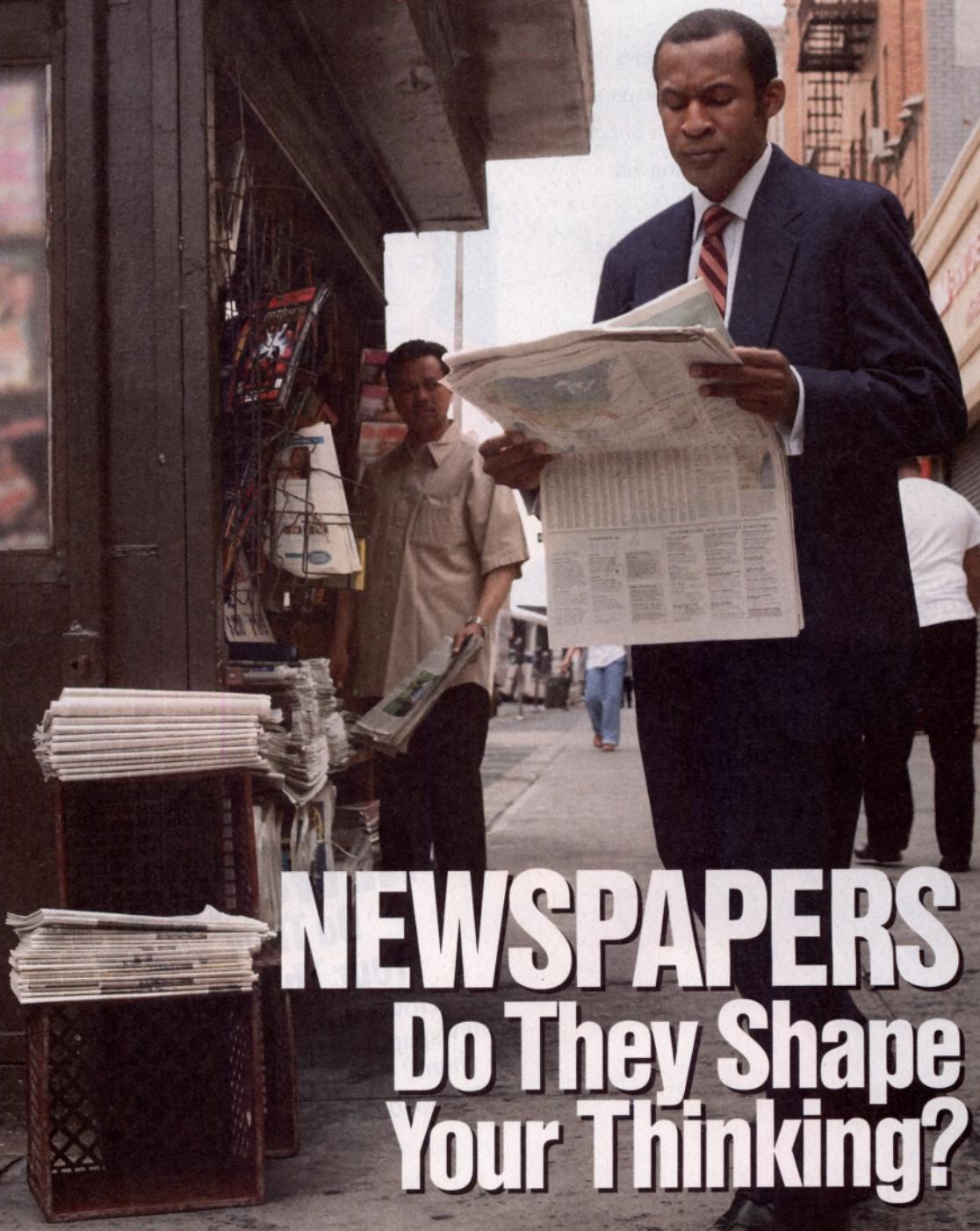


# Awake!

OCTOBER 22, 2005



**NEWSPAPERS**  
**Do They Shape**  
**Your Thinking?**

# Awake!

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PUBLISHED IN 82 LANGUAGES

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How reliable is what we read in newspapers? How can we benefit from them? Learn why it is important to know what is happening in the world.



# The Power of NEWSPAPERS

When World War I swept away the monarchy in Germany, a social-democratic government took office in Berlin. Afterward, Communists tried to overthrow this new government. Both the Communists and the government felt that controlling the press would mean controlling not just public opinion but the people as well. Thus began a fierce battle for the power of the press.



OVER the past few centuries, newspapers have shaped culture, influenced politics, played an important role in business, and affected the daily lives of millions. What role do they play in your life?

Apparently, in 1605, Germany became the birthplace of the first newspaper in Europe. In some places today, about 3 out of 4 people over the age of 14 read a newspaper daily. While certain developing countries have fewer than 20 copies of a daily newspaper for every 1,000 inhabitants, Norway has more than 600. Altogether, around the globe, about 38,000 newspapers compete for readership.

Everywhere, newspapers inform the public of important affairs. But they do more than that. They provide information on which many readers form opinions. "Our daily newspaper reading," claims Dieter Offenhäusser of

the German Commission for UNESCO, affects "our attitudes, our conduct, and even our fundamental moral values."

Historians say newspapers have instigated, supported, and justified wars. They cite the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War, the Spanish-American War of 1898, and the Vietnam War of 1955-75. Many businessmen, scientists, entertainment stars, and politicians have come to grief over a scandal publicized in newspapers. In the famed Watergate scandal of the mid-1970's, investigative journalism set off a series of events that forced U.S. President Richard M. Nixon to resign. Yes, for good or for bad, the press can be a mighty power to reckon with.

But how did this influence begin? How reliable is what we read in our newspapers? What precautions can help us benefit from them?

# Satisfying the Demand for News

"**A**LL Athenians and the foreigners sojourning there would spend their leisure time at nothing but telling something or listening to something new," reported the chronicler Luke almost 2,000 years ago. (Acts 17:21) A century earlier the Roman government, recognizing the public appetite for news, had begun displaying *Acta Diurna*, daily bulletins, in prominent places.

By the seventh century, the Chinese were producing the world's first printed newspaper, called *Dibao* (*Pao*). In Europe, where many people were then still illiterate, traveling storytellers spread accounts of wars, calamities, crimes, and other matters. Later, handwritten and woodcut-illustrated newsheets regarding such things were sold in public markets and at fairs.

In time, trading houses enriched their business letters with important news items. Eventually, these items appeared on an extra sheet called *nova* (news), which could be circulated.

## The Birth of Newspapers

At the start of the 17th century, two German newspapers began regular publication. *Relation* (relating the news), of Strasbourg, was first printed in 1605; *Avisa Relation oder Zeitung* (news advisory), of Wolfenbüttel, began publication in 1609. The first daily newspaper in Europe was the *Einkommende Zeitungen* (Incoming News), which appeared in Leipzig, Germany, in 1650.

That first daily paper in Leipzig consisted of four pocket-size pages. These presented

An early German newspaper and a modern newsstand



## Awake!®

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

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news items in random order. Single copies of this paper were fairly inexpensive, but a year's subscription would cost a well-paid worker a whole month's wages. Still, the demand for newspapers grew rapidly. By the year 1700, in Germany alone there were between 50 and 60 regular newspapers, and these reached several hundred thousand readers.

At first, news sources were letters, other newspapers, postmasters who received news by mail and reproduced it, or simply gossip picked up by newsmen in public places. With growing competition, however, publishers worked on improving the quantity and quality of the news. They hired their first professional editors. And because most publishers could not afford an extensive network of news sources and journalists, the appetite for news led to the formation of news agencies for gathering and distributing news to subscribing publishers.

### Vital Contributing Inventions

The newspaper business would not have been possible without important inventions, especially Johannes Gutenberg's method of printing with movable type. Further inventions made newspaper production practical and affordable. In the 1860's, for example, the web rotary press made it possible to print on a continuous roll of paper rather than on separate sheets. Shortly afterward, the Linotype machine was used to compose metal type into pages for printing. Then, in the latter half of the 20th century, computer typesetting replaced costly hand work.

**Semimonthly Languages:** Afrikaans, Albanian, Arabic, Cebuano, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Croatian, Czech,<sup>#</sup>, Danish,<sup>#</sup>, Dutch, English,<sup>#+○</sup> Estonian, Finnish,<sup>#</sup> French,<sup>#</sup> German,<sup>#</sup> Greek, Hungarian, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian,<sup>#</sup> Japanese,<sup>#</sup> Korean,<sup>#</sup> Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese,<sup>#</sup> Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,<sup>#</sup> Swahili, Swedish,<sup>#</sup> Tagalog, Ukrainian

<sup>#</sup>Audiocassettes also available.

<sup>+</sup> CD also available.

<sup>○</sup> MP3 CD-ROM also available.

**Monthly Languages:** Amharic, Bulgarian, Chichewa, Georgian, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Igbo, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Myanmar, Nepali, Sesotho, Sinhala, Tamil, Thai, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

In the meantime, news itself traveled ever faster as the telegraph began to come into common use in the 1840's, typewriters in the 1870's, and the telephone at about the same time. More recently, in the lifetime of millions now living, the use of computers, e-mail, and fax machines has become common in the newspaper business. Reporters arrive at the scene of their story ever sooner—by rail, automobile, and airplane. And speedy transport now delivers ever more newspapers.

### What Gets Into the Paper?

Finding enough news is not a problem in many places in our ever-shrinking world. "The difficulty lies more in selecting from a vast and never-ending torrent of news," according to the editors of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. News agencies flood Germany's newspapers with some 2,000 items each day. Reporters, correspondents, news broadcasts, and other sources inundate newspaper editors even further.

Two thirds of the news consists of announcements—press statements and reports about scheduled events, such as concerts, sports events, and conventions. Editors must know their market to meet the demand for information on subjects of local interest, which might include harvest results, anniversaries, and celebrations.

Sports sections, comic sections, political cartoons, and editorials are popular parts of newspapers. Feature stories, reports from foreign countries, and interviews with prominent figures and experts on particular

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**Would you welcome more information? Write Jehovah's Witnesses at the appropriate address:** **America:** United States of: Wallkill, NY 12589. **Australia:** Box 280, Ingleburn, NSW 1890. **Britain:** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. **Canada:** Box 4100, Halton Hills (Georgetown), Ontario L7G 4Y4. **Ghana:** P. O. Box GP 760, Accra. **Jamaica:** P. O. Box 103, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. **New Zealand:** P.O. Box 75-142, Manurewa. **Nigeria:** P.M.B. 1090, Benin City 300001, Edo State. **South Africa:** Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Zambia:** Box 33459, Lusaka 10101. **Zimbabwe:** Private Bag WG-5001, Westgate.

subjects can be both insightful and entertaining.

### Newspapers Face a Crisis

"Germany's newspaper industry is facing the toughest financial crisis of its history," reported the newspaper *Die Zeit* in 2002. And for 2004 the Swiss Press Association reported the lowest total circulation in ten years. What has happened to the demand for newspapers?

For one thing, the global economy took a downturn, cutting back advertising, which had generated two thirds of many papers' revenues. Between 2000 and 2004, the U.S. *Wall Street Journal* lost 43 percent of its advertising revenue. Will the ads return in the wake of an economic upswing? Many classified ads for real estate, jobs, and cars have been lost

to the Internet. Today newspapers compete with electronic media—radio, television, and the Internet.

On the other hand, the demand for news is alive and well. Professor of media economics Axel Zerdick remarked to a Frankfurt, Germany, newspaper: "The crisis is not quite as bad as most journalists believe." The chief editor of a German daily's local section echoed that view, observing: "The regional [newspaper] is still going strong."

Even if it is granted that nothing beats newspapers for in-depth coverage and the power to trigger public discussion, the questions remain: Can you trust their slant on the news? How can you benefit most from the newspapers you read?

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## JOURNALISM—A DEMANDING PROFESSION

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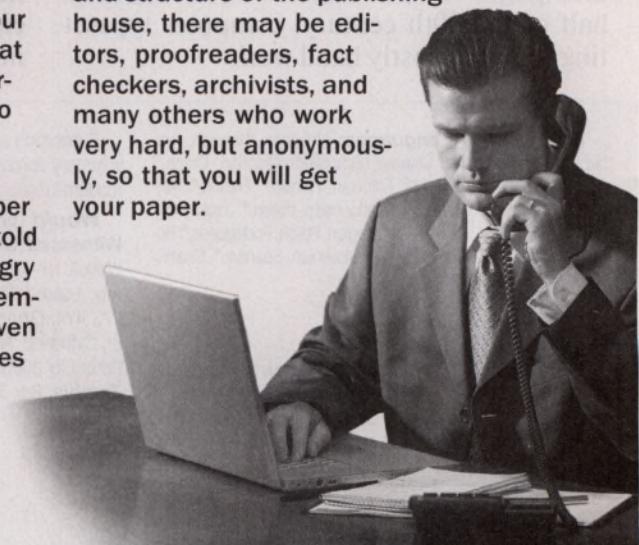
One might envy journalists. "Having one's name in the press can give a journalist a feeling of personal glory," admitted one longtime French journalist. Yet, journalism can also bring its frustrations—a story snapped away by a rival, an interview request turned down, countless hours spent waiting for an event that never materializes.

A newspaper writer in Poland noted another challenge. "We do not know when we will have time off or when we will have to work," she said. "Sometimes our privacy suffers, and the pace of work may disturb our family life." And a former journalist in what was then the Soviet Union pointed to perhaps the greatest frustration, "I worked so hard, but in the end it was still not published."

A sports writer for the largest newspaper in the Netherlands revealed: "I am often told that I am ignorant. Some readers get angry or frustrated, and as emotions at times temporarily run high in sports, people have even threatened to kill me." So, what motivates journalists to continue?

For some, of course, it could be the paycheck—but not for all. A journalist who works for a French paper spoke of his love of writing. A Mexican journalist said, "At least you manage to provide something worth knowing." And in Japan a senior editor of the world's second-largest daily commented, "I find joy when I feel that I have helped people and when justice is served."

Newspapers, of course, are not the work of journalists alone. Depending on the size and structure of the publishing house, there may be editors, proofreaders, fact checkers, archivists, and many others who work very hard, but anonymously, so that you will get your paper.



# How to Benefit From the Newspaper

**"Foolish is the man who never reads a newspaper; even more foolish is the man who believes what he reads just because it is in the newspaper."**

*—August von Schlozer, German historian and journalist of the late 18th century.*

**Jesus Christ foretold much of what we now see reported on in the newspaper**



**I**N ONE survey several thousand people in Britain and France were asked how much trust they placed in each of 13 institutions. The press came in last, even after politics and big business. In the United States, most readers still say they believe their newspaper. But surveys by the Pew Research Center show that the percentage of believers has declined.

There is often justification for skepticism, especially when what is said involves the national interests of the country in which a newspaper is printed. What happens then?

Truth is often sacrificed. As Arthur Ponsonby, an English statesman of the 20th century, once noted: "When war is declared, Truth is the first casualty."

Even when war hasn't been declared, it is wise to examine the news with healthy skepticism. "Any one inexperienced puts faith in every word," observes a Bible proverb, "but the shrewd one considers his steps." (Proverbs 14:15) If you exercise appropriate caution, the newspaper can generally satisfy your appetite for the news that you need.

## The Importance of the News

The news media is important today because it helps us keep up with what is going on in the world. And to do so is vital. Why? Because much of what is happening today was foretold by the greatest prophet who ever lived, Jesus

Christ. When asked about the end of this system of things, he said that the time of the end would be marked by wars, an increase in lawlessness, food shortages, pestilences, earthquakes, and other related events.—Matthew 24:3-14; Luke 21:7-11.

The Bible also says: “*In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here.*” This prophecy adds that during these “last days,” people would be “lovers of themselves, lovers of money,” and “disobedient to parents.” They would have “no natural affection” and would be “without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God.”—2 Timothy 3:1-5.

No doubt you see this Bible prophecy being fulfilled in your own community. And what is occurring worldwide—as reported in newspapers—only serves to confirm the accuracy of Bible prophecies. Does this mean that we can believe everything we read in the newspaper? No, even those dedicated to

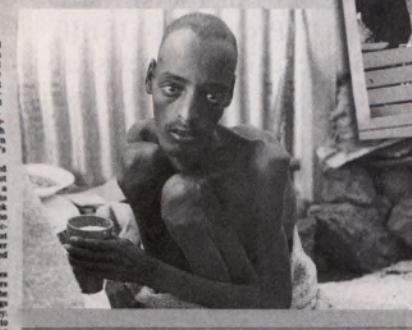
the newspaper business express the need for caution.

### Understand the Challenges

Everybody makes mistakes, even the most honest and skilled professionals. “In my three years as a free-lance fact-checker,” Ariel Hart wrote in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, “I have never checked a story that had no mistakes, whether five pages long or two paragraphs.” She cites such examples as “a year slightly off; old data; misspellings; widely reported information taken from secondary sources, but wrong.”

Journalists must contend with unreliable news sources. At times, hoaxes are fed to the press. In 1999 a prankster planted a fake news story about “a cemetery amusement park,” backing it up with an eye-catching Web site of a phony development company and a phone line for interviews, which the deceiver used to pose as a company spokesman. The Associated Press wire service failed to detect the ruse, whereupon many daily papers in the United

Newspaper reports  
confirm Bible  
prophecies



FAO photo/B. Imeboore



States carried the story. The secret of successful hoaxes is said to be "a provocative story with great visuals that's outrageous yet plausible."

Even well-intentioned journalists don't always get the story right. "Journalists usually work at a quick pace," explains a writer in Poland. "Newspapers are racing against one another. Each one wants to be the first to publish the news. For that reason many of us, although willing, are not able to write a well-researched article."

### Pressures to Conform

*Freedom of the Press 2003—A Global Survey of Media Independence* rated 115 of 193 countries as either not free or only partly free. However, subtle manipulation of the news may occur even in countries that enjoy freedom of the press.

At times, some journalists are simply excluded from receiving important information, while others who toe the line receive exclusive

**Commendation was given to those who checked the sources for the apostle Paul's teachings, also a wise practice when reading unusual news reports**

interviews and invitations to accompany politicians on their travels. Revenue from advertisers can also influence reporting. "The advertiser may threaten to withdraw profitable ads if the editor publishes anything negative about the advertiser," a Polish journalist noted. And a copyreader at a Japanese newspaper cautioned, "Keep in mind that an objective news report is very difficult to achieve."

"Well, then," you may ask, "if professional journalists face such problems in producing credible copy, how is the reader to know what to believe?"

### A Balanced View Is Needed

Clearly, discernment is needed. "Does not the ear itself test out words as the palate tastes food?" asked the patriarch Job. (Job 12:11) The reader needs to examine carefully what is written to see if it has the ring of truth. He wisely, as it were, tests and chooses what



is right. A first-century disciple of Jesus Christ wrote approvingly of those who listened to the apostle Paul but then checked Paul's sources to verify the truth of what he taught.—Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

Similarly, a newspaper reader may ask himself such questions as: What is the background of the writer? What are his prejudices? Does the story cite hard facts that others can check? Who might have an interest in distorting the truth? Wisely, the reader may check different sources for verification. He may also discuss what he reads with

others. "He that is walking with wise persons will become wise," a Bible proverb observes.—Proverbs 13:20.

At the same time, don't expect perfection. As we have seen, various factors prevent newspapers from being entirely objective. Still, they can help you to stay informed about what's going on in the world. It is important to keep up-to-date, for Jesus, when speaking of the very times in which we live, urged: "Keep awake." (Mark 13:33) Your newspaper can help you do so, even while you make allowances for its limitations.

## WHEN THE PRESS REFLECTS BIAS

Misrepresentation in the news is often the result of hasty reporting or misinformation. Yet, such well-intentioned stories can quickly spread serious falsehoods. On the other hand, sometimes efforts to misinform are deliberate, as was true in Nazi Germany when lies were spread about people of certain races and religions.

Consider the effect of a thinly veiled smear campaign launched not long ago during a human rights case in Moscow, Russia. "When three girls committed suicide in Moscow," reported *The Globe and Mail* newspaper of Toronto, Canada, "the Russian media immediately suggested they were fanatical followers of the Jehovah's Witnesses."

Such news stories appeared on February 9, 1999, the day that a civil court resumed a trial aimed at banning Jehovah's Witnesses in the city of Moscow. Geoffrey York of *The Globe and Mail* Moscow Bureau reported: "Police later admitted the girls had nothing to do with the religious sect. But by then a Moscow television channel had already launched a new assault on the sect, telling viewers that the Jehovah's Witnesses had collaborated with Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany—despite historical evidence that thousands of their members were victims of the Nazi death camps."

As a result, in the minds of many of the misinformed and possibly fearful public, Jehovah's Witnesses were either a suicidal cult or Nazi collaborators!



# A CONFLICT THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

AS TOLD BY MICHAEL MOLINA

*'The Republic of Viet Nam awarded Petty Officer Molina with the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry,' reported the military newspaper "Tester," of Maryland, U.S.A. 'Later Molina earned a gold star in lieu of a second award of the Commendation Medal for his courageous and tenacious actions during another heavy gunfire engagement. On June 6, 1968, Molina earned a second gold star when he prevented the loss of an important outpost to Viet Cong guerillas.'*



**A**LTOGETHER, I flew 284 combat missions and was decorated with 29 medals. Now I serve as a Christian minister in a different kind of warfare, about which the Bible says: "The weapons of our warfare are not fleshly." (2 Corinthians 10:4) Let me explain how it was that I made such a change in my life.

Chicago is situated in northern Illinois, U.S.A., which always seems to have strong wind off Lake Michigan. On February 1, 1947, the day I was born there, it was not only windy but also freezing cold. Since my father had recently served in World War II, two military doctors helped my mother bring me into the world. When I was ten years old, my parents moved our family to Los Angeles, California, where they sent my older brother, my sister, and me to a Catholic school.

I grew up playing baseball and football in the streets and in vacant lots, but I also played

soldier with homemade wooden rifles and machine guns. The 1960's, when I entered high school, were years of radical thinking and changing attitudes. Assassinations of social and political leaders, including the 1963 shooting of the president of the United States, as well as protest marches, burning of the American flag, and violent demonstrations, were the scenes of the day. While in school, most of my classmates and I worried about the military draft.

Shortly after graduation from high school in 1966, I received a call to report for my physical examination, which I passed. However, instead of being drafted into the army, I joined the navy. Since I was fascinated with helicopters, I volunteered for a new squadron of navy attack helicopters. In November 1967, soon after receiving basic training, I found myself in Vietnam's capital city, Saigon.

### **Initial War Experiences**

Shortly, I was shipped to a small airstrip, where there were four Huey helicopters. Some of our detachment of 30 sailors slept at the airstrip, while others of us were accommodated ten miles away in a two-story building. On my first night, I awoke abruptly as bullets began piercing the building. I rolled out of my cot and lay flat on the floor for a few seconds. When I heard shooting above, I found my way to the stairs and made it to the roof, where someone gave me a rifle. We fought for the rest of the night, barefoot and in our underclothes.

After three days of heavy fighting—surrounded and completely cut off—we ran out of food and water and most of our ammu-

nition. The officer in charge gave the order, "At the first light of day, we will make a run for the airstrip." We had to cross a small town that was in flames. We could hear gunfire, including that of machine guns, as we made our way through the town. There were dead bodies everywhere.

We finally made it to our airstrip, where the situation was not much better. We dug foxholes around the airstrip and tried to hold our ground. On several occasions the Vietcong broke our perimeter and invaded our airstrip, killing many, including our commanding officer. I stayed in my foxhole for several weeks without a change of clothes or a shower. Then a helicopter evacuated us to another outpost.

After those initial days of combat, I was determined to become a helicopter door gunner. I was given a few days' training and became part of an aircrew. Combat firefights were routine; sometimes I flew three or four missions a day.

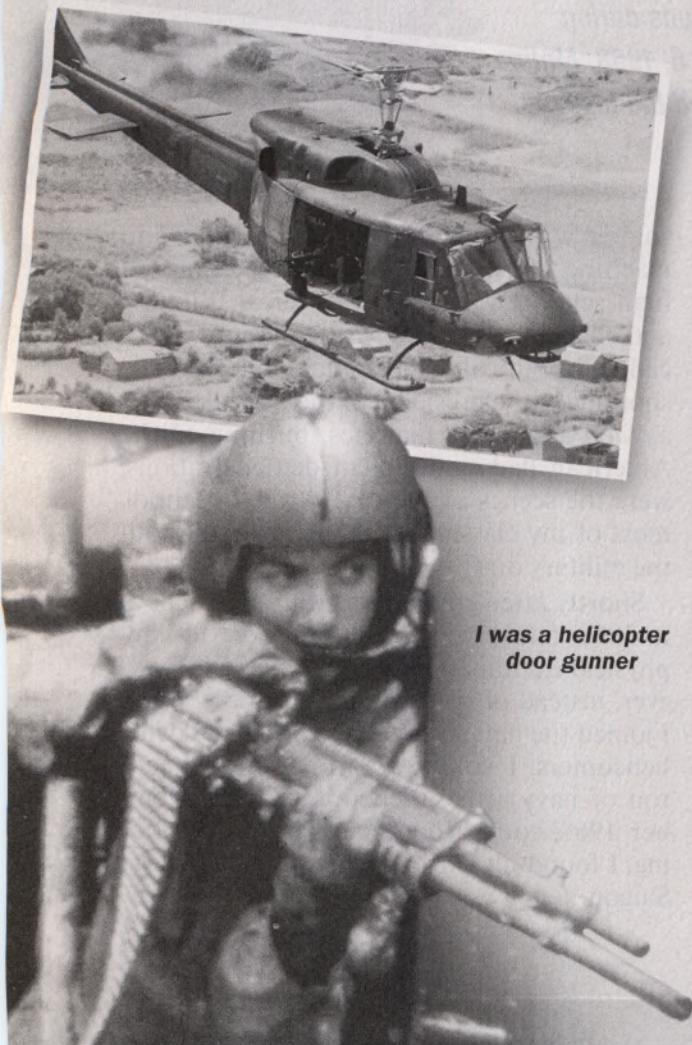
### **The Effect of the War**

I was shocked to see so much killing. At the same time, I thought about the protests against the war back home. Were we not fighting for freedom? Were we not risking our lives so that others could live better lives? Still, I wondered where the justice was in the war. Who would benefit from it? The Vietnamese? They had endured many years of war even before we came. Now there was only more death and suffering.

I was young and didn't understand the politics behind the war. I didn't have time to think about it either. I just knew that I had missions to fly and a job to do because that was what I was trained for. Sailors would say, "We were trained to fight, not to think." I did promise myself, though, that if I survived, I would do some serious investigating to find out why we were there.

The Vietnam conflict exposed me to something else that I was not prepared to han-

*I was a helicopter door gunner*



dle—drugs. As an adolescent, I smoked cigarettes, drank beer and whiskey on weekends, and went to parties. But I had never used drugs. In Vietnam things changed. Some of my companions said: "Why not, Mike? You're going to get your head shot off tomorrow anyway." So, on occasion, I complied.

Combat, though, is no place for the use of hallucinogenic drugs, and I swore to myself that I would not take them before going on a mission. When I returned home, however, I carried the urge to take drugs, and I got involved in that world.

### **Back From the War**

When I returned home to California from Vietnam in October 1970, my outlook on life had changed drastically. Although I had joined the military to help the cause of freedom, I felt I had been used. I came back bitter and full of hate. I was a misfit and was no longer patriotic.

I spent days smoking marijuana and taking other drugs while working on my motorcycle in my parents' garage. Brooding over my situation and thinking about what had happened in Vietnam only depressed me further. My conscience started to bother me. My desire to investigate the reason for the Vietnam War grew.

The government gave veterans education benefits, so I enrolled in a city college and later entered the California State University at Los Angeles. There I acquired friends who had demonstrated against the war in Vietnam, as well as others who had been in the war. We had long discussions about the war and world conditions. Not one of us had satisfying answers; we were all quite confused.

### **Efforts to Help and Find Help**

Many of us, in fact, had emotional and psychological problems. I was moved to try to do something to help. So in school I majored in abnormal psychology. Since I had been so involved in war and killing, I decided to work to

make amends. Thus, I started working in hospitals for the mentally disturbed.

Drugs were all over our university campus, and I came to see that they were the root of many problems. I wanted to make progress with my studies and help those in the hospital who were having psychological problems. So I quit all use of drugs and dedicated my time and energies to study and work. Yet, as a therapist, I could see only limited progress with my mental patients.

Completely frustrated with the system of things and with my own tormented conscience, I sought relief from my anguish. I started to pray and go to church. Mass in the Catholic Church was of little instructive value to me. So I started attending church at night. I would go in, light a candle, and pray in front of the images. These included Jesus hanging on a cross as well as Mary with a dagger in her heart and other images of so-called saints.

I began to think: 'What a cold and morbid place the church is! Could God's spirit really be here?' I needed answers and encouragement. I had seen enough suffering. So one night I left the church and went to pray in the park. I looked up at the stars and probably for the first time in my life tried earnestly to communicate with my Creator.

### **Learning Bible Truth**

I escaped from the stress of working at the hospital and visited my old friend Gary for a weekend. One day we spent some time in his living room watching TV. The news was about efforts to impeach President Nixon. We talked about the corruption in all aspects of life, and I mentioned that I had felt deceived regarding the war in Vietnam.

Alva, my friend's wife, overheard us and came out from the kitchen. She said that events such as those we were discussing were in fulfillment of Bible prophecy. "What could the problems of a president have to do with



**With Bill Akina  
and his wife,  
Eloise, 1978**

Bible prophecy?" I asked. Alva explained that soon God's Kingdom in the hands of Christ Jesus will replace all corrupt governments and that people will live forever in peace on an earth that will be transformed into a paradise. (Daniel 2:44; Revelation 21:3, 4) Alva spoke about the Lord's Prayer, in which we ask that God's Kingdom come and that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.—Matthew 6:9, 10.

I could see that we truly do need divine guidance to realize better government and true peace on earth. (Ecclesiastes 8:9; Jeremiah 10:23) Regarding the possibility of living forever, I remembered learning that the atoms that make up our physical body are replaced in relatively short periods of time. Even though some things Alva said seemed far-fetched, my curiosity was aroused. I wanted to make amends for the many injuries I had caused and to help ease the suffering of others. Alva suggested that I go to the Kingdom Hall, where I could learn more.

Bill Akina was a full-time minister in the congregation. He had been in the navy during the second world war, so I could relate to him. Above all, he knew the Bible, and he and his wife answered my many questions by using it. As my studies with Bill progressed, I could see that although my efforts to help those in the hospital were well-intentioned, I could give them only temporary relief. On the other hand, helping people acquire an accurate

knowledge of the Bible would mean everlasting life to them if they had faith and lived in harmony with this knowledge.—John 17:3.

Bill studied the Bible with me using the study aid *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*. I was baptized in symbol of my dedication to God in July 1974. Six months later I became a pioneer, as full-time evangelizers among Jehovah's Witnesses are called. In the meantime, I quit my studies at the university and discontinued my work in the hospital. To support myself in the ministry, I worked as a janitor cleaning banks at night. (1 Thessalonians 4:11) My friends and family thought I had gone crazy.

After pioneering in California for about a year, I began to wonder how I could be used more fully in Jehovah's service. I decided to set missionary work in a foreign territory as my goal. After serving as a pioneer for a few years, I received an invitation to attend the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead, which was then located in Brooklyn, New York. I was part of the 66th class of that school and graduated on March 11, 1979, in Long Island City, New York.

#### **Changes of Assignment**

I was assigned to Guatemala, Central America, where I served as a missionary for about a year. Then I was invited to work in the small printery at the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in the capital, Guatemala City. In 1981, I married Lupita, a local pioneer, and she was invited to join me at the branch office. Later, in 1996, our printing in Guatemala was discontinued when we began receiving all of our publications from the Mexico branch.

Our little girl, Stephanie, was born in 1984, yet I was able to continue serving at the branch office. This was true even after Lupita gave birth to Mitchell in 1987. Living in a residence apart from the branch office and commuting about six miles to the office each day has not been easy. But it has been a privilege



**Working in the printery  
at the Guatemala branch, 1982**

to serve in this capacity, and my family has been very supportive.

Lupita and Stephanie are now pioneers, and Mitchell is a baptized minister. He will finish his studies at a trade school this year, and his goal is to pursue the full-time ministry. I know that we enjoy these special privileges, not because of personal abilities, but because of Jehovah's undeserved kindness. He is a loving God, and he will use anyone who has a willing spirit and looks to him for guidance.

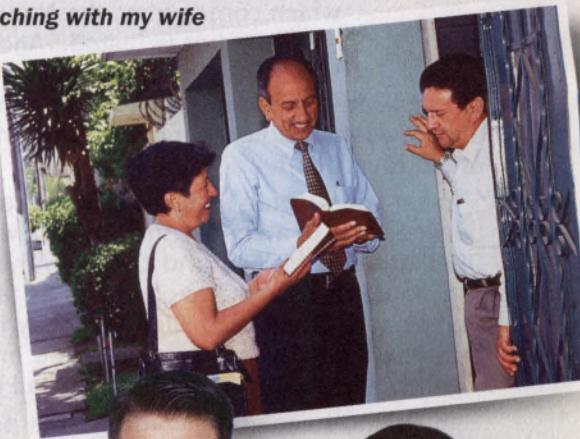
Sometimes we are asked how we as a family manage to share so fully in the ministry and at the same time support ourselves. We do work secularly during our vacations. But beyond that, we have always tried to have a 'simple eye' as regards material things, looking to Jehovah for help, trusting in him, and constantly seeking his guidance.  
—Matthew 6:25-34; Proverbs 3:5.

Carrying a gun gave me a sense of power, so I can see the need constantly to work on developing humility. Satan's system of

things taught me to hate and kill and to be suspicious, aggressive, and defensive. But Jehovah has extended mercy and loving-kindness to me, for which I am very appreciative. Now I am determined to continue to learn war no more and to have love and compassion for all.—Matthew 5:43-45; Isaiah 2:4.

It has not been easy for me to make changes. However, I have learned to live a more peaceable life. With God's help I have also been able to cope with the nightmares resulting from my war experiences. I truly look forward to the time when wars and conflicts will cease. (Psalm 46:9) Until that time comes, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve in the lifesaving work of helping people to learn about our grand Lifegiver, Jehovah God.

**Preaching with my wife**



**Today with  
Lupita, Mitchell,  
and Stephanie**



# Jicama

## A Healthful Mexican Snack



The leaves and ripe pods of the jicama, a climbing legume, are not appetizing. This is good, though, since they are not edible. The edible treasure lies below the ground; it is the plant's tuberous root.

From ancient times, people in Mexico have consumed the jicama. Its name, which comes from the Nahuatl language, means "what is tasted." And just seeing a picture of the popular Mexican snack made of raw jicama slices seasoned with lemon juice, salt, and powdered piquin pepper or cayenne pepper can make your mouth water.

What does jicama taste like? Some say its flavor lies between that of an apple and that of a water chestnut. Originating in Mexico and Central America, the jicama plant has traveled to countries as far away as the Philippines, China, and Nigeria. Today it is cultivated in many lands, where it is prepared in various ways—grilled, pickled, used in salads, boiled in soups.

In Oriental cooking, jicama serves as a substitute for water chestnuts. An appreciated quality of this vegetable is that it remains crisp even after cooking. Especially is this true of the milk jicama, which produces a milky juice, unlike the water jicama. Interestingly, both types can grow from the same seed.

As a snack, jicama is ideal. It is nutritious, refreshing, crunchy, juicy, easy to digest, and low in calories. An analysis made by a nutrition institute showed that while 3.5 ounces of potato chips contains 540 calories, the same amount of jicama has only 40! Other properties of jicama are its calcium, phosphorus, and vitamin-C content.

As mentioned, except for the



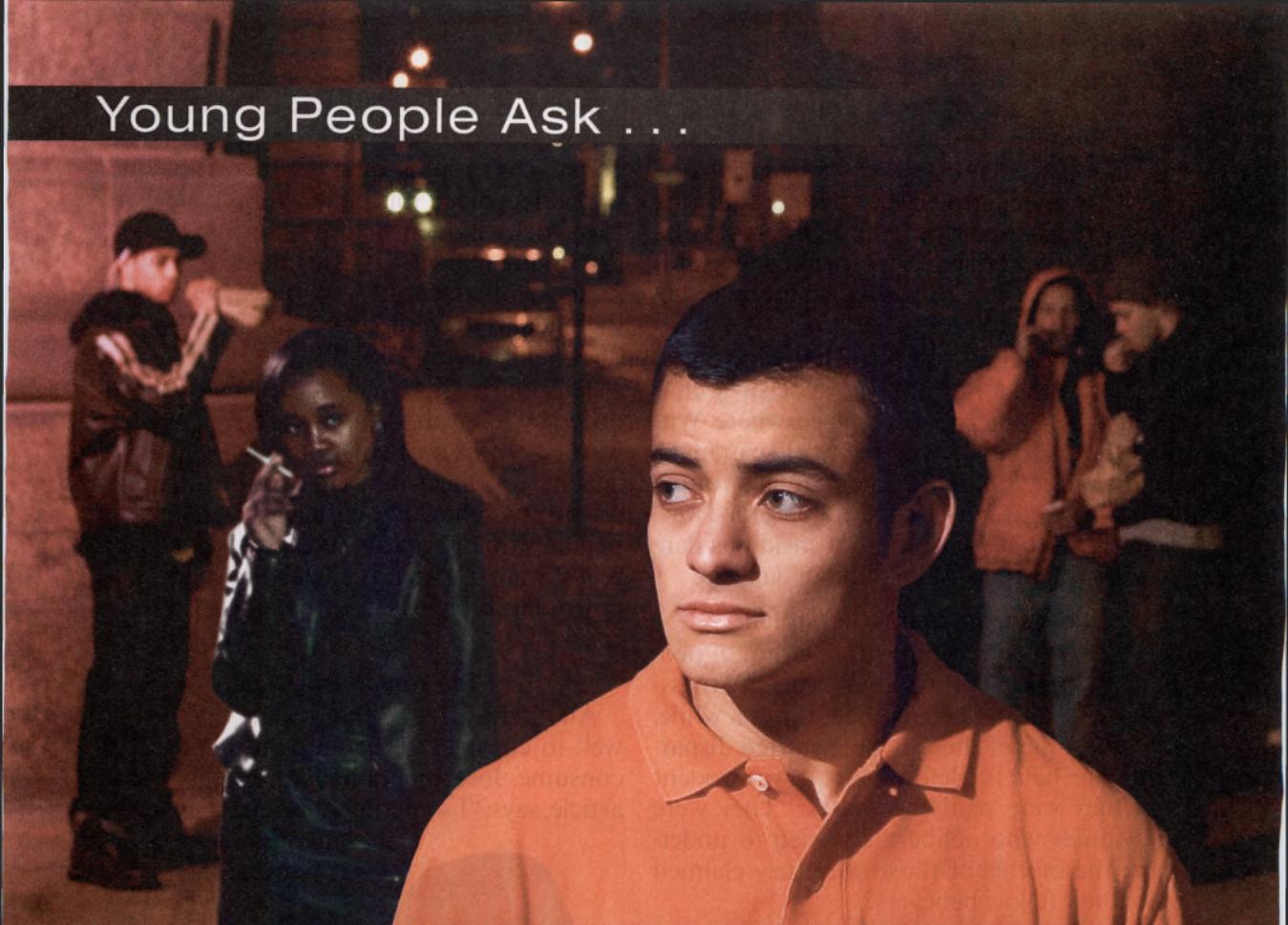
root, the jicama plant, for the most part, is not edible, but that does not mean that its other parts are not useful. The seeds in the pod contain a series of compounds that make an effective insecticide, and they can be used as such when they are pulverized. The seeds are also used in some dermatologic preparations. The stalks, on the other hand, yield strong fibers that can be used in making fishing nets.

Jicama roots come in a variety of sizes, from those weighing less than ten ounces to those weighing more than two pounds. They will keep for about three weeks in the refrigerator. To use a jicama, all you have to do is wash it, peel it, and—unless it is very young—remove its outermost fibrous layer.

So if jicama is available where you live, why not give it a try as a snack? It may do you good!



# Young People Ask . . .



## Chat Rooms—How Can I Avoid the Dangers?

*"I regularly chatted online for three or four hours a day. Sometimes I would chat for six or seven hours straight."—José.\**

C HAT ROOMS—like any other area where strangers mingle—contain dangers that you need to be aware of. To illustrate, if you visited a big city, you would logically endeavor to minimize any threat to your safety by identifying and then avoiding hazardous areas.

\* Some names have been changed.

The same logic applies if you must visit a chat room. In the September 22 issue of *Awake!* two dangers inherent to many chat rooms were discussed, namely, the possibility of your coming in contact with sexual predators and the temptation for you to become a deceiver. There are other dangers that are worth considering. But, first, how are chat rooms organized?

## Organized for a Purpose

Chat rooms are usually organized according to topics that attract certain groups of people. Some might be set up for enthusiasts of a particular sport or hobby. Others may be devoted to discussing a television show. Still others might cater to people claiming to belong to a particular religion.

If you are one of Jehovah's Witnesses, curiosity might prompt you to visit a chat room that claims to be a place where Witness youths from around the world can make new friends. Finding friends among youths who share your faith is a desirable goal. However, these chat rooms harbor insidious dangers for Christians. What kind of dangers?

### Introducing Moral Corruption

"I was in a chat room with a group of people who I thought were all Jehovah's Witnesses," says a youth named Tyler. "After a while, though, some of these people started disparaging our beliefs. Before long, it was evident that they were really apostates." They were individuals who deliberately tried to undermine the morals of those who they claimed were their fellow believers.

God's Son, Jesus Christ, warned that some of those who followed him would turn on their companions. (Matthew 24:48-51; Acts 20:29, 30) The apostle Paul called such individuals in his time false brothers and says that they "sneaked in" to do harm to those in the Christian congregation. (Galatians 2:4) The Bible writer Jude says that they "slipped in" with the goal of "turning the undeserved kindness of our God into an excuse for loose conduct." (Jude 4) He also describes them as "rocks hidden below water."—Jude 12.

Notice that both Paul and Jude identify the stealthy methods often used by apostates. These Bible writers noted that the apostates "sneaked in" or

"slipped in" with the purpose of morally corrupting those in the Christian congregation. Today, chat rooms offer such corrupt ones the perfect cloak for their devious endeavors. Like rocks hidden below water, these false Christians mask their real intent beneath a pretense of concern for Witness youths. But their goal is to shipwreck the faith of unwary ones.—1 Timothy 1:19, 20.

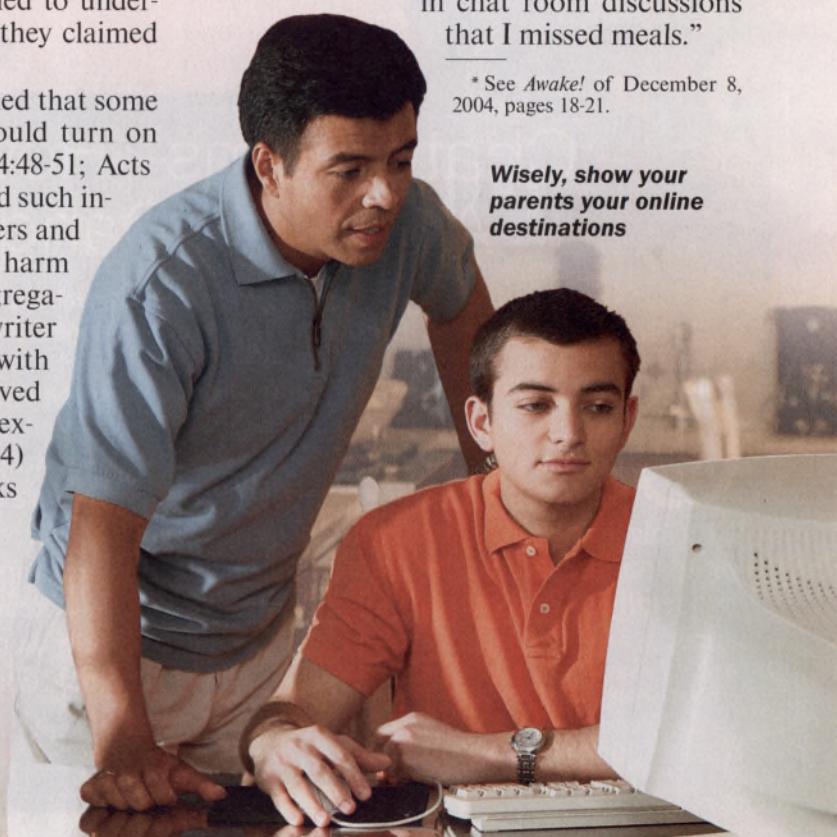
This journal, as well as other material produced by Jehovah's Witnesses, has repeatedly warned of this particular danger.\* Therefore, anyone you meet in a chat room ostensibly set up for Jehovah's Witnesses is, at best, a person who disregards such counsel. Do you really want as friends those who choose to downplay Bible-based direction?—Proverbs 3:5, 6; 15:5.

### The Trap of Isolation

Another aspect of chat rooms that you do well to consider is the amount of time they consume. José, mentioned at the start of this article, says: "I sometimes became so involved in chat room discussions that I missed meals."

\* See *Awake!* of December 8, 2004, pages 18-21.

**Wisely, show your parents your online destinations**



You may not become as absorbed in chat rooms as José. However, to spend time chatting online, you must buy out time from some other activity. The area prone to suffer immediately may not be your homework or your household chores. The first casualty may be communication with your family. Adrian, who lives in Spain, says: "I would leave the table immediately after a meal and go online to chat. I became so hooked on chat rooms that I virtually stopped talking to my family."

If you are spending valuable time in chat rooms, you may likewise be isolating yourself from those who matter most to you. The Bible provides this relevant warning: "One isolating himself will seek his own selfish longing; against all practical wisdom he will break forth." (Proverbs 18:1) The strangers you meet in many chat rooms are unlikely to encourage you to live by the practical wisdom found in the Bible. It is more likely that they will encourage you to seek selfish interests and will tempt you to break free from Christian moral standards.

True, one of the lures of chat rooms may be that you find it easier to talk online than to communicate with family members. Your chat room associates may seem eager to hear your opinion on matters and might openly express their feelings. Your family members, on the other hand, might appear too busy to listen to your concerns and may find it difficult to express their feelings freely.

However, ask yourself: 'Do my online associates know who I really am? Are they really interested in my long-term welfare?' Members of your family are far more likely to care about your emotional and spiritual health. If your parents are trying to live by Bible standards, they are keenly interested in communicating with you. (Ephesians 6:4) If you respectfully express your thoughts and feelings to them, they may surprise you by responding more kindly than you expect.—Luke 11:11-13.

### Avoiding the Dangers

You may have a compelling reason to access a chat room—for example, as part of a required school project.\* If so, you can ensure that chat rooms do not become a snare for you by taking the following simple precautions.

First, avoid using an Internet-connected computer in the privacy of your own room. Doing so would be like wandering by yourself down a dark street in a strange city—you would be asking for trouble. Rather, keep the computer in a public area of the house where others can easily monitor its use.

Second, encourage better communication with your parents by showing them your online destinations and by explaining why you need to access a particular chat room. Also, set a time limit on how long you will be at the computer, and then stick to it.

Third, install computer programs that will help protect you from online sexual harassment by filtering the content of incoming messages. If you do receive sexual solicitations while online, let your parents or teacher know immediately. In some countries adults who know you are a minor yet solicit you through sexually suggestive text messages or other pornographic material are committing a criminal offense. They should be reported to the police.

In addition, never give out your name, your address, the name of the school you attend, or your phone number to someone you meet in a chat room. And never accept an invitation to meet face-to-face with a person you meet online!

Although written thousands of years ago, the words of wise King Solomon are relevant to the dangers posed by chat rooms: "Shrewd is the one that has seen the calamity and proceeds to conceal himself, but the inexperienced have passed along and must suffer the penalty."—Proverbs 22:3.

\* See *Awake!* of January 22, 2000, page 20.

# We Felt God's Strengthening Aid

AS TOLD BY  
ESTHER GAITÁN

**"We have kidnapped your mother.  
Do not try to call the police. Just wait for  
our call early tomorrow morning."**

MY YOUNGER sister received this call about our mother, Esther, on a Tuesday last year. My husband, Alfredo, and I had just returned from a meeting at the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses when I learned about the call. By the time we got to my parents' home in Mexico City, our relatives were already there. My younger sister and brother were inconsolable, and Mother's sisters were in tears.

My father and older brother were away on a business trip. After speaking to them by phone, we all agreed that it would be best to inform the police. All through that distressing night, we prayed for help.

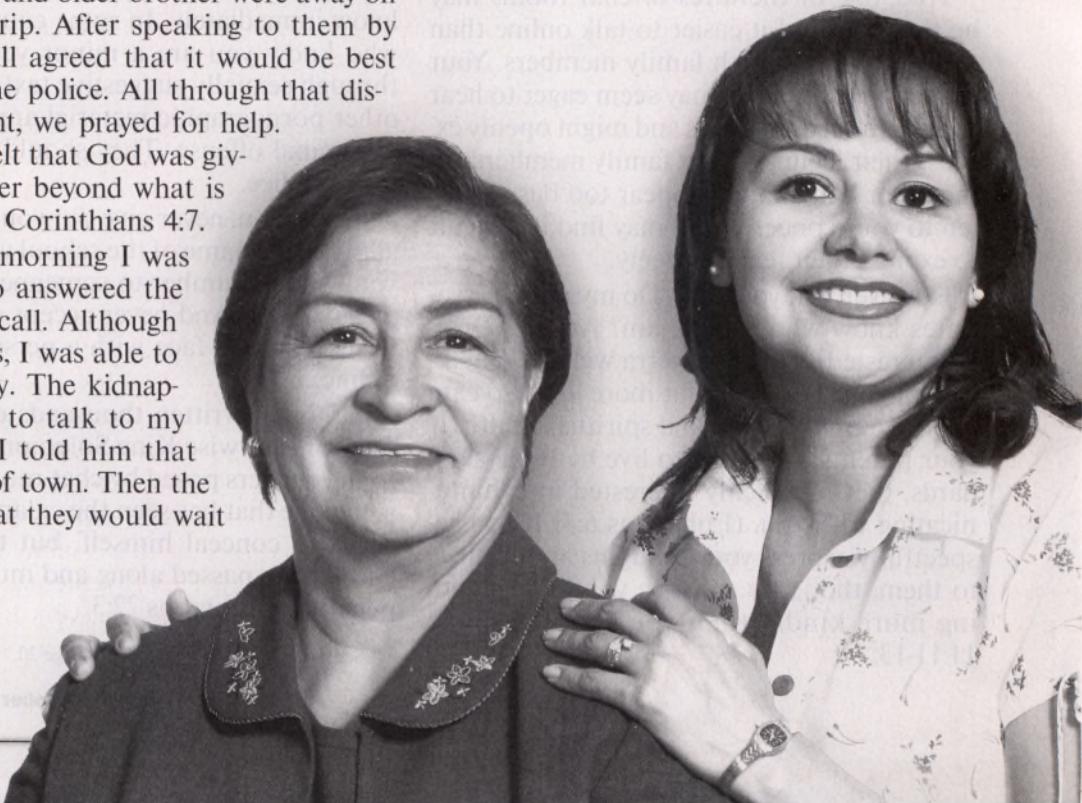
We clearly felt that God was giving us "power beyond what is normal."—2 Corinthians 4:7.

The next morning I was the one who answered the kidnappers' call. Although very nervous, I was able to speak calmly. The kidnapper wanted to talk to my father, but I told him that he was out of town. Then the man said that they would wait

until Father arrived to begin negotiations. He warned me that if we didn't pay a huge sum of money, they would kill my mother.

The following day I again answered the telephone. Since I sounded calm in the face of his threats, the kidnapper asked: "Don't you realize the gravity of the situation?"

"Of course," I replied. "You kidnapped my mother. But we are Jehovah's Witnesses, and we have full confidence that our God will



help us. And the Bible prepares us to endure these difficult times in which we are living."

"Yes. Yes. I know all that," he replied. "Your mother says the same thing. She trusts her God and you a lot." So we knew Mother was maintaining a firm faith, and this strengthened us.

### Help to Endure

As the days passed, our fellow Christians telephoned us and sent cards and electronic messages. We continued to attend our meetings and participate in the preaching work. Daily reading the Bible and Bible literature also comforted us. Above all, prayer gave us "the peace of God."—Philippians 4:6, 7.

One of the police officers commented: "During the nine years I have been in the department, I have seen the despair of many families, but you are different. You display great tranquillity. I am sure that it is because of the God you worship."

We showed him the December 22, 1999, issue of *Awake!* magazine, with the cover series "Kidnapping—Why a Global Threat," which we had reviewed. He read it and asked for more copies, saying he would like to get to know Jehovah's Witnesses better.

Finally, after 15 days of negotiations, the kidnappers released my mother. She was well, although she had been kept isolated in a small room, chained by her foot. Yet, she had been treated with respect and had been given the medication she customarily took for diabetes and high blood pressure.

Mother described how she coped so remarkably well. "In the beginning," she admitted, "I was very frightened; but I began to pray to Jehovah, and he did not allow me to despair. I never felt alone within those four walls. I discovered how real Jehovah was to me; he never abandoned

me. I asked him to help me show the fruitage of his spirit—above all, patience.

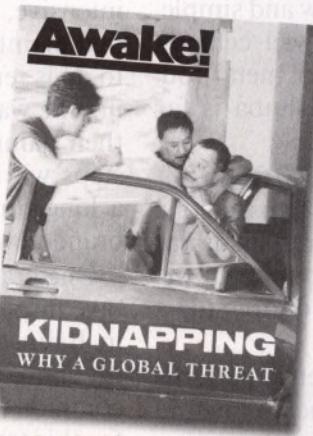
"Thanks to God's help, I never cried or panicked. I spent the days recalling all the Bible verses that I knew, as well as singing our Kingdom songs out loud. Sometimes I imagined that I was at my Christian meetings, and I mentally participated in them. I also imagined preaching to people and conducting Bible studies. My mind was so involved with these things that time passed quickly.

"I even had a chance to give a witness about my faith to the kidnappers. Every time one of them brought me food, I preached to him, even though I was blindfolded. For example, once I told the kidnapper that the Bible foretold the difficult times in which we live and that I understood that they must have had a great need for money. I commented

that Jehovah God has absolute power but that he never abuses it. Then I asked that they please not abuse their power over me but that they treat me with fairness.

"The kidnapper listened to me and told me not to worry, that they would not harm me. I am grateful to Jehovah for sustaining me in such difficult moments, and I am more resolved than ever to continue serving him as a regular pioneer [full-time evangelizer] as long as I am able."

Without a doubt, this trial drew Mother closer to Jehovah, as it did all of us. We lack the words with which to express our gratitude that Mother is home again. It comforts us to know that under God's Kingdom these outrages will no longer exist. Meanwhile, my family and I can bear witness to the truth of the words of the Bible psalmist: "Many are the calamities of the righteous one, but out of them all Jehovah delivers him."—Psalm 34:19.



# Houses With “Fur Coats”

By Awake! writer in Ukraine

**S**TORES, homes, and office buildings throughout Ukraine are adorned with a covering called shuba, meaning “fur coat.” Shuba is a traditional stucco building finish that resembles the furry inside of a sheepskin coat. Gentlemen who reside in palatial homes esteem shuba’s beauty, and even farmers of modest means splurge to adorn their cottages with such a “fur coat.”

The techniques of applying this stucco finish can usually be learned in about two years. A shuba craftsman’s tools are few and simple. They include a bucket to hold wet cement, a short broom, and a wooden or metal rod. However, the skill of creating shuba is far from simple.

Shuba is more than a mere stucco finish—it involves a variety of patterns, designs, colors, and thicknesses. Only when a craftsman has a keen eye for the artistic possibilities of the building before him can the art of dressing a home in shuba be mastered.

The various designs or geometric patterns to be used may be outlined on the wall before applying the cement. Contrast in the design is achieved by using dark- and light-colored cements applied in various thicknesses. After

the shuba dries, it is spray-painted for added beauty and variety.

Clutching his broom in one hand, the craftsman plunges it into the cement. Then he slaps the broom sharply against his rod, which he is holding in his other hand. The cement is propelled through the air and lands on the wall. Working at a steady pace, a craftsman can coat between 25 and 30 square yards of wall per day.

Although the application of shuba is labor-intensive, homes dressed in it require minimal maintenance. All the householder needs to do is remove the dust once a year by spraying the walls with a fine stream of water and then paint any faded areas. Following these steps will assure that the shuba will endure a long time. In fact, many homes still look brand-new in 20-year-old “coats.”

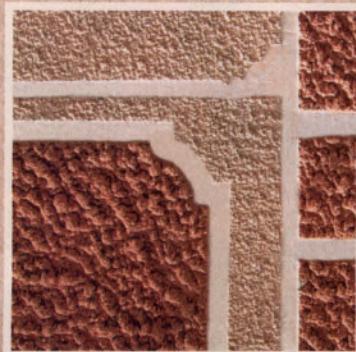
One craftsman has had the opportunity to take his skills abroad. When visiting a friend in Balingen, Germany, he was asked to apply shuba to his friend’s home. While shuba is common in Ukraine, it proved to be a novelty for this town.

As the craftsman applied the shuba, he drew the attention of the entire neighborhood. A wide-eyed building contractor watched, unable to believe the beauty being created with such simple instruments. Drivers craned their necks to get a glimpse as they slowly passed by, and a journalist snapped pictures for the local newspaper. When completed, the house received a prize from the city.

Would shuba look good in your neighborhood? Perhaps a beautiful new “fur coat” on your home would warm things up a bit.

## In Our Next Issue

- What Hope Is There for the Poor?
- Does the Bible Discriminate Against Women?
- Bee-Eaters—Multicolored Acrobats of the Skies



◀ Prize-winning  
shuba-covered house  
in Balingen, Germany

▼ A shuba craftsman's  
tools include a short broom  
and a wooden rod





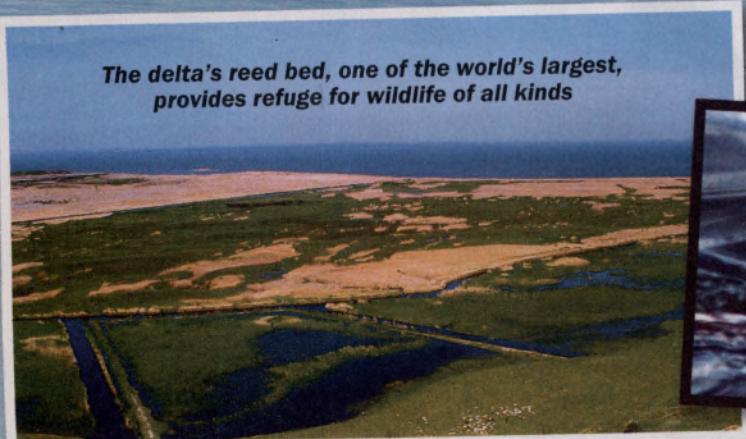
# Europe's Delta of **Striking Contrasts**

By Awake! writer in **Romania**

All photos:  
Silviu Matei



The delta's reed bed, one of the world's largest, provides refuge for wildlife of all kinds



**The Danube River** is born in the Black Forest of Germany. As a youthful watercourse, it bounds east across Austria and along the border of Slovakia. As a mighty torrent, it pours south into Hungary and then along the border between Croatia and the country of Serbia and Montenegro. It then slows and widens as it meanders along the Bulgarian border before turning north through Romania. Eventually it laps the border of Ukraine.

Laden with silt and swollen with water from some 300 tributaries, the mature river finally gives birth to a beautiful delta on the shores of the Black Sea. Near the city of Tulcea, in southeastern Romania, the Danube's

three daughters, the Kiliya, the Sulina, and the St. George, form the main channels that empty into the Black Sea.

As these three Danube distributaries seep through the delta, they fragment into many small waterways that feed numerous swamps and lakes. Sediment from the river combines with sand from the sea to create massive sandbanks and islands. Some dunes, like those on Caraorman sandbank, are up to 20 feet high and are desertlike in appearance.

However, the Danube Delta is far more than a landscape of shifting sand and silt. The delta covers an area of some 1,660 square miles, forming Europe's largest wetland habitat. Moreover, the delta hosts what is likely

All photos: Silviu Matei



*About half the world's white pelicans breed here*

the largest expanse of reed beds in the world, covering some 660 square miles!

Stately forests of elm, oak, and alder flourish on a number of the delta's sandbanks. A web of wild vine, ivy, liana, and other vegetation clings to these trees in eternal competition for sunlight. In a sense, this delta is a vast organic filter that serves as the largest water purification system in Europe.

#### Haven for Animal Life

Millions of birds of more than 300 species flock to this avian paradise. About half the world's white pelicans and over 60 percent of the world's pygmy cormorants breed within the Danube Delta. Also, nearly all of the world's red-breasted geese—a globally threatened species—spend the winter here. In March, pelicans build their nests and lay their eggs on remote floating islands of reeds. When autumn arrives, the pelicans depart for the Nile Delta, Greece, and Asian coasts as distant as India.

The birds are drawn back to the Danube Delta not only by the ideal habitat but also by the fish. More than 90 species of fish thrive in the delta's channels. In fact, half of all the

freshwater fish consumed in Romania come from the Danube Delta. Among the most famous delta fish is the sturgeon, which makes its way up the Danube in breeding season to lay its eggs. These eggs, otherwise known as caviar, are a prized and expensive delicacy.

There is little actual land here—only 13 percent of the delta region rises above the waters. Here wolves, foxes, hare, and muskrat eke out a living. Such endangered species as the freshwater otter and the European mink—once a favorite of fashionable ladies—also survive in the delta. In addition, over 1,800 species of insects buzz and crawl across this aquatic wonderland.

#### A Biosphere Worth Preserving

In 1991 the Danube Delta was inscribed on the World Heritage List. The following year it received international recognition as a biosphere reservation. The reserve is carefully managed from the city of Tulcea. Fishing is officially controlled, although poaching remains a constant threat.

Even so, the health of the delta is at the mercy of the cities and industrial centers that spew effluent into the Danube along its 1,770-mile journey to the sea. In years past a network of wet grasslands filtered the lower Danube before its waters entered the delta. Now, nearly four fifths of those grasslands have disappeared.

Today the delta itself is expanding into the Black Sea by as much as a hundred feet a year. And the Danube, just as it has for thousands of years, continues to build, renovate, and refresh this landscape of striking contrasts.

All photos: Silviu Matei

**More than 300 species of birds flock to this avian paradise, including kingfishers**

**Over 1,800 species of insects are found in the Danube Delta**



# Africa's Mystery Circles

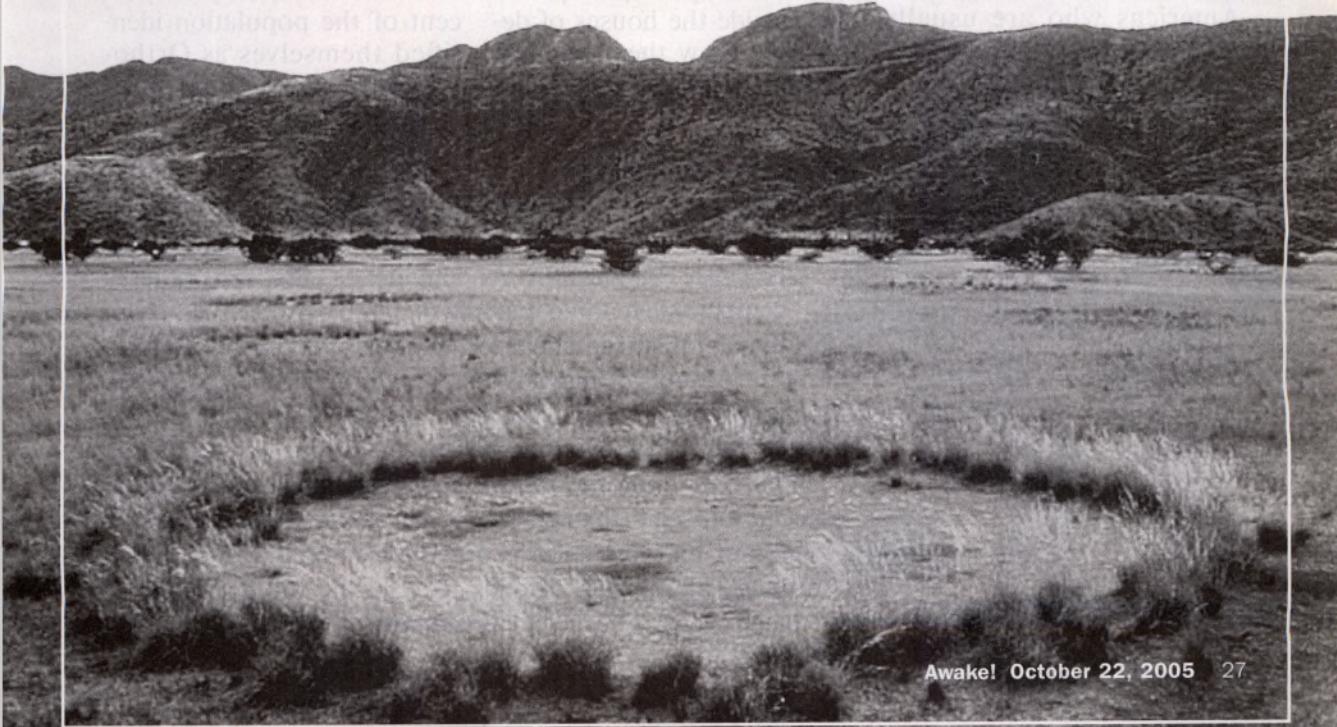
In a 1,500-mile swath along the western edge of the Namib Desert in southwestern Africa, patches of barren, sandy soil 6 to 30 feet in diameter dot the landscape. Each patch is girded with a ring of tall grass. To some visitors the rings look like terrestrial chicken pox or splash marks made by giant raindrops. Local tradition has it that these circles possess magical powers. Some tribes believe that each circle surrounds the grave of a Bushman who died in one of the many conflicts between Bushmen and colonialists over the centuries.

Scientists too have long sought to explain the rings. In 1978, assuming that over time the circles would shift position, researchers marked the centers of some with metal stakes. Twenty-two years later, the circles had not moved. There have been abundant theories on the origin of the circles, reports London's newspaper *The Daily Telegraph*, including "termite activity, poisoning from toxic indigenous plants, contamination from

radioactive minerals and even ostrich dust baths." Professor of botany Gretel van Rooyen of the University of Pretoria, South Africa, led a recent research effort to try to understand the circles. She reports: "One by one we tested the theories and one by one they were disproved."

Perhaps significantly, the researchers did find that grass withered when planted in soil taken from inside the circles. But it grew well in soil taken from the grassy rings, confirming that there is a difference between the soil in the two areas. Although initial soil testing failed to provide any explanation, Van Rooyen hopes that analysis using a mass spectrometer will turn up further information. She wonders if there are toxic elements in the soil of the circles. "But even if we find them," Van Rooyen says in *New Scientist*, "how they came to be there is the next problem." For now, then, the circles remain one of earth's many fascinating mysteries.

Courtesy of Austin Stevens



# Watching the World

## Chagas' Disease Spreading

Chagas' disease comes from a parasite transmitted through the feces of a blood-sucking insect commonly called the kissing bug. The disease is endemic in rural areas from Mexico to Argentina. *The Herald* of Mexico reports that an estimated one and a half to two million Mexicans are infected with the parasite. However, Chagas' disease is spreading to other parts of the world. One way is through blood transfusions. Mexican biologist Bert Kohlmann explains: "We've already got reports from Australia, Europe, the United States and Canada of infections through blood transfusions. Migrants from the Americas who are usually healthy give blood and nobody in those

other places even thinks about screening for Chagas." The World Health Organization estimates that in the Western Hemisphere, 16 to 18 million people are infected with the disease and 100 million more are at risk. At present, there is no cure for Chagas', which is often fatal.

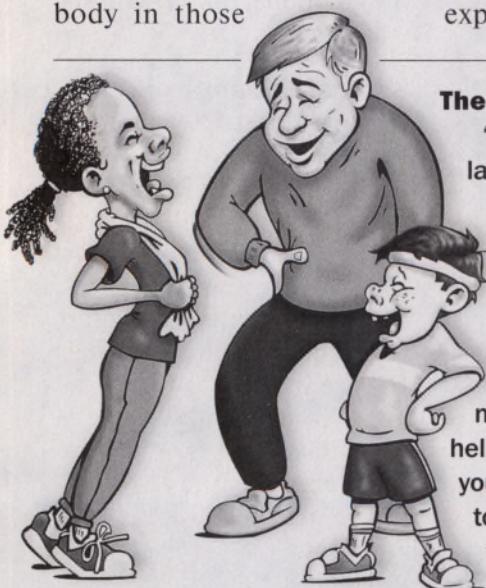
## Drumming Up Taxes

To encourage local residents to pay their \$1.15 million of unpaid property taxes, city officials in Rajahmundry, India, offered to waive penalties and interest, reports Reuters news service. When that approach failed, the officials hired 20 teams of drummers to play outside the homes of negligent taxpayers. The drummers "put up a spectacle outside the houses of defaulters, draw them out and explain their dues to them

and the need to clear it at the earliest," said municipal commissioner T.S.R. Anjaneyulu. "They don't stop until people agree to clear the dues." The unusual method got results. After the drummers played nonstop for just one week, the city recovered 18 percent of its property tax backlog.

## Religion in Russia

In the past, religious believers in Russia were thought to be mostly women, the elderly, and those with an incomplete secondary education. However, data now shows a rise in religious affiliation among youths, men, and those with higher education, reports the Russian newspaper *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*. Between 1989 and 1991, only 30 percent of the population identified themselves as Orthodox. But after 1999, that figure



## The Power of Laughter

"Scientists have calculated that only half a minute of joyful laughter is worth 45 minutes of static rest," reports the Polish weekly *Przyjaciółka*. "A spontaneous burst of laughter is comparable to three minutes of aerobic exercise, whereas ten warm smiles equal ten minutes of intensive rowing." Other benefits of laughing include a threefold increase in the amount of air drawn into the lungs as well as improved circulation, digestion, metabolism, brain function, and elimination of harmful substances. The magazine suggests that to help put yourself in the right mood, you should smile at yourself, your mate, and your children first thing in the morning. "Learn to laugh at yourself," it adds. "Try to find the good side of things even in difficult circumstances."

## Sunnier Afternoons—Quieter Nights

A recent study of the sleep patterns of 56 healthy babies, published in the *Journal of Sleep Research*, revealed that “babies who slept well at night were exposed to significantly more light in the early afternoon.” Exposure to light in the morning and evening, however, produced no difference in sleep quality. The author of the study, Dr. Yvonne Harrison of Britain’s Liverpool John Moores University—herself a mother—decided to study the effect of light on babies’ sleep because of earlier research showing that more exposure to daytime light improves sleep for the elderly.



reached more than 50 percent. Russian sociologists recently found that 30 percent of Russians believe in life after death, 24 percent in heaven and hell, and 28 percent in religious miracles. Nearly a third of those surveyed agreed with the statement “I believe that God exists and have no doubts about that.” At the same time, “30 percent of Russians believe in astrology, and 50 to 55 percent believe in prophetic dreams and omens,” says the report.

### Greek Church Tries Modern Greek

Concerned that many Greek churchgoers could not understand Bible passages read at church services in ancient Greek, the archbishop of Greece directed that Athens’ churches also use modern Greek. “The New Testament has been read in the original Hellenistic ‘Koine’ or common language, a version of Greek spoken from the late fourth century BC to fifth century AD,”

explained the newspaper *Kathimerini*. But the archbishop was “anxious that the young especially do not understand this form of Greek and cannot follow services,” stated the report. In a pilot program that *Kathimerini* called “a major step for a Church that clings to its traditions,” Bible passages were read first in Koine Greek and then in modern Greek. Less than a year later, however, the newspaper reported that the church “was abandoning” this effort that had been made “to make New Testament readings more accessible.”

### Friend-Finder Web Sites Fuel Divorce Rate

Internet sites that reunite old schoolmates are “fuelling a surge in marital break-up as bored husbands and wives contact old flames,” reports Britain’s *Guardian Weekly*. Commenting on how this practice affects Britain’s divorce rate, which reached a seven-year high in 2004, Christine Northam, spokes-

woman for the marriage guidance body Relate, said: “A lot of people have a rosy impression of the first relationship they had at school or college. If they are feeling unhappy with their partner, they begin wondering what it would have been like if they’d stayed with the old flame.” It is now easier than ever for unhappy spouses to “log on to the internet to scan for romance,” notes the paper, “instead of sorting out the emotional problems of the marriage.”

### Staircases Dangerous

Using the stairs “produces more nonfatal injuries each year than motor vehicle accidents,” states the U.S. magazine *The Week*. The report adds: “Every year, an estimated 1,091 American stair climbers are killed and 769,400 are injured.” What causes the missteps that result in falls? “Generally, people misjudge the distance and plant one of their feet wrong,” says *The Week*.

# From Our Readers

**Serving Where the Need Is Greater** The article "If People Only Knew!" (January 8, 2005) was exactly what I needed! In a society where youths are pressured to pursue material wealth, it is very easy to

lose focus on putting Jehovah first. Davey's success in serving where there was a greater need has motivated me to engage in a similar preaching assignment at the end of this year.

*C. G., United States*

I completely agree with Davey's words that "there is nothing better than to serve Jehovah with all we have."

What a pity that not all young people understand this! I don't regret my decision to devote the years of my youth to Jehovah's service, and I intend to maintain my zeal to the end as Davey did!

*A. P., Russia*

Whether we are young or old, Davey's zealous example forces each one of us to think about how we are using our life. I wish to express my appreciation to Davey's parents, who raised their son with love. Truly, they can be proud of him!

*L. C., Italy*

I am 17 years old, and at the moment I am learning a trade. I have my whole life ahead of me. Davey's example has given me further encouragement to give my best to Jehovah and to serve as a full-time evangelizer in the future. Like Davey, I have a strong desire to go where there is more need for Jehovah's servants. I know that it would be the best way for me to use my life.

*R. I., Finland*

Where I live it is common for young ones to pursue a career or just to spend their time on personal pleasures. I am convinced that Davey's example will inspire more young ones to think about the way they are using their life and the importance of fulfilling their dedication to Jehovah.

*J. O., Sweden*

This article made me review my spiritual goals. I had lost sight of them for a while. But Davey's experience made me reflect on what people might say about me if I died. It also showed me that I too should take a closer look at my ministry. Keep writing such beautiful articles.

*S. K., Germany*

Living in a materialistic society, we need strength to fight selfish cravings. I will not forget the fine example of Davey, and I will do whatever it takes to be there in the coming new world to thank him for teaching me the valuable lesson that "there is nothing better than to serve Jehovah with all we have."

*O. G., France*

I am ten years old. I know exactly how Davey felt because I pioneer with my parents in Taiwan. This article encouraged me. It's good to know that there are other young ones serving where the need is greater. I agree with Davey that there is no better feeling!

*J. R., Taiwan*

**Harp Seals** Thank you for the article "Snow Babies of the Magdalén Islands." (January 8, 2005) I had been depressed because of a lingering health problem. But seeing these cute creatures was heartwarming. Learning about them filled me with appreciation and left me in awe of Jehovah's creations. I felt as if I could reach out and touch them! I thank Jehovah that I have one more thing to look forward to in his righteous new world.

*Y. M., Japan*

# Giving Comfort *in the Midst of Tragedy*

*Some of the  
local Witnesses*



Dolores Gómez, one of Jehovah's Witnesses in a small town near Barcelona, Spain, was 44 years old when her doctor told her that she had a cerebral tumor. He said that she would not live much more than eight months. Her fellow Christians were generous in their expressions of love. In the final days before her death, her relatives, who are not Witnesses, arrived from various regions of Spain.

The local Witnesses cared for them, providing them with accommodations, meals, transportation, and other necessary support. The unwavering faith and dignity of Dolores right down to the end, along with the hospitality of the local Witnesses, touched the hearts of her family. The following letter expresses their feelings.

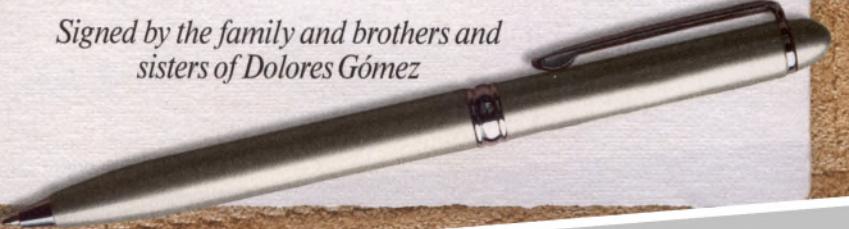
"This letter is directed to a group of men and women who preach not only by means of their expressions of love toward their fellow man but also by acts that express their noble feelings from the bottom of their hearts. We have been able to experience this in a unique chapter of our lives, the terminal illness of our sister Loli [Dolores].

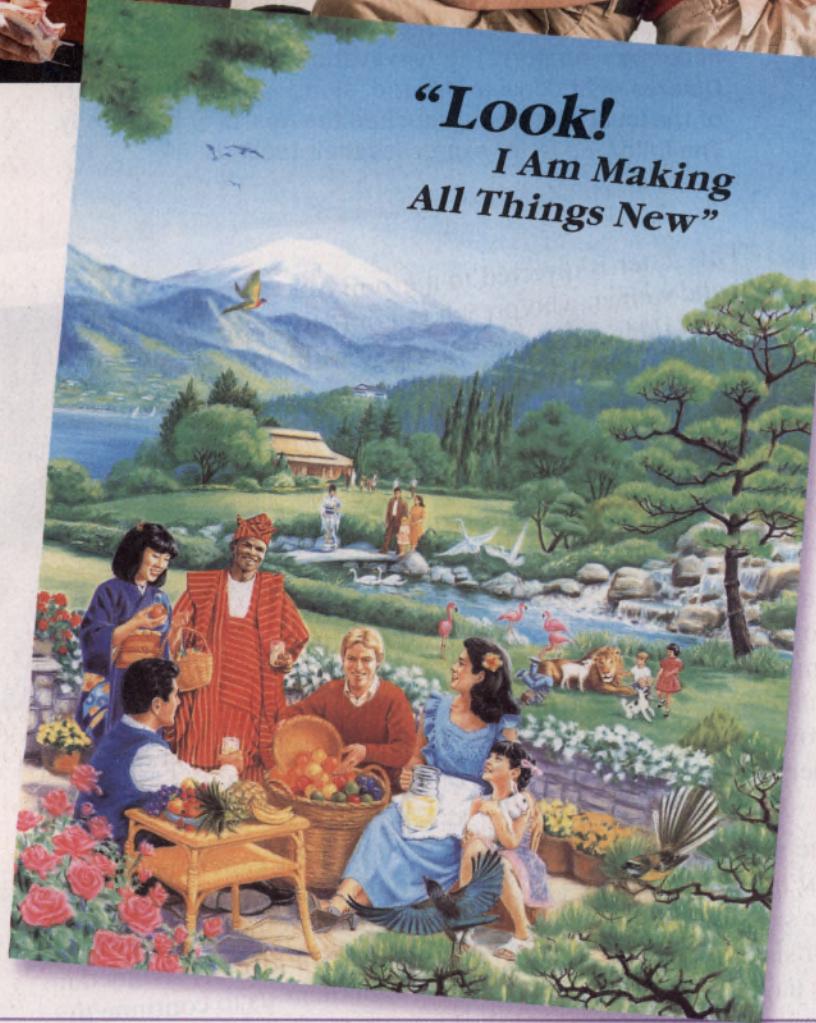
"Therefore, all of us (her relatives from distant parts of Spain) united in the pain of such a great loss want to express our most profound feelings of gratitude and affection for all of you who accompanied her in her joys and sorrows, in her triumphs and heartaches, until the final moment of her existence here on earth.

"Also, we want to let you know that we have experienced one of the greatest manifestations of love and solidarity. We return to our homes and to our families and obligations, but we will not be the same, having been marked by the force of love that reigned in our sister Loli and in you, and this strengthens us to continue living day by day.

"We say good-bye with a hearty embrace and a most profound feeling of gratitude. Until we meet again, friends, may Jehovah shower you with happiness."

*Signed by the family and brothers and  
sisters of Dolores Gómez*





## ***"Look! I Am Making All Things New"***

■ "Look! I am making all things new" is a promise from God that has been adopted as the title of an inspiring brochure. (Revelation 21:5) What does that promise mean for us? How will it be fulfilled, and when? You can find out by reading this colorful 32-page publication.