon animals, this concern is not unreasonable.

The sled dogs do appear to take to their task with enthusiasm, as the starting line is filled with their barks—each dog giving voice to its desire to be on the trail. So eager are some dogs to go that one team of ten pulled at their harnesses with such vigor that they dragged the pickup truck they were tied to—and the truck was in gear with the parking brake on!

The mushers are very solicitous of the welfare of their animals. At stops, a good part of the time is spent preparing food for the dogs and spreading straw to insulate them in their snowy beds, as well as checking their bootees, which protect their paws, and tending to any that are cut. Rest for the musher on the Iditarod may be snatches of one and a half to two hours at any one time, though there is one mandatory 24-hour stop where mushers may get six or seven hours of rest. The dogs, fortunately, get more rest than the musher.

A musher's rule of thumb is that a dog

should not pull more than its own weight. The average Iditarod sled, including musher, weighs between 300 and 500 pounds. If a racer has a team of 15 dogs, each pulls about 33 pounds or less, well below a dog's average 50-pound weight. In addition, for a great deal of the time, the musher does not ride the sled. Rather, he runs behind and pushes, perhaps assisting on an uphill climb or over a stretch of rough terrain.

However, in spite of the care mushers give their dogs, there are those who say that the races damage some of them. A letter to *The New York Times* noted that the Humane Society of the United States claimed that some dogs cannot finish the course and that some even die because of being pushed too hard. It was stated that to a large extent, the reason for this was the high level of prize money supplied by corporate sponsors.

Four Classes of Dogs

What kind of dog is this that can maintain the pace and seem to enjoy it? Any dog that is trained to pull can be a sled dog. But the racing sled dog in Alaska is usually one of four primary types: the Alaskan malamute, the Siberian husky, the Alaskan husky, or the village, or Indian, dog, according to author Lorna Coppinger, in her book *The World of Sled Dogs*.

1) The Alaskan malamute is a distinct native breed of the Arctic. Russian explorers found the malamute with the native Inuit tribe of Kotzebue Sound, a people known then as the Mahlemut or Malemiut. This dog has a large frame and is very powerful. It proved to be excellent for freighting heavy loads during the gold rush era. Its slower speed is compensated for by its tremendous strength and endurance.

2) The Siberian husky, often with icy blue eyes, is likewise recognized as a breed. It is small, intelligent, and fast and has very

distinctive markings. It was first brought to Alaska in 1909 by a Russian fur trader who entered his team of ten Siberians in the second All-Alaska Sweepstakes.

3) The Alaskan husky is not considered a breed but is recognized as distinct, having several characteristic traits. It is a mixture of northern dogs and derived its name from a native word for Eskimo—Husky or Huski—meaning, “eater of raw flesh.” The name is not inappropriate, as the northern mushers in years past have relied heavily on dried fish to feed their teams.

4) The Indian, or village, dog, the most common Alaskan racing sled dog today, is often nondescript. It is the product of years of selective breeding of the gene pool available in the village area where it develops. This dog can travel a mile in close to three minutes and can complete a 20-mile race at better than 17 miles per hour and still have energy enough to look forward with eagerness to tomorrow’s run. Although unimpressive to some, if it has a proper gait, the dog is beautiful to the musher.

The Finish

The arrival of the winner does not end the Iditarod. It may be yet another eight to ten days before the race is officially over and the Red Lantern Award is presented to the final musher to cross the finish line. The red lantern symbol is drawn from the railroad days, when a red lantern was hung on the end, or caboose, of the train.

In reflecting on the Iditarod, we are impressed with the teamwork between man and dog that makes it possible for them to travel more than 1,100 miles over extremely difficult terrain in very inhospitable weather. Yet some teams do this in about ten and a half days. We are also impressed by the marvelous physical and mental capabilities that the Creator has put into man and beast that enable them to accomplish such a feat.

A Delightful INTERNATIONAL Fruit

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN MEXICO

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS and his crew were likely the first Europeans to taste it during their exploration of the West Indies in 1493. It was sent to the king of Spain, and he also was delighted with its taste. Sailors made it popular throughout the Americas and, in 1548, took it to the Philippine Islands for cultivation.

Later, about 1555, this delightful fruit traveled to France. By the 1700's, it was already proudly displayed on the tables of some European kings as a luxurious fruit. It became so popular that it then spread to the rest of Europe and into Asia and Africa. At present, it is harvested mainly in Brazil, Hawaii, Mexico, the Philippines, Thailand, and a few other countries that have suitable climate and soil.

Thus after some five centuries of traveling, it has reached places far away from America, its native region. Do you know the fruit we are talking about? It is the delightful pineapple.

In Mexico it was known as *matzatli*, in the Caribbean *ananá*, and in Central and South America *nana*. It seems that the Spaniards were the ones who called it *piña* because of its likeness to the fruit (cone) of the pine tree. Today in Spanish it is known as *piña* or *ananás*, while in English it is known as pineapple. Regardless of its name, those who have tasted it agree that it delights the palate.

The Pineapple and Its Plant

What does a pineapple look like? It is oval shaped and set on the center of the plant. The fruit is covered with a hard shell, and at the top, there is a crown formed by numerous small, semi-hard green leaves. The pineapple plant itself has long, sword-shaped leaves growing in various directions from the stem. The plant grows from

Above: Pineapple. *Century Dictionary*

two to three feet high, and the fruit can weigh from four to eight pounds.

When it is still small, it is similar to the pinecone of the pine tree, and the skin stays a purple color. It becomes green when it has matured, and it usually turns yellowish-green, greenish-orange, or reddish when it has ripened. When the pulp is ripe, it has a sweet flavor—aromatic and juicy.

How Is It Cultivated?

How do you cultivate a pineapple? First of all, soil such as is found in tropical places is necessary—sandy, rich in organic material, acidic, and low in salt, with a high level of moisture. Then, it is necessary to plant one of the small shoots that spring up around the base of the fruit and that remain in the plant after the fruit is harvested. Or the crown of the pineapple itself can be cut off and planted. One will have to be patient to be able to enjoy its fruitage though, because it takes over a year for it to mature and produce a harvest.

Antonio, who has been working for more than 25 years in the cultivation of pineapples, explains a certain technique that is used: "It is necessary to put a small amount of calcium carbide in the center of the plant before the fruit begins to grow. This is done so that all the pineapples can be harvested at the same time, since left to grow naturally, some will grow faster than others and the harvest will be more difficult."



When the pineapple is mature but not yet ripe, it must be covered to keep it from being burned by the sun. It is covered with paper or with the leaves of the same plant. After the required time has elapsed, the pineapple is ready for harvest. Cut the shell off, and enjoy it in slices! But be careful. Eating the core of the fruit can produce irritation of the tongue. That is the reason why some people enjoy only the pulp and throw the center away.

If you want to taste a sweet and juicy pineapple, do not be influenced by its outer appearance. While showing us one of them, Antonio explains: "Some people choose a pineapple by the color of its peeling, whether it is green or yellow. But the fruit can be ripe even if its shell is green. You should strike it with your fingers. If it produces a hollow, or empty, sound, its pulp will be white and its flavor will be insipid. But if it produces a firm sound, as if it were full of water, then it is ready to eat—sweet and juicy." There are several varieties of this fruit, but the most popular is the one called smooth Cayenne (Cayena).

A Real Delight

Besides enjoying the delightful flavor of the juice or of the fruit in slices, you may enjoy it in a syrup, which is available canned in some countries. Also, the pineapple contains certain nutrients like carbohydrates, fiber, and vitamins, mainly A and C.

In Mexico you can enjoy a refreshing drink made out of the peelings of the pineapple. To make it yourself, keep the peelings in a glass container with water and sugar for two or three days. Once this is fermented, you can serve it as a cool drink over ice. It is a very refreshing beverage called *tepache* and has a sweet-and-sour flavor. Would you like a glass? In the Philippines, pineapple is cultivated to obtain fibers from its leaves. These are used to make a dull-white, transparent, and very fine fabric. It is used to make handkerchiefs, towels, belts, shirts, and children's and ladies' dresses.

In the past few centuries, the pineapple has been exported to many countries where it is not grown. All those who enjoy its taste hope that it will continue its journey around the world, delighting mankind.

Are God's Standards Too Difficult to Reach?

"GOD DOES NOT MEASURE MEN BY INCHES."

—OLD SCOTTISH PROVERB.

SCHOOL tests, employment interviews, and medical examinations are just some of life's turning points at which a person is measured. But when it comes to living daily by God's standards, many persons feel they may somehow fail to reach them. Is that your belief too? Can you measure up to God's standards?

To answer, let us first look at the standards God has set for his worshipers. The Bible casts light on the way we should walk through life. (Psalm 119:105) Bible writer wise King Solomon concluded that man's "whole obligation" is to "fear the true God and keep his commandments." (Ecclesiastes 12:13) The prophet Micah observed: "What is Jehovah asking back from you but to exercise justice and to love kindness and to be modest in walking with your God?" —Micah 6:8.

Jesus Christ, God's own Son, declared that no commands are greater than to "love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind and

with your whole strength" and to "love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:30, 31) In addition, we show that we love God by obedience to all of his commands.—1 John 5:3.

Simply expressed, humans should love and respect God, obey his commands, act fairly, be kind to all, and avoid pride. Are such standards not within our reach?

God Makes Allowance

God rightly expects humans to reach his standards. But, in all honesty, does any human conform perfectly to these standards all the time? Obviously no, for we have inherited imperfection from our forefather Adam. (Romans 5:12) Thus, we are prone to err. Yet this does not disqualify us from serving God acceptably.

To illustrate, consider the problems of learning to drive a car. It takes constant vigilance and time to drive well enough to pass a driving test. Of course, we still have to work at driving well even after getting a license. As we gain experience, we hone our skills. But there are no perfect drivers!



Happily, God makes allowance for our failings. He is not unreasonable, demanding what we cannot deliver, nor does he keep finding fault. He understands our frailties and weaknesses. King David, who sinned grievously, confessed: "He has not done to us even according to our sins; nor according to our errors has he brought upon us what we deserve." For what reason? "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, [God's] loving-kindness is superior toward those fearing him." Even though Jehovah knows we sin, he is prepared to put our transgressions "as far off as the sunrise is from the sunset."—Psalm 103:10-14.

Do Not Give Up

"When I'm depressed," explains a sincere worshiper of God, "I sometimes conclude that I shall never succeed in living by God's standards. But when I develop a more positive outlook, I feel I can manage to live the way God wants me to. But it is not all plain sailing!" Do not be discouraged if you feel this way. You are not the first, nor will you be the last, to have such sentiments.

The Christian apostle Paul frankly admitted: "When I wish to do what is right, what is bad is present with me. I really delight in the law of God according to the man I am within, but I behold in my members another law warring against the law of my mind and leading me captive to sin's law . . . Miserable man that I am!" Yet he did not conclude that what God expected was too difficult, for he added: "Who will rescue me from the body undergoing this death? Thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So, then, with my mind I myself am a slave to God's law, but with my flesh to sin's law." (Romans 7:21-25) He thus felt able to please God though still a sinner.

Jehovah, our loving Creator, forgives our faults and failings through the merit of the ransom sacrifice of his dear Son, Jesus. "If

anyone does commit a sin," wrote the apostle John, "we have a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ, a righteous one. And he is a propitiatory [covering] sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 2:1, 2) The barrier that sin interposes and that prevents us from reaching God's standard for friendship is removed or broken by the power of Christ's sacrifice. Thus fellowship with God is restored.

Humbly accepting this loving arrangement brings forgiveness, for God resides "with the one crushed and lowly in spirit." (Isaiah 57:15) We can count on Him to revive our spirits. He promises to 'raise up the lowly one from the very dust.' No longer do we need to remain depressed when we fail to obey God perfectly. Rather, we can be confident that God never ignores the efforts we make to live by his standards.—Psalm 113:7; Hebrews 6:10-12.

Even though it is a struggle, you will observe that you are happier doing what pleases God. Devotion to God makes life more bearable for you and for those around you. Also think of the future. Striving to live up to God's standards now brings the prospect of life everlasting under paradise conditions.—Isaiah 48:17; Romans 6:23; 1 Timothy 4:8.

Experienced mountaineers realize that once at the summit, they are only halfway. They still have to descend safely. Similarly, those fearing God need both to reach God's standards and then to persevere in living by them.—Luke 21:19; James 1:4.

Draw comfort from the knowledge that God's standards are not too difficult to reach. When you occasionally fail to conform perfectly to them, seek his forgiveness. Count on his loving support. (Psalm 86:5) Therefore, with Jehovah and his Son as your Helpers, you can measure up to God's standards and meet with his approval.—Proverbs 12:2.



River Blindness

Conquering a Terrible Scourge

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN NIGERIA

THE scene was typical of many riverside villages in West Africa. A group of people sat on benches beneath a great tree that shaded them from the scorching sun. Five of them—four men and a woman—were totally and permanently blind.

"They didn't know why they were becoming blind in the old village," said the village chief, who was dressed in a flowing

white robe. "Most of the old people there died blind.... They thought some devil was against them. They implored their fetishes to protect them. Their ancestors told them to give food to the fetishes. So they killed chickens and sheep as a sacrifice. But they still kept on going blind."

In time, doctors came and explained that the blindness did not come from a supernat-

ural source. It was the result of the disease onchocerciasis, or river blindness, so named because the tiny, biting flies that spread it lay their eggs in fast-flowing rivers.

Fortunately, river blindness is not as easy to catch as are other tropical diseases. It poses no threat to city dwellers nor to those making a short visit to an infected area. Blindness occurs only after repeated infections over many years.

Nevertheless, river blindness is a dreadful tropical disease, devastating the lives of millions. While it rages in some areas of the Middle East and Central and South America, the hardest hit are those who work and live near fly-infested rivers in equatorial Africa. In some villages virtually everyone has the disease. According to estimates by The Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A., about 126 million people are at risk of infection. Another 18 million people carry in their bodies the parasitic worms that cause river blindness. The number of people already partly or totally robbed of their sight is estimated to be between one and two million.

Now, the centuries-old scourge is being subdued by the united efforts of WHO (World Health Organization) and other agencies, along with the governments of various countries. Against a backdrop of hostilities and hopelessness in much of Africa, this is a disease-control program that is working. The program is being hailed as "one of the twentieth century's great medical and development triumphs."

A Terrible Disease

River blindness is spread by several species of the female blackfly (genus *Simulium*). When an infected fly bites a human, it deposits the larvae of a parasitic worm (*Onchocerca volvulus*). Slowly, under the skin of infected people, the larvae mature and develop into worms up to two feet in length.

After they are fertilized, female worms each begin to produce tiny worms called mi-

crofilariae; they continue doing this for 8 to 12 years, producing millions of them. The microfilariae do not grow into adults unless they are picked up by a blackfly, undergo development inside the fly, and are passed back to a human. For the most part, these tiny, immature worms swarm through the skin and may eventually invade the eyes. As many as 200 million worms may seethe in one victim. So plentiful are they that diagnosis involves snipping tiny bits of skin for examination. Under a microscope, a skin sample may reveal hundreds of wriggling microworms.

"They used to blame the blindness on spirits. Now, they know it is the worms"

These parasites torment their human victims. Over the years the skin of the infected person thickens and becomes scaly. Often patches of depigmentation appear. Victims develop what is vividly described as crocodile skin, lizard skin, or leopard skin. Itching is intense, reportedly driving some to suicide. If young worms invade the eyes, in time, vision deteriorates and the victim becomes totally blind.

In the poor, rural areas where the blackfly holds sway, blindness is a particularly difficult burden to bear. One reason is that many villagers superstitiously believe that blindness is a result of divine punishment and that blind people are useless in their communities. Another reason is that there are no governmental social benefits, making victims totally dependent on their families. Sata, a female victim of river blindness in Burkina Faso, said: "For a blind person, whether a man or woman, the suffering's the same. If a young woman is blind and unmarried, she won't get a husband. I got married before I became blind, but my husband died.

My brother became blind when he was young and so couldn't get a wife. We're both supported by our families—for food, for everything. It's terrible."

In areas where river blindness is common, people often abandon their villages, forced by the fly and the disease to flee. Fertile land beside the water suffers neglect and becomes wasteland. This, in turn, contributes to poverty and famine.

Battling the Blackfly

International efforts to control river blindness in seven West African countries began in the early 1970's. Armed with biodegradable larvicides, insecticides that kill larvae, fleets of helicopters, small planes, and trucks launched an offensive against the blackfly, the carrier of the disease. The object was to attack and kill the blackfly when it is most vulnerable—during its larval stage.

It was not necessary to poison entire rivers. Experts knew that female blackflies lay their eggs on water and that the eggs stick to branches and rocks just below the surface of river rapids. Only fast-flowing waters provide

CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

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the emerging larvae with the abundant oxygen they need to survive. This meant that the breeding sites along rivers were limited and identifiable.

The purpose of spraying the breeding sites was not to eradicate blackflies entirely, an impossible task. But by reducing the numbers of flies, experts hoped that the chain of parasite transmission could be broken. Fewer flies would mean fewer new infections. In theory, if the flies could be suppressed until the existing parasites gradually died in people already infected, the time would come when there would be no parasites left. So, if a fly did bite a person, it would collect no parasites to pass to others.

The project was challenging. The flies breed in thousands of places difficult to reach. Also, since they can fly hundreds of miles, blackflies needed to be battled over a vast area. Moreover, exceptional vigilance would be required since even a month of neglect could result in the resurgence of fly populations, frustrating years of work.

Beginning in the 1970's, aircraft selectively sprayed more than 12,000 miles of remote waterways. As a result, the disease was cleared out of 80 percent of the infected areas in the countries that took part.

One or Two Tablets Once a Year

Then, beginning in 1987, another weapon was developed in the fight against river blindness. This time, instead of attacking the blackfly, the target was the parasites inside the human body. The weapon was a safe and effective drug named Mectizan (ivermectin), developed in the laboratories of an American pharmaceutical company.

To halt the progress of the disease, an infected person needs to take a single dose—one or two tablets—each year. Mectizan does not kill the adult parasitic worms in the body, but it does kill the microworms and inhibits the adult's production of more micro-

filariae. This halts the progression of the disease in the victim and slows the transmission of the disease to others. The drug also works to reverse early lesions in the cornea of the eye and prevents others from worsening. However, it cannot repair old eye lesions, nor can it reverse blindness once it has occurred.

The problem, however, was distribution—getting the drug to the people in need. Multitudes living in remote and isolated villages can only be reached by foot. Bringing in a vehicle often requires clearing bush or even

One or two tablets a year may prevent river blindness

the construction of bridges. Sometimes civil strife, lack of funding, and local politics add to the difficulties of distribution. Yet, despite these obstacles, by early 1995 about 31 million Mectizan tablets had been distributed, mostly in Africa.

Future Prospects

Over the past 20 years, the Onchocerciasis Control Programme has battled river blindness in 11 West African countries, an area three times the size of France. What have been the results? According to WHO figures, the combined use of larvicides and Mectizan has worked to protect more than 30 million people who were once threatened by this ancient and terrible scourge. More than 1.5 million people who were seriously infected by the parasite are now completely recovered. Moreover, the subduing of river blindness is also freeing about 60 million acres of tillable land for resettlement and cultivation—enough land to feed about 17 million people annually.

The war is far from over. The African nations where river blindness has been fought

contain less than half of the people threatened by the disease.

In recent years efforts to combat the disease have intensified. In just two years, from 1992 to 1994, the number of people treated with Mectizan more than doubled, from 5.4 to 11 million. By late 1994 some 32 countries in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East had established Mectizan treatment programs, which may in time protect as many as 24 million people from blindness.

The Pan American Health Organization hopes to eliminate the disease as a public health threat in the Americas by the year 2002. In Africa, of course, the task is bigger. Nevertheless, the United Nations Children's Fund observes: "It is already clear that for the generation now growing up blindness does not present the formidable future threat it once did, in a region in which loss of sight has long been a normal part of ageing."

It warms the heart to learn of the efforts made to help people threatened by blindness. During his earthly ministry, Jesus Christ also showed loving concern for people by miraculously restoring sight to many who were blind. (Matthew 15:30, 31; 21:14) This showed on a small scale what will take place on earth under the Kingdom of God. Indeed, the time is coming when no one will be afflicted by blindness of any kind. God's Word foretells: "At that time the eyes of the blind ones will be opened."—Isaiah 35:5.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

What Hope for Longer Life?

A Bullet Changed My Life

Harnessing the Power of Wind

WATCHING THE WORLD

A Vatican "Contradiction"

"Holiness, why does the Vatican still sell cigarettes?" a priest asked John Paul II during the pope's yearly audience with the clergy of Rome. He continued: "Besides damaging health, this commerce contradicts your continual appeals in favor of the protection of health and our pastoral activity." For Ugo Mesini, the 76-year-old priest, the fact that the Vatican sells tobacco and cigarettes containing the statement "smoking is damaging to your health" is a "counter-testimony" and a "contradiction" to the pope's message. As reported in the Rome newspaper *Il Messaggero*, the pope replied that on the matter of tobacco, his "conscience is clear." He promised, though, to speak about the Vatican's cigarette sales with the overseeing cardinal.

"Satan's Century"

"At its worst, this has been Satan's century," says a *New York Times* editorial. "In no previous age have people shown so great an aptitude, and appetite, for killing millions of other people for reasons of race, religion or class." As evidence, it cites the Auschwitz death camp that came to light 50 years ago. The liberators of this German concentration camp found "slave laborers thin as matchsticks, children chewed up in demented laboratory experiments, and the remains of four gas chambers and crematorium ovens that once claimed 20,000 victims a day," the editorial says, and scorched in their memory are "the bodies heaped like kindling, the 43,000 pairs of shoes,

the piles of human hair." It adds: "To this day, Auschwitz defeats sense and comprehension."

Food Shortages Expected

"Unless there is a major investment in transforming technology, we are in for very severe problems," says Ismail Serageldin, a development expert from Egypt and a vice president of the World Bank. He is speaking of the increasing need for basic foods—a need that is already outstripping supply in certain parts of Asia and Africa,



where population growth is the fastest. "We will have two billion more [people] in the next 20 years no matter what, and 95 percent of them will be in the poorest countries," he said. Although dramatic increases in basic crop yields have been realized in the past 25 years, additional gains are getting increasingly more difficult to achieve because of environmental and biological limits. Gains are also threatened by more aggressive pests and plant diseases and by degradation of the land. Worldwatch Institute concurs. "Evidence that the world is on an economic path that is environmentally unsustainable can be seen in shrinking fish catches, falling water tables, declining bird populations, record heat waves and dwindling grain

stocks, to name just a few," it says in its *State of the World 1995* report.

Age and Diet

Some researchers now say that people over 50 may not need to worry about the added weight of middle-age spread, reports *The Times* of London. For instance, David Dickinson, editor of the Consumers' Association magazine, says: "Advice that everyone with a higher ratio of height to weight is too fat and should slim is mistaken. Slimming can damage your health quite independently of its effect on the height-to-weight ratio. Most people over 50 do not need to slim." Nutrition and Dietetics professor Tom Sanders explains: "The health risks of obesity are often exaggerated. It does increase the risk of diabetes and arthritis, but the health risks of plumpness are negligible. It may even offer advantages to women." And Dr. Martin Wiseman of the Department of Health advises: "At any age it is important not to be too fat or too thin. Eating sensibly and keeping active is the best way of achieving this but as we get older being plump is better than being thin."

Fortunate Accident?

A container filled with 29,000 plastic toys—ducks, turtles, beavers, and frogs—was washed overboard from a ship in a North Pacific storm in January 1992. This accident has proved to be a boon to scientists. Unlike the 61,000 Nike athletic shoes spilled two years earlier, the lightweight toys bob almost completely on

top of the water and are driven by wind as well as by ocean currents. This has allowed oceanographers studying the North Pacific tides to include wind effect in their studies. The first of the toys started appearing on beaches in southeast Alaska some ten months after the spill, and 400 more hit the coast along a 530-mile stretch of the Gulf of Alaska during the following ten months. The small toys, no more than five inches in length, were being shipped from Hong Kong to Tacoma, Washington, U.S.A. It is expected that some will eventually pass through the Bering Strait, make their way in ice packs across the Arctic Ocean, and end up in the North Atlantic.

Partial Victory Over Polio

Paralytic poliomyelitis, commonly known as polio, is said to have killed or disabled over 10 million people down through history. It has been depicted in carvings dating back to ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Striking mostly the young, it can cause paralysis or death by asphyxiation. Now, according to the Pan American Health Organization, an arm of the World Health Organization, polio has been eradicated in the Western Hemisphere. The last reported case was of a Peruvian child in 1991, who survived with damage to one leg. However, unlike smallpox, which was eradicated worldwide in 1977, the polio virus is still found in other regions and could possibly be reintroduced into the Americas by migration and travel. The last complete report showed fewer than 10,000 cases for the year. Until fully conquered, immunization against the disease must continue, say the health experts.

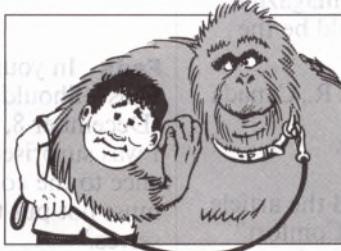
Taiwan's Orangutan Quandary

Authorities in Taiwan face an unusual problem: What to do with the orangutans that became fashionable as pets in 1986 after one was featured on a television show as an "ideal companion." As reported in *New Scientist*, some one thousand young orangutans were taken into the country and sold as pets. Now, as the animals are reaching sexual maturity and becoming aggressive and unpredictable, hundreds are being abandoned by their owners. Because they are solitary animals and do not face the problem of integrating into a social group

a world of drugs, violence and prostitution, and endless hours of idle boredom." It is estimated that 54 percent of Toronto's street kids engage in prostitution. One in five girls will get pregnant, 80 percent use drugs or alcohol, 67 percent have been abused, and 43 percent have attempted suicide. "If anyone tells you street life is glamorous and exciting, don't believe it. It's like death, it's not living at all," claims one youth. "Some find no way out of a continuing life of drugs, prostitution and escalating crime; others, older and wiser, look toward getting an education and a job," adds the *Star*.

Save That Tooth!

If a tooth gets knocked out by accident, don't throw it away, advises the *UC Berkeley Wellness Letter*. "Research shows that you have a 50% chance of a successful reimplantation if you get to the dentist within 30 minutes." What should you do? Try to stay as calm as possible. Hold the tooth by the crown and rinse it gently in lukewarm water—do not scrub it. Call your dentist to tell him of your visit and, unless he tells you otherwise, insert the tooth gently back into its socket. Bite down firmly on a clean cloth or handkerchief for five minutes to seat the tooth, and keep biting with moderate pressure until you see the dentist. If you can't immediately reinsert the tooth, keep it bathed in saliva in your mouth. For children who are so young that they may swallow the tooth, place it in a plastic bag or a cup and immerse it in milk or water containing a pinch of salt. Even if a longer time has elapsed, it is best to go to the dentist and let him decide what to do. "Saving a tooth is definitely worth the effort," says the report.



as do chimpanzees and gorillas, domesticated orangutans can be returned to the wild. However, the pets have picked up human diseases, such as hepatitis B and tuberculosis, and could threaten the already endangered wild orangutan population. Many may have to be destroyed, which some consider kinder than having them live out their lives in a bleak animal shelter.

Toronto's Street Kids

Officials say that up to 10,000 street kids pass through the city of Toronto on a regular basis. "The number has skyrocketed in the last decade," reports *The Toronto Star*. "Most street kids tell of problems at home, ranging from abuse to parental rules they refuse to live by. They tell of

FROM OUR READERS

Court Case I cannot hold back from expressing my appreciation for the article "Christians Face Jerusalem's High Court Again." (November 8, 1994) I read it several times and was thrilled by what took place. Because Ariel Feldman took a firm position in favor of what is right, a marvelous witness was given.

A. I. B., Brazil

Batteries I work with batteries for a living and would like to thank you for the "Watching the World" item "Dangerous Batteries." (August 22, 1994) But there was one important detail missing from the jump-starting instructions given by *Snow Country* magazine, namely, that the black cable should be the last connection made.

P. R., Canada

Thank you for the safety tip.—ED.

Awake! Brings Comfort I read the article "Magazines That Give Practical Comfort" (January 8, 1995), and I too have had success offering back issues of *Awake!* Generally people are grateful for any help they can get with their problems. One woman told me her son had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. I placed the issue "Understanding Difficult Children" (November 22, 1994) with her, and she requested another 30 copies to share with friends!

D. Q., United States

After reading the article "Magazines That Give Practical Comfort," I went through my older magazines to see if I could find some to leave with professionals. So far I have visited a day-care center, a couple of funeral homes, a youth detention center, a public school, and the county board of education. I quickly ran out of magazines!

D. R., United States

Singleness Thank you for the article "The Bible's Viewpoint: When Singleness Is a Gift."

(February 8, 1995) Where I live, marriage is a big thing; Christian brothers and sisters push you toward it. I never thought much about marriage until I turned 30. Then I started feeling the need for a companion. I am grateful to Jehovah for providing this article at a time when I felt I could no longer endure.

E. M. A., United States

Two years ago I became a pioneer, a full-time evangelizer, and as time passes I realize more and more how satisfying it is to serve Jehovah "without distraction." I decided to make room for singleness—the article arrived at exactly the right time.

G. V., Italy

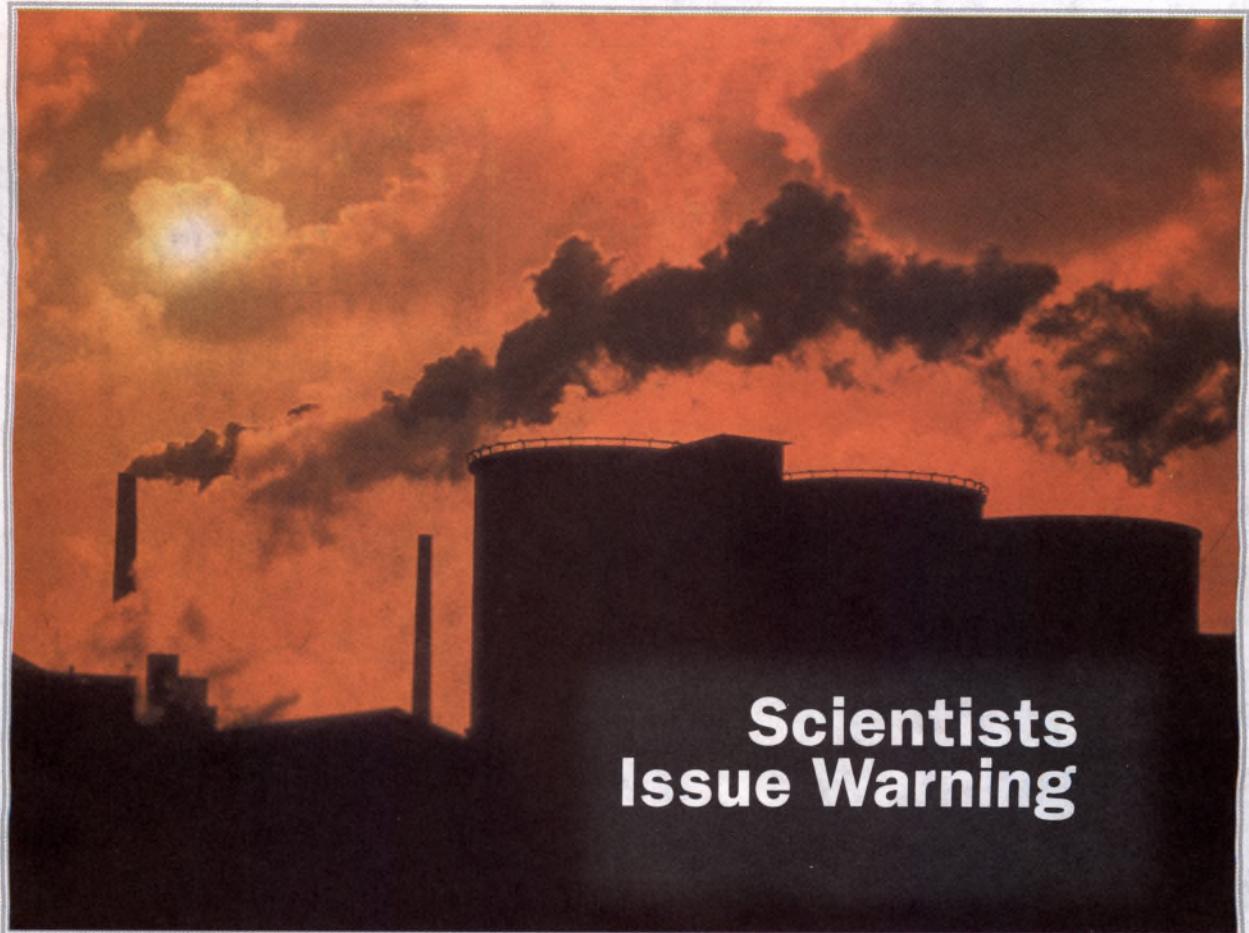
Fads In your article "Young People Ask . . . Fads—Should I Jump on the Bandwagon?" (December 8, 1994), you mentioned tattooing. I was surprised that you did not make reference to the command at Leviticus 19:28: "You must not put tattoo marking upon yourselves."

L. D., United States

These words do indeed give a measure of insight into God's thinking on this matter. Of course, Christians are not under the Mosaic Law. (Colossians 2:14) Still, individuals would do well to bear this scripture in mind when deciding what to do in this regard. The reported health risks and the impression wearing a tattoo might give to others are additional factors that a Christian should weigh very seriously.—ED.

Six months ago I jumped on the fad bandwagon and hopped off with a tattoo on my ankle. Every time I look at my ankle, I am reminded of my decision. I can only wonder what doubts others might now have about my character. I also worry if I might be a cause for stumbling to others in the congregation. I'll think more carefully next time the fad bandwagon pulls around.

S. C., United States



Scientists Issue Warning

"HUMAN beings and the natural world are on a collision course. . . . No more than a few decades remain before the chance to avert the threats [to the environment] will be lost."

This warning, issued by the UCS (Union of Concerned Scientists), was published in *Annals*, a Canadian medical journal. If man's life-threatening practices continue, the report adds, these "may so alter the world that it will be unable to sustain life in the manner that we know."

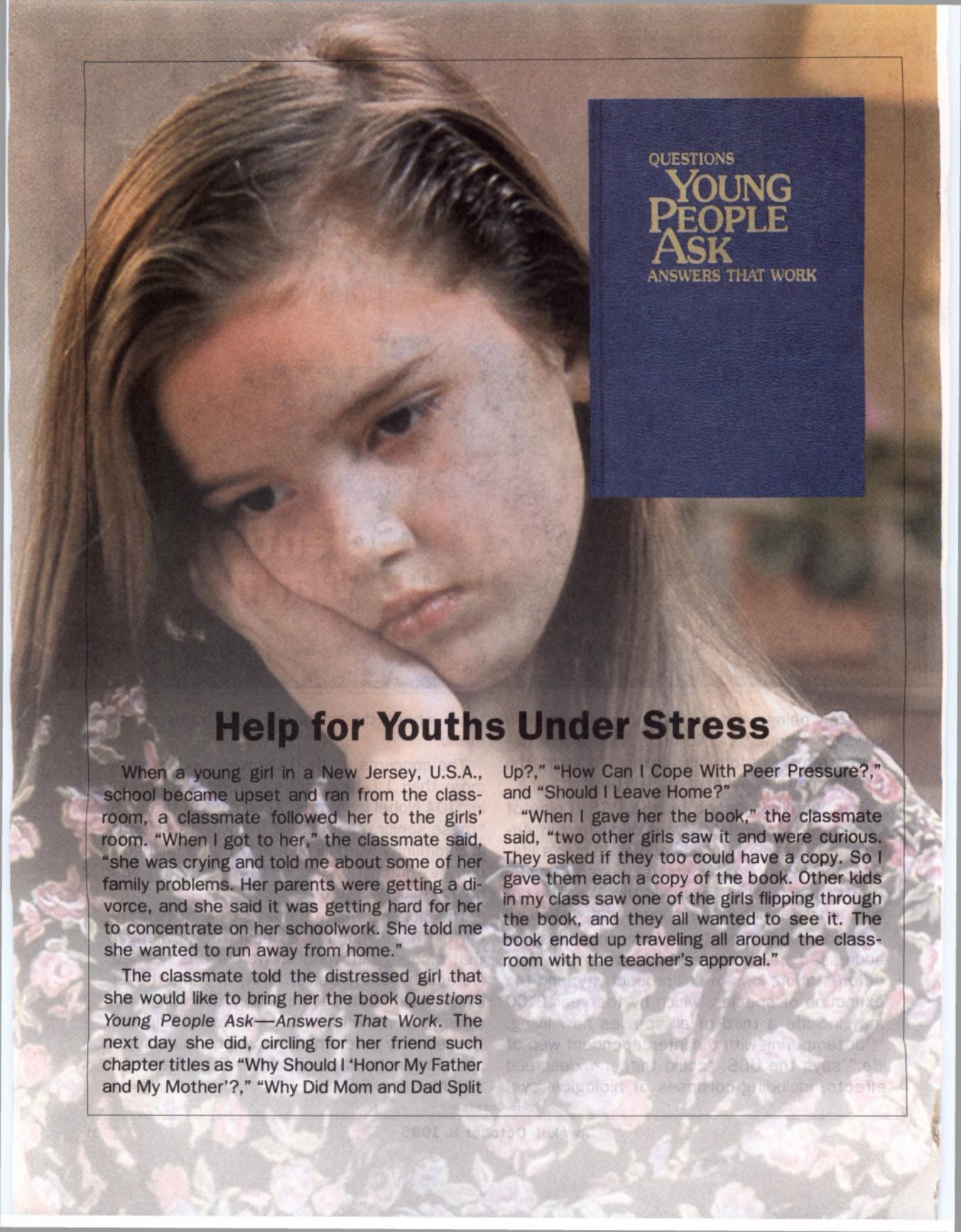
Cited among urgent problems that must be addressed are ozone depletion; water pollution; deforestation; loss of soil productivity; and the extinction of species, which by the year 2100 may include a third of all species now living. "Our tampering with the interdependent web of life," says the UCS, "could trigger widespread effects, including collapses of biological sys-

tems whose dynamics we imperfectly understand."

The concerns of the UCS were endorsed by more than 1,600 scientists worldwide, including 104 Nobel laureates. According to the UCS, "these senior members of the world's scientific community warn all humanity that a change in our stewardship of the earth is needed if vast human misery is to be avoided."

The Bible agrees that man is truly "ruining the earth." (Revelation 11:18) It even acknowledges that a change in world stewardship is needed. (Jeremiah 10:23; Daniel 2:44) In fact, the Bible promises that such a change will occur, not through man's efforts, but by God's Kingdom, the heavenly government for which Jesus taught his followers to pray.—Psalm 145:16; Isaiah 11:1-9; Matthew 6:9, 10.

Photo: Godo-Foto



QUESTIONS
**YOUNG
PEOPLE
ASK**
ANSWERS THAT WORK

Help for Youths Under Stress

When a young girl in a New Jersey, U.S.A., school became upset and ran from the classroom, a classmate followed her to the girls' room. "When I got to her," the classmate said, "she was crying and told me about some of her family problems. Her parents were getting a divorce, and she said it was getting hard for her to concentrate on her schoolwork. She told me she wanted to run away from home."

The classmate told the distressed girl that she would like to bring her the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*. The next day she did, circling for her friend such chapter titles as "Why Should I 'Honor My Father and My Mother'?", "Why Did Mom and Dad Split

Up?", "How Can I Cope With Peer Pressure?", and "Should I Leave Home?"

"When I gave her the book," the classmate said, "two other girls saw it and were curious. They asked if they too could have a copy. So I gave them each a copy of the book. Other kids in my class saw one of the girls flipping through the book, and they all wanted to see it. The book ended up traveling all around the classroom with the teacher's approval."