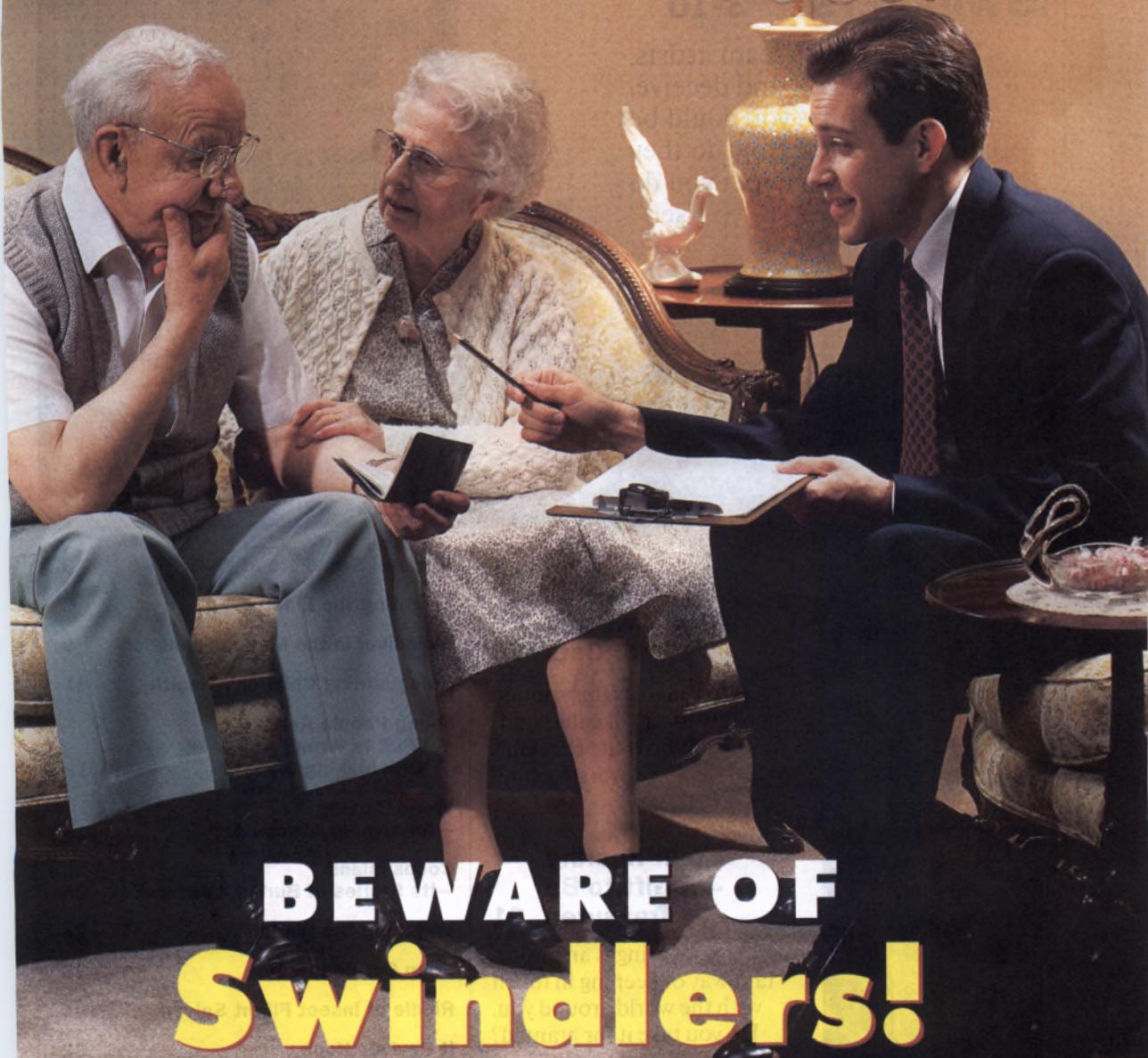


# Awake!

September 22, 1997



**BEWARE OF  
Swindlers!**

Average Printing 18,350,000

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## Beware of Swindlers! 3-10

They are clever scam artists,  
who exploit and deceive.

Be careful—you could be  
their next target! How do they  
operate? What can you do  
to protect yourself?



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What enables this spotted  
beauty to run like the wind?

Who is the cheetah's  
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Your hearing is an impor-  
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Do you take it for granted?

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# Beware! Swindlers at Work

**I**MAGINE the scene. A storm has passed. Destructive winds have ceased their terrible onslaught, and rushing waters no longer pose a threat. Wide-eyed survivors emerge from their shelters, while off in the distance, tense and fearful evacuees return to survey the storm's aftermath. Roofs are gone from homes; trees are uprooted and lie sprawled atop rain-soaked exposed interiors. Power lines are down, making emergency calls and messages impossible. Some homes, once havens for happy families, are gone—damaged beyond repair. What was once a quiet and serene community is now a scene of destruction and despair.

The community rises to the occasion—full of determination to rebuild. Neighbor helps neighbor; some heretofore had not even known one another by name. Men share tools and expertise. Women feed the working crew while older children babysit the young. From outside the community, caravans of crews with a willingness to help roll in—roofers, tree removers, carpenters, painters. With these, however, also come the swindlers, ready to exploit the survivors.

Huge down payments are demanded in advance of the repair work. Desperate homeowners hand over their money, only to find that the workers take off with it, never to be seen again. Roofers who "guarantee" their work repair open seams shabbily, and these leak profusely at the first rain. On the pretense of renting heavy equipment for tomorrow's work, tree removers bilk vic-

tims of thousands of dollars in advance. Tomorrow never comes.

Add to the destruction and loss the heartbreak of homeowners who paid handsome premiums to insolvent or bogus insurance companies that now refuse to pay for damages incurred or whose offices are abandoned, the owners having fled. Those fortunate enough to have an insurance check in hand to cover damages find that all too often unscrupulous and unqualified contractors are there to fill the void when the few qualified ones are unable to handle all the work. As a result, shabby work is performed, much to the grief of the already distraught homeowners.

Victims of disaster are exploited again and again. What starts out as a devastated community coming together for the common good of all, turns out to be for some a heartbreaking illusion.

Following a hurricane, in one community candy bars soared to an unbelievable \$4, and baby formula cost mothers \$6 a can. At one store batteries could not be obtained without the purchase of a TV or a radio. Building suppliers filled their tills to the brim by selling goods at highly inflated prices. In another case mobile-home owners who had their homes towed to higher ground during flooding experienced a 600-percent price hike. Following an earthquake, an 84-year-old woman whose home was damaged received a call from someone posing as a government worker. The woman thought that the documents she later

signed were applications for government assistance and food stamps. In fact, they were for an \$18,000 mortgage on her home to finance what proved to be only about \$5,000 worth of repair work.

### Telemarketing Fraud

'Congratulations, Mrs. S—! This is your lucky day.' These may be the opening words in a surprise telephone call. 'You are our grand winner of...'. Many people have received such calls stating that they have "already won," that their prizes are "guaranteed." The winning "prize" may be a new car, a home entertainment center, or perhaps a diamond ring.

Have you ever received such a call announcing that you were to be the recipient of a free gift? Did your heart race? Could you hardly believe your ears? If you responded to such a call, did you ever receive your prize? Or were you the victim of telemarketing fraud? If that has happened to you, you are not alone. According to *Consumers' Research* magazine, in the United States alone, bogus telemarketers defraud about ten people every minute. Each year unscrupulous



**Beware of the swindlers  
who come after a storm!**

con men swindle \$10 billion to \$40 billion from consumers, about \$7,500 every minute.

"Every year across Canada," reported *Reader's Digest*, "upwards of 150,000 people answer calls from fraudulent telemarketers who tell them they've 'won' or 'been selected' for a grand prize. And every year thousands of Canadians are taken in by these calls, spending an average of \$2,000 each in order to get their prize." An Ontario Provincial Police offi-

cial declared: "Telephone scams are one of the biggest frauds in Canadian history." He adds: "We know that it costs Canadians millions of dollars a year." The figures mainly represent what is reported to the police. However, since it is estimated that only 10 percent of victims report their loss, it is impossible to determine the full extent of the problem accurately.

"We tell people they've won so they stop thinking clearly," admitted one con artist. He added: "Then we pressure them into sending money, and we won't take no for an answer." Once a victim is taken in by the scam, his or her name may be sold to other

**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 that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things.

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telemarketing firms and placed on a "sucker" list. Their names may be sold to others who, in turn, will call them repeatedly. "When we're working from a sucker list," said a former Toronto telemarketing operator, "we get about 75 percent of the people to buy on the first call. That drops to about 50 percent by the third time we work the list. But once they're in, some people just go and go; they chase their money."

To what extent will those taken in by these bogus telemarketers go in chasing their dream of winning a fabulous prize? "We've had to work with banks to freeze some seniors' assets to keep them from being bled dry," said one police detective. One recently widowed woman was found to have sent 36 payments to 16 different telemarketers, totaling over \$85,000. In return, she had received "half a roomful of worthless trinkets."

### **Elaborate Scams for the Sophisticated**

Those who practice these scams, however, do not discriminate. Their victims come from all economic levels of society.

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**You've won a free prize!"  
—or have you?**

Even supposedly sophisticated professionals have been deceived. The deception orchestrated can be so insidious that even the most alert consumer may be victimized. Higher-priced scams targeted for sophisticated buyers may be advertised on television or in color brochures sent through the mail. They may include investments that promise high-yield returns—investments in motion picture studios, gold and gold mines, oil wells. The list seems endless. The results, however, are the same—a total loss.

"The extent of their deception is unbelievable," said a victimized educated woman. "As a schoolteacher, I thought I was an intelligent person. . . . The promises were endless." She lost \$20,000 in a motion picture company scam.

Telemarketing fraud is an international problem. Investigators predict that it "will worsen in this decade." But, beware! There are other kinds of swindling, and some scam artists have a favorite target—the elderly.

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# Targeting the Elderly

**M**AKE no mistake. Scam artists have done their homework. They know the facts that make the older population particularly attractive targets for swindling. In the United States, for example, people over 65 years of age make up only about 12 percent of the population. Yet, they have a combined personal income of over \$800 billion, accounting for nearly 70 percent of the net worth of U.S. families. Not surprisingly, such older ones make up about 30 percent of all fraud victims.

What makes the elderly vulnerable? "They tend to be naturally trusting and may not be knowledgeable about current investing," explains *Consumers' Research* magazine. One police official lamented that telemarketing fraud "feeds especially on the lonely and the vulnerable—old folks—who make up the bulk of the victims. These are people who grew up in an era when a man's handshake was as good as his word." A representative of the American Association of Retired Persons was quoted as saying: "A lot of times it's said that greed gets you in trouble. With older people, it's not greed. They have a fear of outliving their money. They don't want to be a burden on their children. Then they are afraid to report [the fraud] because they're afraid their children will think they can't take care of themselves."

Elderly victims of fraud are not always duped or misled. In some cases they are lonely, perhaps with a need to "buy" friendship. In one community some lonely wid-

ows were coaxed into paying \$20,000 in advance for a "lifetime's worth of dance lessons," wrote one newspaper reporter. "Some were too frail to walk. They weren't naive, just desperate." A dance club gives new enrollees a place to go to be with their newly acquired friends, often in their own age group. A flattering, sweet-talking, debonair salesman, who may also act as their dancing instructor, is difficult to resist.

## Meet Japan's Swindlers

Some swindlers take advantage of lonely elderly people in other ways. In Japan unprincipled con artists have pretended to be caring people, taking time to chat with their elderly victims, giving them a listening ear. Gradually they intensify their visits, and after gaining the full confidence of their target, they promote fraudulent sales. A typical example of such fraudulent schemes was a bogus gold scam in which about 30,000 people, including many pensioners, were reportedly swindled out of 200 billion yen (\$1.5 billion). "No Chance of Recovering Victims' Losses," headlined Japan's *Asahi Evening News*.

Tokyo's *Asahi Shimbun* reported on this case: A middle-aged saleswoman visited an elderly man, saying: "More than my work, I'm concerned about you, Mr. K., for you are living alone." She listened to his many stories, and he was taken in by her charm. As she was leaving, she asked for permission to return the next day. "By all means," was his reply.

Regular visits followed; they would have supper together, and she even brought food for Mr. K. "I will look after you until you die," she promised. Then came the pitch: "I'll manage your property for you. The company I work for just recently developed a very profitable way of making use of one's property." The scheme called for him to mortgage his home and property, buy gold bullion, and deposit it with her company. The trap had been set. Mr. K. became another victim in a long line of swindles. Once the transaction had been accomplished, the lady never returned.

"As a soldier," said Mr. K., "I lingered on the brink of death. But it is even harder to have been swindled out of my property by someone preying on the weaknesses of us old people who live alone with no relatives to rely on. It seems the world has come to an age when people want money, even by fraudulent means."

#### **Swindling the Elderly in Italy**

The book *L'Italia che truffa* (The Italy That Swindles) reported an elaborate scheme conjured up by swindlers in Italy to fleece the elderly of their precious savings. In 1993 a government led by the ex-governor of the Bank of Italy was formed. His signature, of course, appeared on bank notes (obviously still valid) that had been issued during the period of his governorship. After presenting themselves at the doors of elderly people, a number of swindlers, who identified themselves as officials of the Bank of Italy and who carried counterfeit ID cards to prove it, said to each of their victims: "You know that the governor of the Bank of Italy has become the president of the Cabi-



**Con artists may pretend to be caring people,  
in order to swindle the elderly**

net of Ministers; therefore, his signature that appears on bank notes is no longer valid. We have the responsibility of collecting all the old bank notes from the various families and replacing them with new ones signed by his successor . . . Here is a receipt. Go to your bank with this document the day after tomorrow, and you will receive the sum of money that you have handed over to us now." By means of this scheme, the swindlers collected 15 million lire (about \$9,000) in one day!

Some swindlers in Italy contact the incautious, including the elderly, along the streets. They ask the unwary to take part in a survey and give them sheets of paper to sign, saying that their signature is simply to confirm that they participated in the survey. In reality, they are signing a contract that obliges them to do or buy something.

Then, sometime later, the victim receives in the mail a package containing certain goods, perhaps with a warning clearly



## How to Avoid Being Swindled

NOT all telemarketing organizations are dishonest. In the United States, for example, there were 140,000 firms engaged in the telemarketing business in 1994, according to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). It is estimated that 10 percent, or 14,000, of them were fraudulent. It becomes necessary, therefore, to be alert when an offer is made that sounds too good to be true. Here are some tips to help you avoid being swindled by telemarketers.

- ◆ If someone calls to tell you that you have won a free prize, perhaps the best thing you can do is hang up the phone.
- ◆ If a telemarketer insists that you buy today or it will be too late, this is generally a tip-off that the offer is bogus.
- ◆ Guard your credit-card number. Do not give it out to strangers who call to solicit funds.
- ◆ Do not purchase anything over the phone unless you initiate the call and are dealing with a mail-order firm that you know to be reputable.

Homeowners need to be careful of home-repair scams. Here are a few cautions, as set forth by AARP Consumer Affairs:

- ◆ Do not hire a stranger until you have thoroughly checked his or her references; ask for names and telephone numbers of other customers who have used the service.
- ◆ Do not sign anything without carefully checking it, and be sure you understand and agree to all provisions in any contract or agreement.
- ◆ Never rely on someone to explain an agreement to you unless it is someone you know and trust. Read the fine print for yourself.
- ◆ Never pay for repairs in advance. Be sure that the work is completed to your satisfaction before you make the final payment.

Be alert. Use common sense. Do not hesitate to say no if you are not interested in buying. And remember: If an offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

visible on the wrapping that should the goods be refused, he will be penalized in some way. Some, particularly the elderly, become frightened, thinking that it would be better to pay a relatively small sum and keep the goods that are of little value than to face being dragged into court.

How widespread is swindling in Italy? According to *L'Italia che truffa*, the number of swindles that are reported amount to some

500,000 a year. At least three times as many swindles go unreported. One TV journalist commented: "The total is about two million traps of all kinds every year, or something like five to six thousand a day."

And so it goes. No age group (or racial, national, or ethnic group, for that matter) is overlooked by those who would swindle people out of their money—and often their life's savings. Beware! It can happen to you.

# Swindling in the Name of Religion

If YOU are shocked and saddened by the swindles mentioned so far, you are not alone. But there are swindles of an even more reprehensible kind—in the name of religion. One of the most common is connected with the belief that the soul lives on after death and that the living can benefit the dead. Millions of sincere people the world over have been led to believe that by paying large sums of money, they can assist or appease their dead loved ones.

Today, in some countries, there is a new wrinkle to this age-old scam. Recently in Japan, for example, Buddhist priests and priestesses claiming to have spiritual powers were arrested on suspicion of having swindled parishioners out of hundreds of millions of yen. Those arrested had advertised healing and consultation services. Respondents included four housewives who were told that they were being haunted by the spirits of their deceased children. "The women were then asked to pay a total of 10 million yen [\$80,000, U.S.] for memorial services," reported the *Mainichi Daily News*. One 64-year-old woman handed over more than 6.65 million yen (about \$53,000). The woman had consulted the priests about the health of her child. "They allegedly told the woman that she would suffer misfortune unless she conducted a special service to commemorate the souls of her ancestors and to ward off spirits," stated *The Daily Yomiuri*.

Accurate knowledge of the Bible would have spared these unsuspecting people

from being swindled. It makes clear that the soul is not immortal. (Ezekiel 18:4) The dead "are conscious of nothing at all," says Ecclesiastes 9:5. So the dead cannot harm the living. Neither can the living benefit the dead.

## The Many Faces of Religious Swindling

Because of their own greed, some fall prey to religious scams. In Australia one couple who claim to have supernatural powers with the ability to bless money and make it grow were handed \$100,000 by a man who wanted his money to increase. He was told to put the money in a box and hand it over to them to be "sanctified." The couple took the box into the next room to bless it while he waited. When they returned, they gave him back the box, warning him that he must not open the box until the year 2000. And if he did? He was told that "the magic would be destroyed, and he would go blind, his hair would fall out, he would get cancer, and die of a stroke." After two weeks, however, the man became suspicious and opened the box. Surprise! It was full of shredded paper. He blames himself, the newspaper reporting the incident said, and oddly enough, "he has started going bald."

In Italy religious swindling has a novel twist: Some priests have been swindled by scam artists posing as devoted Catholics. The swindlers exploit the Catholic tradition of paying for requiem Masses for some deceased person. How do they do it? The Catholic magazine *Famiglia Cristiana* explains



**Millions of people believe that by paying money they can assist or appease their dead loved ones**

that the tricksters offer to pay in advance for a dozen requiem Masses with a phony check that is made out for a much higher amount than is asked. They deceive a gullible priest into giving them the difference in cash. The swindlers get the cash, and the priest gets a check that bounces!

In the United States, the elderly are often besieged on every side by religious cults that are looking for new recruits to fill their coffers with donations. "Nationwide, cults are obeying the cardinal rule of all confidence games: Follow the money," wrote *Modern Maturity* magazine. "In exchange, they are offering everything from health to political change to the kingdom of heaven." One cult deprogrammer was quoted as saying: "The elderly are a cult's bread and butter."

The financial stakes can be enormous. "I know a number of cases in which people have impoverished themselves," said one

New York lawyer who has handled many cult cases. "It runs the gamut from people who were solicited to make six-figure donations to those who have nothing but their Social Security checks to give." He added: "It's devastating—both to individuals and to their families."

So beware! Swindlers are at work. Home-repair scams, telemarketing fraud, and religious swindling are just a few examples of how they operate. It is impossible to specify all their techniques, for they are always coming up with new scams. But what has been presented herein will no doubt alert you to the need to be wary, and that is perhaps your best defense. (See the box on page 8, "How to Avoid Being Swindled.") The warning of an ancient Bible proverb is most appropriate: "Anyone inexperienced puts faith in every word, but the shrewd one considers his steps."—Proverbs 14:15.

# Safeguarding Children's Health

A RECENT report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *The Progress of Nations*, shows significant improvement in health conditions for children in many lands. Through the concerted efforts of governments and international organizations, mortality rates for children under five years of age have fallen in a number of countries. Nevertheless, *The Progress of Nations* also shows that each year millions more young lives could be spared by simple and inexpensive means, especially in developing countries. Parents in these lands and elsewhere may find the following recommendations in the report helpful.

**Breast-feeding.** "Breastfeeding is the best possible start towards good health and nutrition," advises the report. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "over 1 million infant lives a year could be saved if all babies were exclusively breastfed for about the first six months." Since hospitals and maternity units set a powerful example, UNICEF and WHO are promoting a "baby-friendly hospital initiative." Their objective is to motivate hospitals to give mothers of newborns support and proper advice regarding breast-feeding.

**Hygiene and clean water.** "The toll of disease could be drastically reduced by safe water, by using latrines, by washing hands before handling food, and by preparing and storing food safely," states the report. Though in many communities great effort is required to ob-

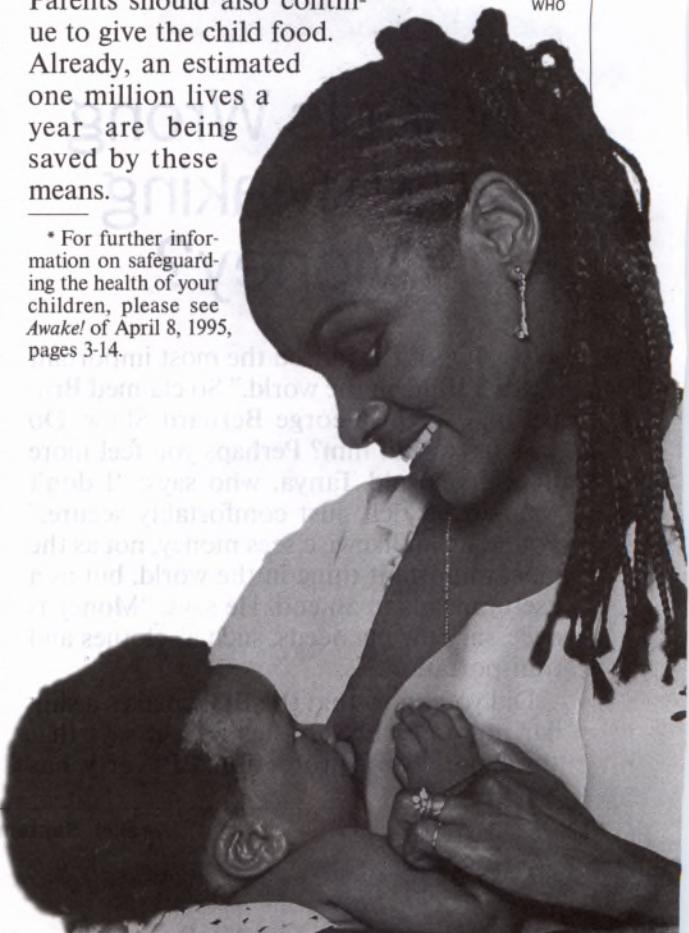
tain enough of it, clean water is indispensable to child and family health.

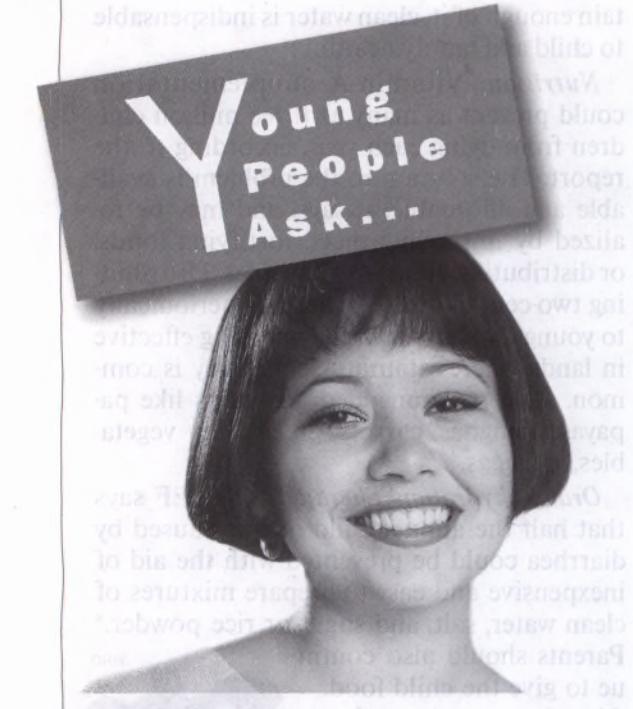
**Nutrition.** Vitamin-A supplementation could prevent as many as three million children from dying each year, according to the report. The solution to the problem is available and affordable, it says, and may be realized by improving diets, fortifying foods, or distributing vitamin-A capsules. Distributing two-cent vitamin-A capsules periodically to young children is already proving effective in lands where vitamin-A deficiency is common. Also recommended are foods like papayas, mangoes, carrots, green leafy vegetables, and eggs.

**Oral Rehydration Therapy.** UNICEF says that half the annual child deaths caused by diarrhea could be prevented with the aid of inexpensive and easy-to-prepare mixtures of clean water, salt, and sugar or rice powder.\* Parents should also continue to give the child food. Already, an estimated one million lives a year are being saved by these means.

\* For further information on safeguarding the health of your children, please see *Awake!* of April 8, 1995, pages 3-14.

WHO





Young  
People  
Ask...

## What Is Wrong With Making Money?

“**M**ONEY is indeed the most important thing in the world.” So claimed British playwright George Bernard Shaw. Do you agree with him? Perhaps you feel more like 17-year-old Tanya, who says: “I don’t want to be rich, just comfortably secure.” Young Avian likewise sees money, not as the most important thing in the world, but as a useful means to an end. He says: “Money is necessary for my needs, such as clothes and transportation.”

Did you know that the Bible makes a similar point? At Ecclesiastes 7:12, it says that “money is for a protection.” Poverty has

been described as “a great enemy to human happiness.” And having adequate money can protect you—at least to some extent—from the problems that poverty often brings. Money can also cushion you from unexpected disasters. “The Bible says that ‘time and unforeseen occurrence befall us all,’ ” says young Phyllis. “We never know when hardships may come upon us, so we need to have money saved up.” (Ecclesiastes 9:11) And while money may seem important to you now, it may play an even more important role in your future.

### The “Tidal Wave of Materialism”

But while *some* concern about having adequate money is normal and healthy, for some youths money has become nearly an obsession. When over 160,000 youths were asked, “What do you want most in life?,” 22 percent said, “To be rich.”

No doubt this craving for cash is fed by what *Newsweek* magazine called the “tidal wave of materialism” that has swept the world. “I am a very materialistic person and very label conscious,” says 18-year-old Martin. “I firmly believe you get what you pay for. Thus, I spend lots of money for the things I want.” Martin is not the only youth who ‘spends lots of money.’ Reports *U.S. News & World Report*: “Last year, 12-to-19-year-olds [in the United States] went on their biggest shopping spree ever, ringing up \$109 billion in purchases, a 38 percent increase over 1990.”

From where, though, do youths get the cash for all those new clothes, compact discs, and computer gadgets? According to *U.S. News & World Report*: “About half of all 16-to-19-year-olds have part-time jobs.” Kept in balance, an after-school job can have its benefits, such as teaching a youth responsibility. However, some youths clearly go overboard in this regard. Observes *Newsweek* magazine: “Psychologists and teachers see

the strain on [working] students. They have little time for homework, and teachers who regularly watch exhausted students struggling to keep their heads up all too often respond by lowering standards."

Even so, few working youths are willing to give up their sources of income. "School's important," says young Vanessa, "but so's money. Homework doesn't pay." How important is making money to you? Is making lots of it your main goal in life?

#### **"Determined to Be Rich"**

The Bible deals with these very questions. The apostle Paul wrote: "Those who are determined to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many senseless and hurtful desires, which plunge men into destruction and ruin. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things, and by reaching out for this love some have been led astray from the faith and have stabbed themselves all over with many pains."—1 Timothy 6:9, 10.

Paul certainly knew what he was talking about. Before becoming a Christian, he had been one of the religious leaders known as "the Pharisees," whom the Bible describes as "money lovers." (Luke 16:14) Even so, the apostle did not condemn making money in itself. Rather, he gave warning to those who are "determined to be rich" or, as another translation puts it, to people who "set their hearts on being wealthy." (Phillips) But what is so bad about doing that?



**Many youths want money so they can keep up with their peers**

As Paul explained, such ones "fall into temptation and a snare." Proverbs 28:20 makes a similar point when it says: "He that is hastening to gain riches will not remain innocent." Thinking that they do not have enough, some youths have resorted to stealing.

True, most youths would not think of stealing. But some may engage in equally risky behavior. Reports *Christianity Today*: "Some experts believe problem gambling has become the fastest-growing teen addiction." In one U.S. locality, "almost 90 percent of teens had illegally purchased lottery tickets by their senior year in high school." Some youths resort to even more desperate measures. "Decent jobs are hard to get," says 16-year-old Matthew. "So I get most of my money trading and selling things. . . . Occasionally I [used to] deal [drugs]."

### 'Plunging Into Ruin'

True, having money may give one a sense of freedom. But as Paul explains, in the long run, pursuing money can actually make one a slave to "many senseless and hurtful desires, which plunge men into destruction and ruin." Yes, once the love of money sinks its teeth into you, covetousness, murderous jealousy, and other hurtful desires can dominate. (Compare Colossians 3:5.) An article in 'Teen' magazine observed that some teens can become so envious of the cars and clothes other youths possess "that they become overwhelmed." Such envy sometimes "deepens into self-disgust," adds the article, "and a teen is unable to think about anything except what [he or] she doesn't have."

Note, then, that not only can the desire for wealth cause one to "fall into temptation" but it can also cause one to 'plunge' into destruction and ruin.' Observes Bible commentator Albert Barnes: "The image is that of a wreck, where a ship and all that is in it, go down together. The destruction is complete. There is a total ruin of happiness, of virtue, of reputation, and of the soul."—Compare 1 Timothy 1:19.

Rightly, then, Paul says that the all-consuming "love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things." As a result of it, many have been "led astray from the faith and have stabbed themselves all over with many pains." Take, for example, a youth

we'll call Rory. At age 12 he began gambling. "It was a way to get money without doing anything," he recalls. Before long, he was hundreds of dollars in debt and neglecting friends, family, and schoolwork. "I tried to quit," he admits, but he repeatedly failed. He continued 'stabbing himself all over with many pains' until he sought help at age 19. Writer Douglas Kennedy is thus not exaggerating when, in his book *Chasing Mammon*, he calls the pursuit of money "a traumatizing experience."

### Finding a Balance

Solomon's advice is thus as relevant now as it was centuries ago: "Do not toil to gain riches. Cease from your own understanding. Have you caused your eyes to glance at it, when it is nothing? For without fail it makes wings for itself like those of an eagle and flies away toward the heavens." (Proverbs 23:4, 5) Material riches are temporary, so it is foolish to make the pursuit of wealth your chief aim in life. "I do not want to get entangled in purely materialistic goals," says a Christian youth named Maureen. "I just know," she says, "that my spirituality will be the price I pay if I get caught up in simply making money."

True, money is a necessity. And having an adequate income will allow you to care for your own needs—and possibly even assist others materially from time to time. (Ephesians 4:28) Learn to work hard so as to be able to earn money honestly. Also, learn how to save, budget, and spend your money intelligently. But never make money the most important thing in life. Try to have the balanced view expressed by the writer of Proverbs 30:8, who prayed: "Give me neither poverty nor riches." By keeping spiritual interests to the fore, you will be able to gain the best kind of riches. As Proverbs 10:22 says, "the blessing of Jehovah—that is what makes rich, and he adds no pain with it."

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

**A Trouble-Free Paradise  
—When?**

**Life Is Different Down Under**

**Secrets of Animal Slumber**

# CHEETAH

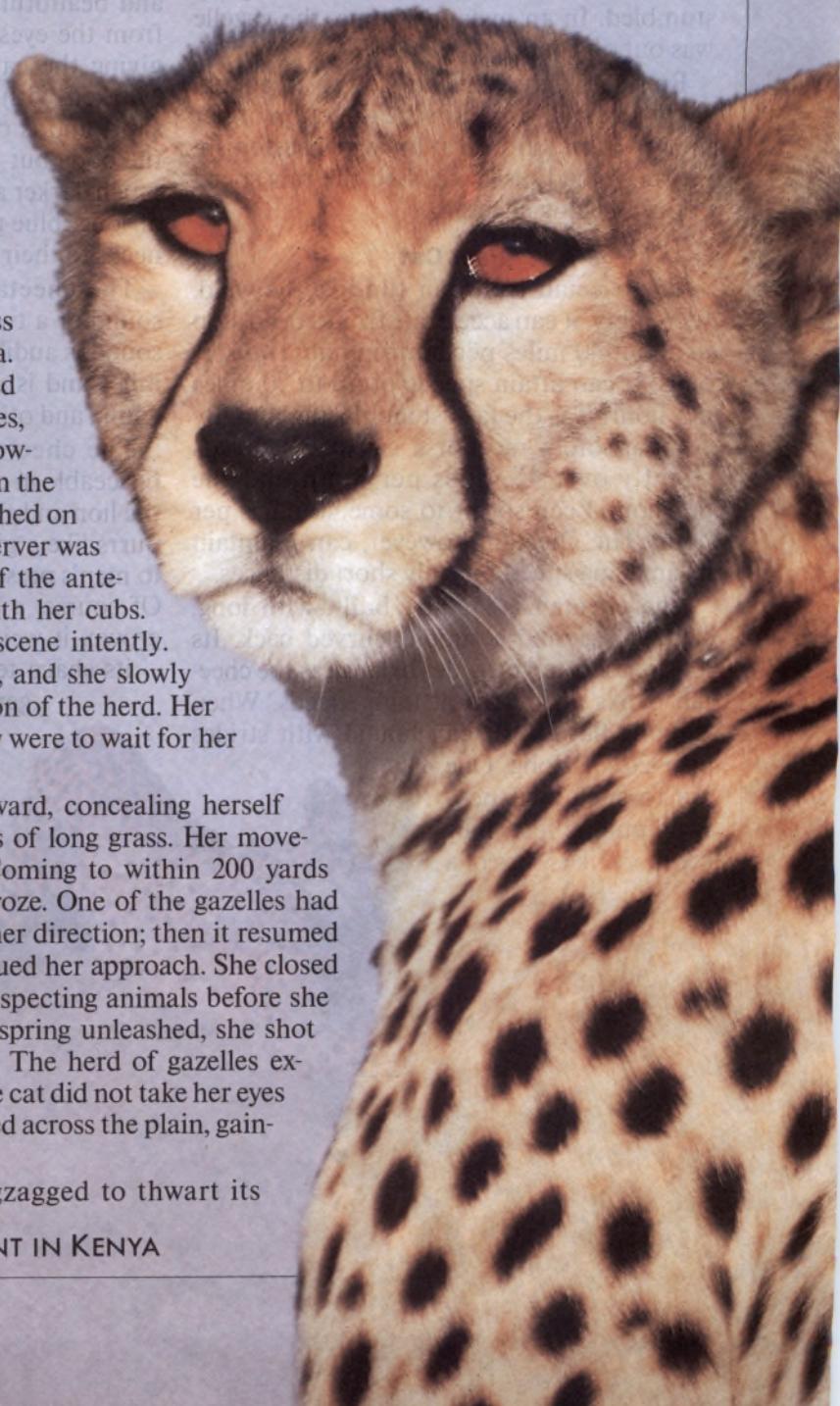
## The Swiftest of Cats

THE heat hung motionless over the sunbaked savanna. Our binoculars were fixed on a herd of Thomson's gazelles, their golden striped flanks glowing in the last rays of light from the setting sun. Not far away, perched on a termite mound, another observer was also gazing in the direction of the antelopes. It was a spotted cat with her cubs. Her amber eyes studied the scene intently. Suddenly, her muscles tensed, and she slowly rose and moved in the direction of the herd. Her cubs seemed to know that they were to wait for her return.

Cautiously, she moved forward, concealing herself behind small bushes and tufts of long grass. Her movements were fluid and sure. Coming to within 200 yards of her quarry, she suddenly froze. One of the gazelles had looked up and was staring in her direction; then it resumed eating. Once more, she continued her approach. She closed to within 50 yards of the unsuspecting animals before she decided to run. Like a coiled spring unleashed, she shot forward into the fading light. The herd of gazelles exploded in all directions, but the cat did not take her eyes off her chosen quarry. She raced across the plain, gaining on the fleet-footed gazelle.

The frightened animal zigzagged to thwart its

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN KENYA



pursuer, but its evasive maneuvers were no match for the lightning agility of the cat. Then, within a few feet of her prize, she reached out with a forepaw to trip her intended victim. At that moment, she slightly stumbled. In an instant of time, the gazelle was out of sight.

Breathless, the cheetah slowed to a stop, sat down, and looked in the direction of her hungry cubs. I looked at my wife in astonishment. We had just witnessed the raw speed of the amazing cheetah.

### Fast Cat

The cheetah truly can run like the wind. Incredibly, it can accelerate from a dead stop to about 40 miles per hour in only two seconds! It can attain speeds of up to 70 miles per hour! It is the fastest animal on land. By comparison, a racehorse can reach speeds slightly over 45 miles per hour, and the greyhound can sprint to some 40 miles per hour. The cheetah, however, can maintain its amazing speed for only short distances.

The cheetah is slightly built, with long, slender legs and a supple, curved back. Its long spotted tail provides balance as the cheetah banks and turns at high speeds. When running flat out, it can bound with strides over 20 feet long. One aid to such swiftness is its unique feet; they are more like those of a

dog than those of a cat. It uses its claws to grip the ground for increased traction.

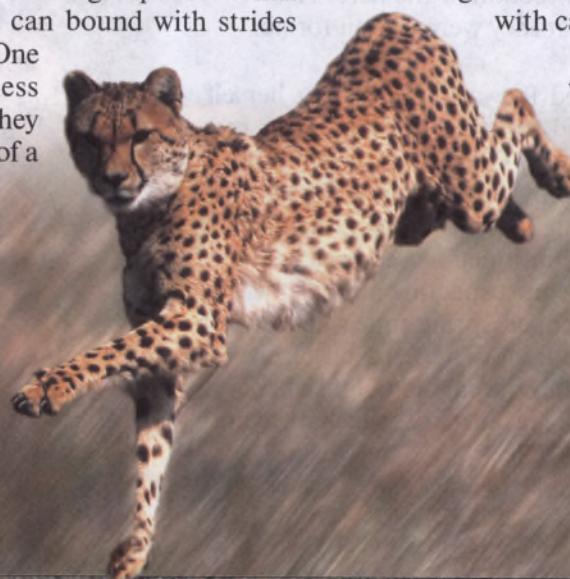
### Spotted Beauty

The face of the cheetah is clearly unique and beautiful. Two delicate black lines fall from the eyes to the corners of the mouth, giving the cat a sad, almost forlorn, look. Marked with small, solid spots, its fur is short and is often a light reddish-brown on the body but whitish on the belly. Cubs are much darker at birth and sport a thick mane of long, blue-gray hair that runs from their necks to their tails.

The cheetah calls out with a churring sound or a twittering chirp like a bird. This sound is audible for up to one and a quarter miles and is used to communicate with its young and other cheetahs.

The cheetah's disposition is mild and peaceable in comparison with its fellow cats the lion and the leopard. When contented, it purrs like a giant house cat. It adapts easily to man's presence and has even been tamed. Of course, a cheetah is no house cat. Full grown, it weighs 100 pounds or more, and its sharp teeth and claws make it a dangerous animal—one to be treated with caution.

The cheetah is not born with the ability to hunt and must be trained extensively by its



mother to do so. If a cub is raised in captivity, it will lack the ability to stalk and run down its prey. When a mother and cubs feed together, they do so peacefully, without the squabbling and fighting that is common among feeding lions. In dry areas cheetahs have even been known to dine on succulent melons.

Tourists in African game parks have been amazed at how unafraid these peaceful cats can be. It is not uncommon for a grown cheetah to seek the shade of a tourist van or to jump up on the car hood and gaze through the windshield at the surprised and often frightened passengers.

#### **Parental Cat-Care**

The female cheetah may give birth to a litter of up to six tiny cubs. She protects them courageously and keeps them well hidden, moving them often in the first few months of their lives. However, despite the efforts of cheetah mothers to protect their young, it seems that only about a third of the cubs survive to adulthood.

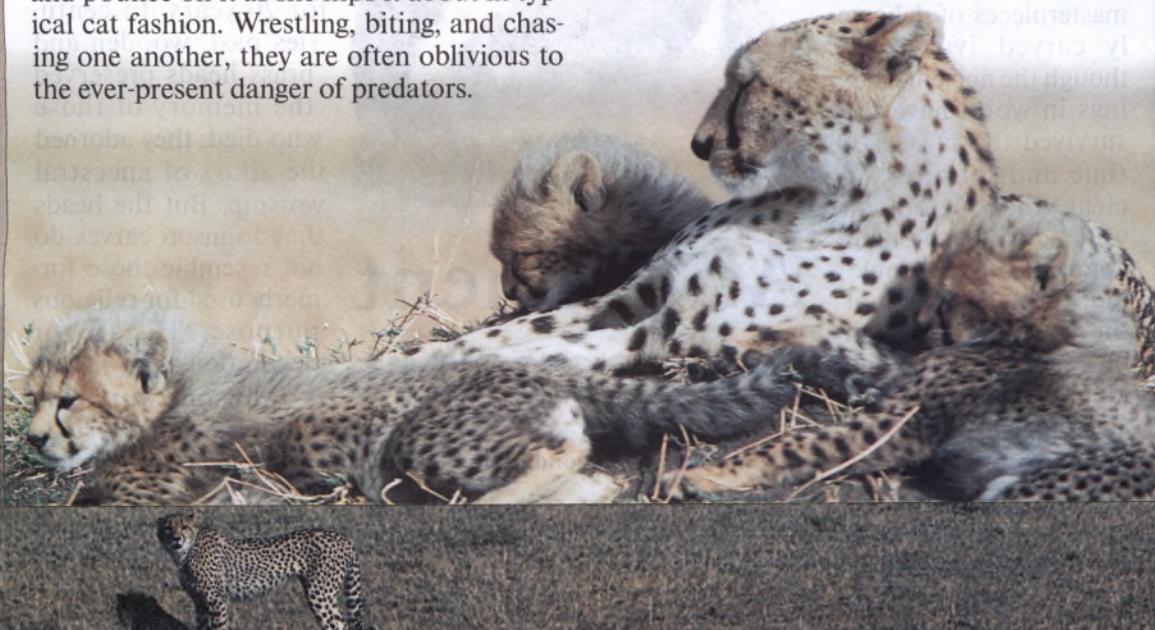
Caring for a family of cheetah cubs is no easy task for the mama cheetah. They are full of energy and are extremely playful. The cubs often stalk their resting mother's tail and pounce on it as she flips it about in typical cat fashion. Wrestling, biting, and chasing one another, they are often oblivious to the ever-present danger of predators.

#### **The Hunter Is Hunted**

The cheetah has many enemies in the wild, including lions, leopards, and hyenas. However, the cheetah's worst enemy is man. Its lovely spotted fur is highly prized for clothing, rugs, and trophies. This fleet-footed creature has been trapped and trained for sport hunting. Because of its refusal to breed in captivity, the cheetah has been pursued to the very ends of its domain to supply this demand. Loss of habitat has also put pressure on the cheetah, so that in East Africa it is now found mainly in game reserves.

In 1900 there were an estimated 100,000 cheetahs in 44 countries. Today there are perhaps only 12,000 that survive in 26 countries, mostly in Africa. Efforts are being made to protect this beautiful spotted cat, yet its numbers continue to dwindle.

Some feel that the cheetah may not be saved from extinction. However, it is reassuring to know that the time is coming when man will fully accept his God-given responsibility to care for, protect, and "have in subjection . . . every living creature that is moving upon the earth." (Genesis 1:28) Only then will there be a sure guarantee that such beautiful cats as the cheetah will delight the inhabitants of the earth forever.



WOOD-CARVERS have been busy for a long time in Benin City, located in what is now southern Nigeria. Four hundred years ago, Benin City was the capital of a powerful and highly organized forest kingdom. Visitors from Europe marveled at the city's broad, straight streets, its well-arranged houses, and its dignified and law-abiding people. For centuries Benin City thrived as one of western Africa's most important commercial and cultural centers.

The kingdom of Benin was ruled by a succession of kings called obas. The obas actively promoted art. Adorning their splendid palace in Benin City were sculpted heads, exquisite wall plaques cast in bronze, and masterpieces of delicately carved ivory. Although the ancient carvings in wood have not survived the ravages of time and termites, it is clear that wood-carvers were active in the kingdom. Martins Akanbiemu, former curator of the National Museum in Lagos, writes: "The guild of wood carvers... appears to be the oldest to work for the Oba."

# Wood Carving



## An Ancient African Art

By *Awake!* correspondent in Nigeria

In 1897, British forces sacked Benin City and carried off to Europe its now priceless art treasures—over 2,000 pieces. Today, the largest collections of ancient Beninese art are displayed, not in Nigeria, but in museums in London and Berlin.

### Wood Carving Today

Today Benin City is a bustling town much like many others in Nigeria. Yet, traces of its former glory remain. The palace has been rebuilt, and the present oba resides there. You can see evidence of the deep moat that surrounded the ancient city; and if you listen carefully, you can hear the gentle tick tick tick of chisel on wood.

A man named Johnson has been carving wooden sculptures in Benin City for 20 years. In centuries past, wooden and brass heads preserved the memory of those who died; they adorned the altars of ancestral worship. But the heads that Johnson carves do not resemble those formerly used for religious purposes. His are for decoration only.

Johnson works in ebony, a hard, brittle wood ideal for carving.



1

#### Making a carving:

1. choosing the best piece of wood,
2. outlining the head to be carved,
3. using a chisel, 4. sanding, 5. polishing

He uses mostly the heartwood, or inner wood, of the tree. Nigerian ebony heartwood is often jet black, though some trees produce heartwood that is streaked or is gray to black in color. He includes some sapwood, or outer wood, in the carving; this adds a pleasing red color, which complements the black. Both red and black ebonies polish to a beautiful luster.

Ebony is plentiful in Nigeria. When an ebony tree is felled, it is often left in the bush for a few months to season. Even after the ebony log arrives in his workshop, Johnson allows the wood to dry out several months longer before he uses it. This is essential, since wood that is not dry can change shape and crack.

When he is ready to carve, Johnson uses a handsaw to cut a piece about 15 inches long. After waiting another week to make sure that the piece does not crack, Johnson marks the wood with chalk to outline the head he wants to carve, and then he sets to work.



2



3



4



5



First he uses a flat chisel, then a curved chisel, and then a finer chisel. After that, he files with a rasp. The carver's knife is then used to etch in detail. As Johnson works, he concentrates intensely on the wood. Carelessness can result in a sculpture with a strange-looking smile or an eye looking in the wrong direction.

After the carving is done, Johnson's apprentices sand the piece with progressively finer grades of sandpaper. Finally, they apply furniture polish or shoe polish and buff it with a shoe brush to make it shine. It takes two days to carve a wooden head like the one in the pictures. It takes another three days to sand and polish it.

When the carving is finished, Johnson

puts it aside for a couple of months to make sure that no cracks appear. If the wood was thoroughly dry before the carving began, there will be no cracking. That is usually the case. If a crack does occur, the carving goes back to the workshop for filling, sanding, and repolishing.

### Learning the Carver's Art

Johnson has six apprentices, ranging from 10 to 18 years of age. They learn the carver's art backward, from the last job to the first. In this order the first thing the apprentice learns is polishing. Then he learns sanding. Later, he is shown how to use a rasp. Eventually, the day comes when he picks up a flat chisel to make the first cuts on a new block of wood.

"Not everyone can be a carver," says Johnson. "First, you need to have aptitude along with the ability to concentrate. You also have to learn how to be patient with your progress and how to cope with your failures. You need perseverance too, since it takes at least three years to be good at carving. But that is not the end of it—learning never ends. With practice, you improve all the time."

### The Ant and the Wood-Carver

Some say that African art owes a debt to the white ant, or termite. The wood-carver creates a sculpture, and the white ant (with some help from the tropical climate) destroys it, sometimes within a few days! Over the centuries the white ant has kept the wood-carver busy. It has been an endless yet constructive cycle: The ant destroys, and the carver begins afresh, with opportunities to improve his skill and develop imaginative new styles.

The book *African Kingdoms* states: "Mold and the diligent white ant substantially removed any chance for older works to fix their details upon the work of subsequent generations. Consequently, along with the

recurring need for new works, there was also a greater opportunity for variation in form; there was far less copying, and much more dependence upon individual skill and imagination."

Some say that this relationship between the ant and the wood-carver helps explain the artistic excellence that has made African art so famous. In his book *Nigerian Images*, scholar William Fagg observes: "Let us . . . pay tribute to the white ant, which, however unwelcome to man most of its activities may be, has engaged through the centuries and millennia in a continuous and immensely productive dialogue with the tropical woodcarver."

Courtesy of Dr. Richard Bagine



# Your Hearing A Gift to Be Treasured



A QUIET evening in the country, away from the noises of civilization, offers a chance to soak in the gentle sounds of the night. A light breeze faintly rustles the leaves. Insects, birds, and animals add their distant calls. What a wonderful sensation to hear such soft sounds! Can you hear them?

The potential of the human hearing system is simply astonishing. Spend half an hour in an anechoic chamber—an acoustically isolated room with surfaces designed to absorb all sound—and your hearing will have slowly ‘turned up the volume’ enough for you to begin to hear unfamiliar sounds originating within your own body. Acoustic scientist F. Alton Everest describes the experience in *The Master Handbook of Acoustics*. First, your own heartbeat becomes loudly audible. After about an hour in the room, you hear your blood coursing through its vessels. Finally, if you have keen hearing, “your patience is rewarded by a strange hissing sound between the ‘ker-bumps’ of the heart and the slushing of blood. What is it? It is the sound of air particles pounding against your eardrums,” explains Everest. “The eardrum motion resulting from this hissing sound is unbelievably small—only 1/100 of a millionth of a centimeter!” This is “the threshold of hearing,” the lower limit of your ability to detect sound. Greater sensitivity would be of no use to you because weaker sounds would be drowned out by the noise of air-particle movement.

Hearing is made possible through the co-operation of the outer, middle, and inner ear along with the processing and percep-

tive powers of our nervous system and brain. Sound travels through the air as waves of pressure variations. These waves move our eardrums back and forth, and this motion, in turn, is transferred by the middle ear to the inner ear. There the motion is converted to nerve impulses, which the brain interprets as sound.\*

## Your Important Outer Ear

The flexible, convoluted outer feature of your ear is called the *pinna*. The pinna collects sound, but it does far more than that. Have you ever wondered why your ear has all those little folds? Sound waves reflecting off the various surfaces of the pinna are subtly modified according to their angle of arrival. The brain is able to decode these minute variations and determine the position of the sound’s source. The brain does this in addition to comparing the time and intensity of a sound as it enters each of your ears.

To demonstrate this, snap your fingers as you move your hand up and down directly in front of a person who has his eyes closed. Although your fingers remain at the same distance from each of his ears, he will still be able to tell whether the sound comes from above, below, or anywhere in between. In fact, even a person with only one good ear can localize sounds quite well.

## Your Middle Ear—A Mechanical Marvel

The primary function of your middle ear is to transfer the movement of your eardrum to the fluid that fills your inner ear. That fluid is much heavier than air. Thus, as is true of

\* See *Awake!* of January 22, 1990, pages 18-21.

a bicycle rider going up a steep hill, a proper 'gear ratio' is required to convey the energy as efficiently as possible. In the middle ear, the energy is transferred by three tiny bones, commonly called the hammer, the anvil, and the stirrup because of their shape. This miniature mechanical linkage achieves a 'gear ratio' that is nearly perfect for the inner ear. It is calculated that without this, 97 percent of the sound energy would be lost!

There are two delicate muscles attached to the linkage in your middle ear. Within a hundredth of a second of your ear's exposure to a loud low-frequency sound, these muscles automatically tighten, greatly restricting the movement of the linkage and thus forestalling any possible damage. This reflex is quick enough to shield you from practically all the loud sounds that occur in nature, although not from all those produced by mechanical and electronic equipment. Moreover, the little muscles can only hold this protective posture for up to ten minutes. But this gives you an opportunity to flee from the offending sound. Interestingly, when you talk, your brain sends signals to these muscles to decrease your hearing sensitivity, so that your own voice is not too loud for you.

### Your Amazing Inner Ear

The part of your inner ear involved in hearing is contained within the *cochlea*, named for its snail-shell shape. The casing protecting its delicate mechanism is your body's hardest bone. Within its labyrinth is found the *basilar membrane*, one of several tissues dividing the cochlea's length into channels. Along the basilar membrane lies the *organ of Corti*, which supports thousands of *hair cells*—nerve cells that have hairlike ends extending into the fluid that fills the cochlea.

When the movement of the bones of the middle ear vibrates the *oval window* of the cochlea, it sets up waves in the fluid. These waves move the membranes, just as ripples

on a pond move floating leaves up and down. The waves bend the basilar membrane in places corresponding to specific frequencies. Hair cells in those places then brush against the overlying tectorial membrane. This contact triggers the hair cells, and they, in turn, generate impulses and send them to your brain. The more intense the sound, the more hair cells are stimulated and the faster they are stimulated. Thus, the brain perceives a louder sound.

### Your Brain and Hearing

Your brain is the most important part of your hearing system. It has the awesome ability to transform the flood of data it receives in the form of nerve impulses into the mental perception of sound. This major role points up the special link between thought and hearing, a connection pursued in the field known as *psychoacoustics*. For example, your brain enables you to hear one conversation out of many in a crowded room. A microphone does not have this ability, so a tape recording made in the same room might be nearly unintelligible.

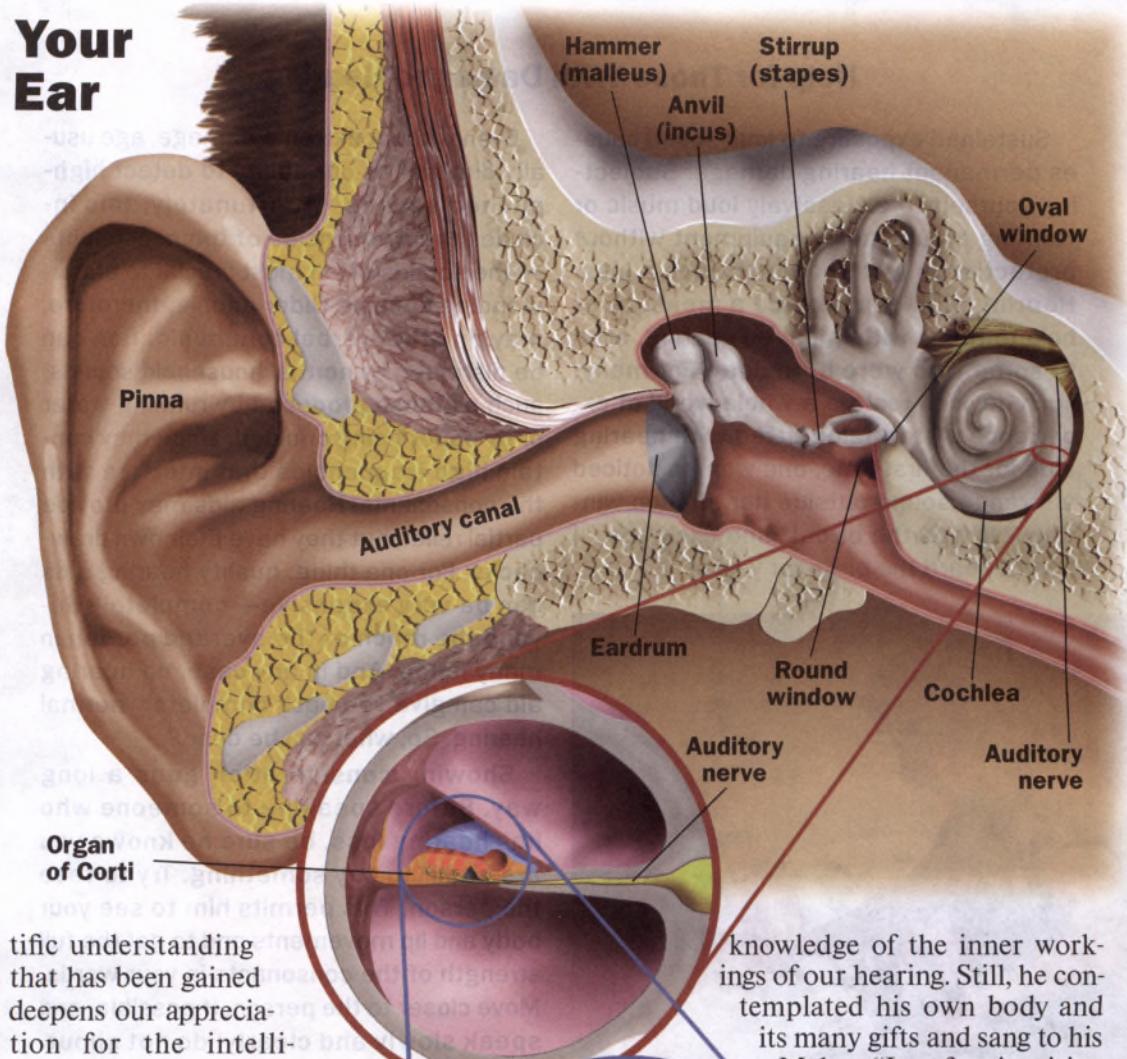
The irritation caused by unwanted noises demonstrates another aspect of this link. No matter how low the intensity of a sound may be, if you can hear it at all when you do not want to, it can be irritating. For example, the intensity of sound produced by a dripping faucet is very low. But you may find it extremely objectionable if, in the dead of night, it keeps you awake!

Indeed, our emotions are closely tied to our sense of hearing. Just think of the contagious effect of hearty laughter, or of the warmth engendered by a sincere word of affection or praise. Likewise, a great deal of what we learn intellectually is taken in through our ears.

### A Gift to Be Treasured

Many of the fascinating secrets of our hearing remain to be unlocked. But the sci-

# Your Ear



tific understanding that has been gained deepens our appreciation for the intelligence and love manifest in it. "In considering the human hearing system in any depth," writes acoustic researcher F. Alton Everest, "it is difficult to escape the conclusion that its intricate functions and structures indicate some beneficent hand in its design."

King David of ancient Israel lacked present-day scientific

knowledge of the inner workings of our hearing. Still, he contemplated his own body and its many gifts and sang to his Maker: "In a fear-inspiring way I am wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful." (Psalm 139:14) Scientific research into the marvels and mysteries of the body, including hearing, is adding to the evidence that David was right—we were wonderfully designed by a wise and loving Creator!

## Help for Those With Damaged Hearing

Sustained exposure to loud sound causes permanent hearing damage. Subjecting yourself to excessively loud music or working around noisy equipment without protection is just not worth such a loss. Hearing aids can provide a measure of help to those with impaired hearing, even to some who were born deaf. For many, such devices restore a whole world of experience. After being fitted with hearing aids for the first time, one woman noticed a strange sound outside her kitchen window. "It was the birds!" she exclaims. "I hadn't heard the birds for years!"

Even without extreme damage, age usually diminishes our ability to detect high-pitched sounds. Unfortunately, this includes the frequencies of the consonants—the sounds often most crucial to understanding speech. Older people, therefore, may find that verbal communication can be disrupted by normal household sounds, such as those produced by running water or by paper being crinkled, since they contain high frequencies that interfere with the consonants. Hearing aids may provide partial relief, but they have their own drawbacks. For one thing, quality hearing aids can be very expensive—completely beyond the reach of the average person in many lands. And in any case, no hearing aid can give you back completely normal hearing. So, what can be done?

Showing consideration goes a long way. Before speaking to someone who has hearing loss, be sure he knows you are about to say something. Try to face the person. This permits him to see your body and lip movements and to get the full strength of the consonants in your words. Move closer to the person, if possible, and speak slowly and clearly; do not shout. Loud sounds are actually painful to many hearing-impaired people. If a statement is not understood, try rephrasing rather than repeating it. Likewise, if your hearing is not what it used to be, you can make it easier for others to communicate with you by moving closer to the one speaking and by being patient. These extra efforts may well result in improved relationships and can help you to stay tuned in to your surroundings.



**When addressing a person with hearing loss, face him and speak slowly and clearly**



# Cocos Island

## ITS STORIES OF BURIED TREASURES

By *Awake!* correspondent in Costa Rica

HERE is an island about 300 miles off the southwest coast of Costa Rica that is known for its stories of buried treasure. It is believed by some that Robert Louis Stevenson based his famous book *Treasure Island* on tales of pirate treasure buried there.

Cartographers and mariners have called the island by different names since its discovery in the 16th century. Among Spanish-speaking natives, the island is today known as *Isla del Coco* (Isle of the Coconut). Its English name is Cocos Island.

Between Costa Rica and the Galápagos Islands, there is an undersea landmass known as the Cocos Ridge. Volcanic activity on this ridge gave birth to its only island.

This rugged speck of land is the only major island in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean that receives sufficient rainfall to support a tropical rain forest. Every year the island gets about 275 inches of rain!

The 18th-century English poet Coleridge described the plight of the ancient mariner who had "water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink." However, during the 17th and 18th centuries, the fresh waters of Cocos Island served as an ocean oasis for sailors who were able to find the island.

### A Legend of Hidden Treasure

In an era when international communication and commerce were dependent on ocean travel, armed robbery on the high



1



3

2



seas, or piracy, was a menace to society. Pirates posed a threat to one another as well.

After a small coastal town or a ship was pillaged, the stolen goods were divided among the crew. Thus, each pirate was faced with the dilemma of how to safeguard his share of the ill-gotten gains against theft by his comrades. The method of choice was hiding the treasure in a secret location with hopes of withdrawing it later. The treasure map, characterized by cryptic directions understood only by its maker, became the key to finding hidden treasure.

One of the legends of Cocos Island has it that successful raids of ships and cities along the Pacific Coast of Central Ameri-

***The white-tipped shark (1) and the hammerhead shark (2, 3) travel the waters around Cocos Island in schools of between 40 and 50***

ca left one pirate band overloaded with gold and jewels. Because the island had plenty of fresh water and a good supply of meat (pigs were introduced there at the end of the 18th century), the captain of the ship planned to use Cocos Island as his base of operations.

According to one version of the story, dividing the spoils took a whole day. Gold was measured out in potfuls. Driven by the fear of losing their wealth to their greedy comrades, all the pirates opted to bury their share of the treasure somewhere on the island. Using ropes to climb the cliffs that dominate the island's coastline, each pirate disappeared into the tropical forest. While some trusted their memory, others returned with maps that only they could decipher, which would lead them back to their treasure. However, all this exhausting effort was for naught. The legend continues that after having stashed their goods, the pirates sailed away in their galleon in search of greater gains. When they reached their next port, the captain, fearing mutiny, pulled anchor after sending the suspected rebels ashore. His hope that they would be identified as pirates and hanged was almost realized. What he failed to anticipate

was the ability of his two highest-ranking crew members to make a deal with authorities who wanted to capture the captain. The British Navy dispatched a ship in hot pursuit of the galleon, and this resulted in the capture and death of the captain and his crew.

Over the last century, this legend has fueled the hopes of treasure hunters. But, as illustrated by the following account, would-be treasure hunters should think twice before embarking on a digging expedition to Cocos Island. An article published in *The New York Times* of August 14, 1892, described the quest of Captain August Gisler to discover a treasure of gold, silver, and jewelry, valued at \$60,000,000. Gisler's treasure hunting involved cutting himself off from civilization and submitting himself to the severest of conditions on this deserted jungle island. He spent at least \$50,000 of his own money and more than 19 years searching for the treasure. In 1908, Gisler left Cocos Island, bankrupt and broken in spirit, with no treasure to show for all his efforts.

The fact that Gisler failed to discover treasure on the island has not discouraged everyone. There have been more than 500 organized expeditions to the island. According to available information, none have turned up the storied riches.

#### **Nature's Treasures on Cocos Island**

Recently, a different type of treasure hunter has been lured to Cocos Island. Ecotourists as well as naturalists and other scientists have been drawn by the flora and fauna of the island and the treasure trove of marine life in the surrounding waters.

The island is covered with lush tropical vegetation. Some 450 species of insects and arthropods have been identified, although it is estimated that there are over 800 species on the island. There are 28 rivers, which

twist around rugged terrain and spill over imposing cliffs as magnificent waterfalls.

One of the 97 species of birds on the island is the white tern. It has the amusing characteristic of hovering in the air just above people's heads, seemingly unafraid of human visitors to the island. This delightful tendency has given this bird the Spanish nickname *espíritu santo*, or holy spirit, referring to the Biblical account of Jesus' baptism.—See Matthew 3:16.

Deep below the waters surrounding Cocos Island is a world teeming with natural treasures. Among the ecotourists that visit the island are scuba divers, who marvel at the high concentration of hammerhead sharks. The hammerhead and the white-tipped shark frequent these waters and have been witnessed traveling in schools of between 40 and 50. Divers are also impressed by the remarkable clarity of the water. They are dazzled by the display of color as tropical fish graze on the algae and plankton.

The country of Costa Rica has traditionally held its biological treasures in high esteem. Currently, 18 percent of its land area is protected in a national park and reserve system. In 1978, Cocos Island was declared part of that park system, which now consists of 56 protected areas in the country. In 1991 the protected area was extended to include a 15-mile buffer around the island. Patrolling and protecting the marine environment from commercial fishing presents a challenge. Environmentalists fear that unrestricted fishing may damage the delicate ecosystems in the undersea world surrounding the island.

Down to the present, Cocos Island continues to be known for its stories of swash-buckling pirates and their buried treasure. It still intrigues and attracts treasure hunters from around the world. However, the greatest wealth of the island lies buried in its natural resources.

## WATCHING THE WORLD

### Electric Cars and the Environment

The German Automobile Company carried out a study to discover whether battery-driven cars are better for the environment than vehicles powered by a combustion engine. According to the newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the study involved 100 drivers who traveled 800,000 miles between 1992 and 1996. Electric cars were found to have several advantages, despite their shorter range: They ran quietly, causing no direct emissions where they were used. However, these advantages may be outweighed by one major problem. Recharging the batteries consumes more primary energy than is consumed by vehicles driven by fossil fuels—from 1.5 to 4 times as much, depending on use—and that energy must be generated somewhere. Depending upon how the energy is generated, it is possible that “damage to the environment is greater than that of conventional automobiles,” comments the newspaper.

### Caution: Colobus Crossing

Diani Forest, near the coast of southern Kenya, is one of the few places in East Africa where the colobus monkey still thrives. The problem facing the animals is how to cross the busy beach road safely. According to one estimate, at least 12 monkeys are killed by cars on the road each month, reports *Swara*, the magazine of the East African Wild Life Society. A group of concerned Diani residents decided to act to

reduce the carnage. Apart from urging drivers to be more careful, they recently built a rope bridge high above the road. Encouraged by sightings of monkeys using the bridge, residents are making plans to construct more bridges.

### Warning: Telephones Can Be Hazardous

If used while driving, that is. A study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* suggests that drivers using car phones are four times as likely to be involved in accidents



as drivers who are concentrating only on the road. This may make driving while using a phone about as dangerous as driving with a blood-alcohol level of 0.1 percent. And drivers with speakerphones did not do better than those who used their hands to hold the phone. The researchers are quick to point out that the phones themselves are not responsible for the accidents but that they are merely associated with them, such as when an argument ensues and a person is distracted. Besides, 39 percent of the drivers involved in accidents used their car phones afterward to call for help. It is suggested that those with car phones should avoid all unnecessary calls while driving and keep their conversations brief. Some countries, such as Brazil, Israel, and Switzerland, already have laws that restrict drivers from using cellular phones.

### Tobacco's Strategy

“Ever wonder why the tobacco industry has not used its considerable political clout to get Congress to soften or remove the warning labels required on all cigarette advertisements and packages [in the United States]?” asks *The Christian Century*. “The answer is simple: that warning about the hazards of smoking protects the tobacco industry from legal action. If you start smoking at age 12 and end up dying of lung cancer at 45, and you decide you want to sue the company that hooked you, the industry has an easy comeback: ‘We warned you that smoking carried health risks.’” One of the latest marketing ploys is to encourage cigar smoking by getting glamorous screen personalities and models to endorse the product. Cigars, however, are more polluting than cigarettes and bring big health risks. “Cigar smoking does nothing for a woman except increase her risk of life-threatening illness, and rob her of the strength and stamina she needs to succeed in life,” says Dr. Neil Schachter, of New York City’s Mount Sinai Medical Center.

### Millennium Madness

“The 20th century, which began as the Century of Total War

and grew into the Atomic Era, seems to be ending as the Age of Entertainment," says *Newsweek* magazine. "Hotels around the globe are already fully booked" for celebrations on New Year's Eve 1999. However, a controversy has been raging over just where the millennium will dawn. "The trouble started in the nation of Kiribati," notes *U.S. News & World Report*. "The international date line used to cut right through the chain of islands: When it was Sunday in eastern Kiribati, it was Monday in western Kiribati." The nation solved the problem by stating that from January 1, 1995, onward, the date line would go around its easternmost island, Caroline. That would mean Kiribati would be the first landmass to see the start of a new day. However, other nations, such as Tonga and New Zealand, wanted "first" status. According to the Royal Greenwich Observatory, the question is moot. "Since the sun shines on the South Pole from the September equinox to the March equinox, the millennium dawns first on the bottom of the Earth," states the report. However, adds the Observatory, that will not be until January 1, 2001—not the year 2000.

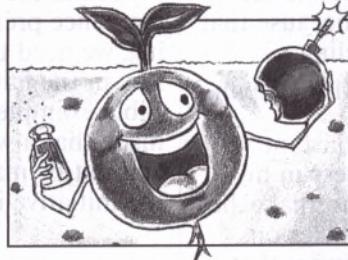
#### **Earthquakes Unpredictable**

Recently, an international group of earthquake experts met in London to discuss the scientific predictability of earthquakes. Their assessment? "For over 100 years many Earth scientists have thought that [large earthquakes] obviously must be preceded by observable and iden-

tifiable precursors that could be used as the basis for issuing alarms," writes Dr. Robert Geller, of Tokyo University, in the publication *Eos*. Instead, a fundamental shift in thinking is required as "it appears likely that the occurrence of individual earthquakes is inherently unpredictable." Although precise predictions may not be possible, scientists can estimate the likelihood and potential magnitude of earthquakes for areas having extensive seismic records. For example, a new map produced by the U.S. Geological Survey indicates where strong shaking may occur within the continental United States during the next 50 years. Based on this data, government agencies suggest that more than 70 percent of California's population live in areas that may be at risk.

#### **Plants Eat Explosives**

Sugar-beet plants and a type of pondweed have the ability to extract explosives from soil



and water in old munition sites and break them down safely, reports *New Scientist* magazine. Scientists at Rice University, in Houston, Texas, fed TNT to periwinkle and parrot feather, a common pondweed. Within a week no trace of explosive remained in their tis-

sues, and burning the plants did not produce an explosion. At the same time, researchers at the University of Maryland discovered that common sugar-beet cells and extracts can absorb and degrade nitroglycerin. Both groups of scientists sterilized the plants to prove that they received no help from microorganisms. "At present, it is usually too dangerous and expensive to reclaim old munitions sites in order to build on them, but that could change if cheaply grown plants were used to draw the explosives out of soil and water and break them down safely," says the article. There is an urgent need because "the existing practice of dumping munitions waste at sea is being phased out."

#### **Dangerous Dancing**

Some ballroom dancing has changed from a genteel art "to a fiercely competitive sport at which fortunes are made," reports *The Times* of London. High-speed collisions and high kicks that accidentally injure competing dancers are becoming a danger on the dance floor. Worse, some dangerous dancing is being purposely carried out with "cold-blooded deliberation," according to Harry Smith-Hampshire, a leading dance judge. Dance competitors are introducing "the manners of the football stadium and boxing ring," according to *The Times*. With the prospect of ballroom dancing soon gaining Olympic recognition, professional coaches and judges have drawn up an official "code of conduct" to regulate the sport.

## FROM OUR READERS

**Heart Attack** I am grateful to belong to an organization that, besides guiding us spiritually, cares about our physical well-being. The series "Heart Attack—What Can Be Done?" (December 8, 1996) showed us how to recognize the symptoms of heart attack. When my father-in-law showed these symptoms, we realized that his condition might be serious and took him to a hospital. He was having a heart attack; but after 24 days in the hospital, he is out of danger.

E. S., Brazil

My father died of an aortic aneurysm in 1995, so when I first saw this issue, I didn't have the courage to read it. I read it a month later, however, and the articles provided me with comfort, knowing that others have experienced the grief that heart disease can bring to a family.

S. J., Canada

Last July my husband collapsed while in the door-to-door preaching work and had to be rushed to a hospital. Happily, he pulled through. Your articles came out at the right time for us. It made us cry to see the section "Families Need Support," because that is exactly how we have been feeling.

M. A., Japan

Last Sunday I was feeling a constant pain in my left arm and numbness in my fingertips. I figured it was just normal aches and pains. When I read your articles on heart attack, I became acutely aware that I was suffering those symptoms! I went to a hospital emergency room, and the doctors found that one of the main arteries in my heart was blocked. They performed surgery the next day. It is very possible that if your articles had not been written, I wouldn't be here to write this thank-you note!

N. S., United States

I particularly appreciated the box "Symptoms of a Heart Attack." It made me realize that you take a keen interest in our problems and that you give us what we need to cope with them.

M. B., Senegal

Since my father had a heart attack, life in our home has changed dramatically. During these difficult moments, the articles proved to be of great comfort to us.

P. G., Italy

**Wifely Subjection** I really appreciated the article "The Bible's Viewpoint: Wifely Subjection—What Does It Mean?" (December 8, 1996) My husband is an unbeliever, and it is hard to be in subjection to him at times. I want to set the best example that I can so I can win him over. (1 Peter 3:1) Yet, I want to stand firm in my service to Jehovah. Your article encouraged me, and it made me happy to know that my God is watching over me.

M. S., United States

I found the article to be very enlightening. Since pressures from Satan are mounting, we need this kind of information to stay in the faith. I particularly enjoyed the Bible example of Abigail and the point made that a wife should show discernment and not be made to feel guilty for taking the initiative in certain situations.

D. M., United States

**Louis Pasteur** I am 12 years old and wanted to let you know that I appreciated the article "Louis Pasteur—What His Work Revealed." (December 8, 1996) We are studying about him in my science class. I used this article when preparing a report and received ten points of extra credit!

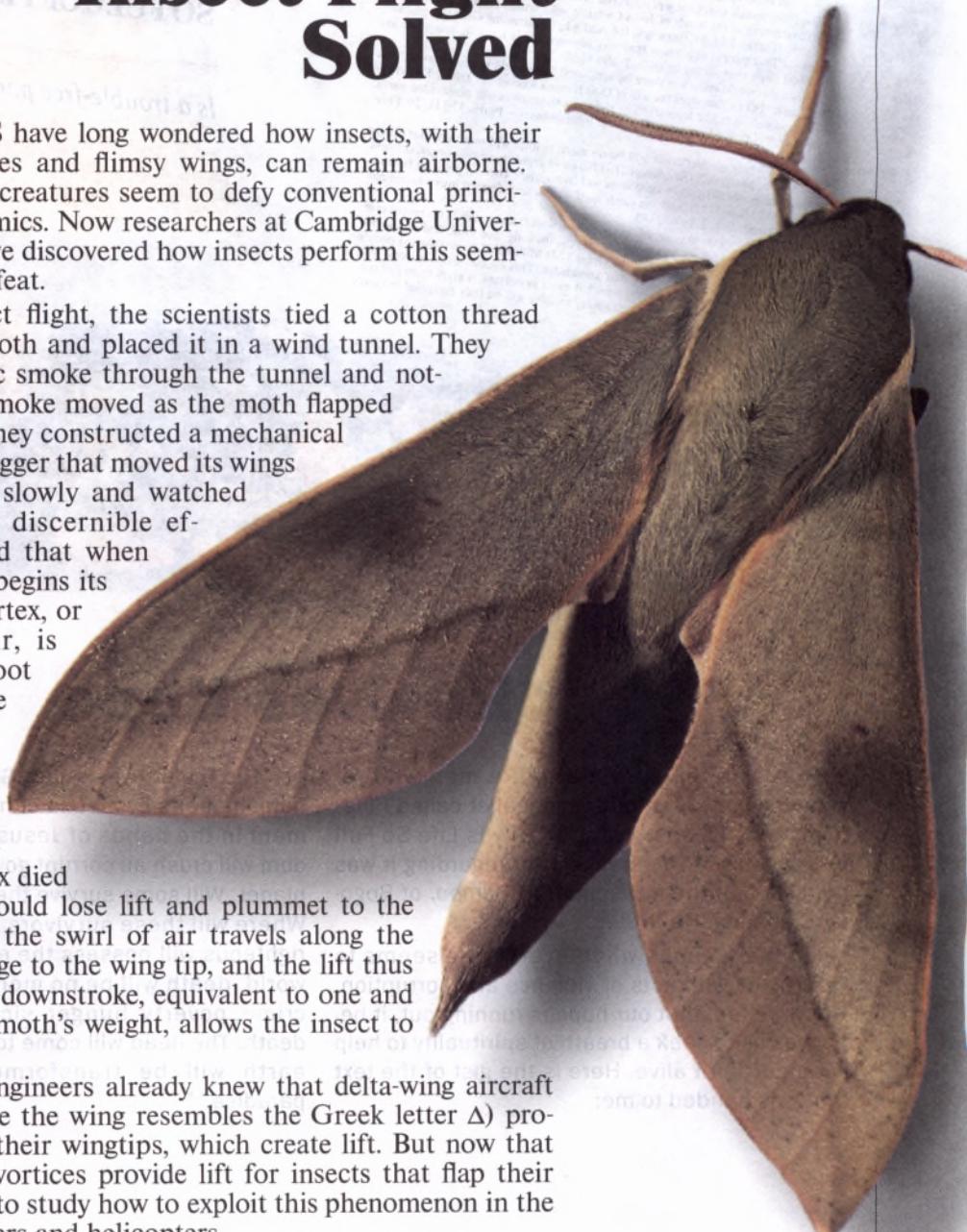
A. P., United States

# Riddle of Insect Flight Solved

**S**CIENTISTS have long wondered how insects, with their heavy bodies and flimsy wings, can remain airborne. These tiny creatures seem to defy conventional principles of aerodynamics. Now researchers at Cambridge University, England, have discovered how insects perform this seemingly impossible feat.

To study insect flight, the scientists tied a cotton thread around a hawkmoth and placed it in a wind tunnel. They pumped nontoxic smoke through the tunnel and noted the way the smoke moved as the moth flapped its wings. Next, they constructed a mechanical model 10 times bigger than the moth that moved its wings 100 times more slowly and watched the now readily discernible effects. They found that when the moth's wing begins its downstroke, a vortex, or whirlpool of air, is created at the root of the wing. The resultant low pressure above the wing produces lift, drawing the insect upward. If the vortex died out, the moth would lose lift and plummet to the ground. Instead, the swirl of air travels along the wing's leading edge to the wing tip, and the lift thus generated by the downstroke, equivalent to one and a half times the moth's weight, allows the insect to fly with ease.

Aeronautical engineers already knew that delta-wing aircraft (so-called because the wing resembles the Greek letter  $\Delta$ ) produce vortices at their wingtips, which create lift. But now that they know how vortices provide lift for insects that flap their wings, they want to study how to exploit this phenomenon in the design of propellers and helicopters.



## A TROUBLE-FREE PARADISE IS A CERTAINTY

If you could, wouldn't you solve all the problems that afflict mankind? Of course you would! Should we think that our loving Creator, who alone has the power and the wisdom to solve mankind's problems, will do any less?

The Bible reveals that God will intervene in human affairs by means of his heavenly government in the hands of Jesus Christ. It will "crush" corrupt governments on earth. (Daniel 2:44; Matthew 6:9, 10) And why? Addressing God, the psalmist answers: "That people may know that you, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth."—Psalm 83:18.

When this world ends, will there be survivors? "The world is passing away," the Bible says, "but he that does the will of God remains forever." (1 John 2:17) Where will these survivors live forever? "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it," the Bible answers.—Psalm 37:9-11, 29; Proverbs 2:21, 22.

In God's new world, "death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain anymore." (Revelation 21:4) No more crime, poverty, hunger, sickness, sorrow, or death! Why, even dead ones will live again! "There is going to be a resurrection." (Acts 24:15) And the earth itself will be transformed into a literal paradise.—Isaiah 35:1, 2; Luke 23:43.

What must we do to enjoy life in God's new world? Jesus said: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." (John 17:3) Millions of homesickhearted people all over the world are taking in that knowledge. This enables them to cope with many of their personal problems now, but more important, it gives them full confidence that problems beyond their ability to solve will be fully remedied in God's new world.



## It Revives Hope

That was the sentiment of a man who received a copy of a four-page leaflet called *Kingdom News*. It was entitled "Why Is Life So Full of Problems?" The man's letter regarding it was published in the newspaper *El Tiempo*, of Bogotá, Colombia. He wrote:

"In these times when everything seems to take place with acts of violence and corruption, when we feel that our hope is running out, it behooves us to seek a breath of spirituality to help keep our faith alive. Here is the gist of the text that was handed to me:

## WHY IS LIFE SO FULL OF PROBLEMS?

*Is a trouble-free paradise possible?*

"The Bible reveals that God will intervene in human affairs by means of his heavenly government in the hands of Jesus Christ. This Kingdom will crush all corrupt governments from the planet. Will some survive the end of this world? Where will these survivors live eternally? The righteous will possess the earth. In God's new world, death will be no more. There will be no crime, poverty, hunger, sickness, outcry, nor death. The dead will come to life again, and the earth will be transformed into a literal paradise."