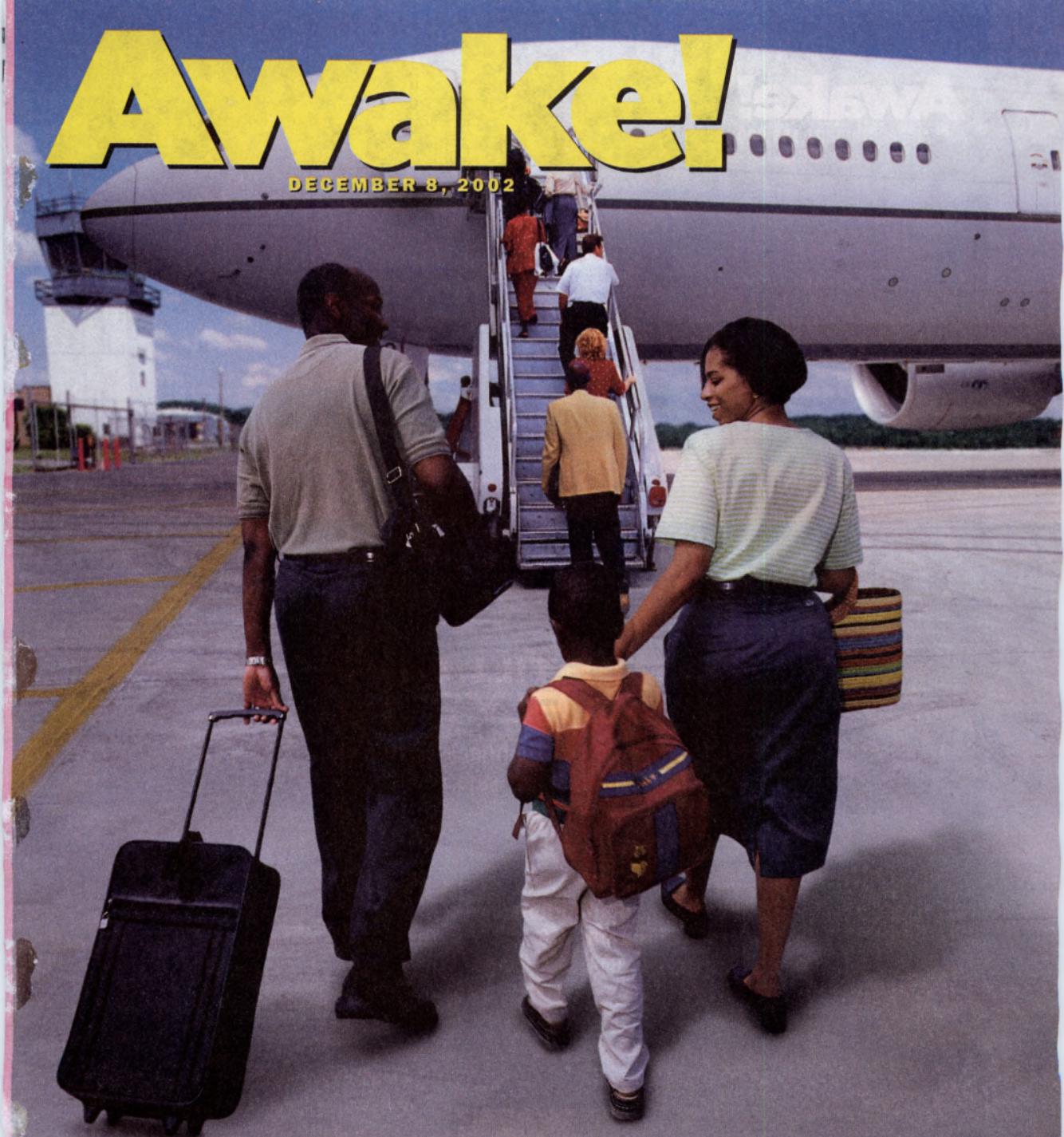


# Awake!

DECEMBER 8, 2002



IS IT STILL SAFE TO  
**FLY?**

# **Awake!**

AVERAGE PRINTING 21,153,000  
PUBLISHED IN 87 LANGUAGES



## **IS IT STILL SAFE TO FLY? 3-12**

Because of terrorist hijackings of planes,  
many wonder, 'How safe is flying now?'



### **What You Should Know About Christmas 16**

What does the Bible say about  
this observance?

### **From Deadly Mission to Peaceful Pursuit 18**

A Japanese pilot trained for a  
suicide mission tells his story.



- 3 Is Flying Still Safe?
- 4 The Quest for Safer Skies
- 9 Being Safety Conscious
- 13 Children's Sports  
—The New Epidemic of Violence
- 22 Crossword Puzzle
- 23 The Bagpipe—Traced to Antiquity
- 26 You Can Discover Design  
in Nature
- 28 Watching the World
- 30 From Our Readers
- 31 Her Solution to Noise Pollution
- 32 "Dreams of Paradise"

# IS FLYING STILL SAFE?

**F**OUR jetliners hijacked. Four crashes. The destruction of familiar landmarks. The image of a 767 jetliner smashing through one of the Twin Towers, shown over and over on television.

The attacks of September 11, 2001, brought us into a chilling new era of terrorist aggression. Airlines became the means to a deadly objective, and aircraft became incendiary devices.

As a result, a new pattern of fearful fliers has emerged: Those who used to feel safe but are now shaken by the possibility of terrorist attacks. Moreover, a series of nonterrorism-related fatal airline accidents after September 11 has accentuated the fear of flying for many.

Admittedly, air travel is a luxury beyond the reach of millions worldwide. For others, however, flying is a routine necessity. For those with jobs that require a great deal of business travel, stepping aboard a plane is unavoidable. Christian missionaries and ministers often have to take long flights to and from their assignments. Even for poor people, an aircraft is sometimes the only suitable means of transportation during a medical emergency. And thousands of pilots and flight crews make a living by flying.

Many of these air travelers, perhaps unnerved themselves, are having to calm anxious spouses and frightened children before



they leave home. And as departures that were once routine become ordeals, travelers wonder if flying is still a preferred way to travel.

To address such concerns, *Awake!* consulted with security experts, airport personnel, airline officials, and aircraft maintenance workers. They all seem to agree on this: Although flying has remained one of the safest means of travel, new threats call for new measures to increase the security of the traveling public.

The following articles will discuss the challenges involved and what you can do personally to increase your safety and comfort while flying.

# THE QUEST FOR SAFER SKIES

**J**UST a few weeks before 9/11, Alex felt that he was about to conquer his fear of flying. As the passenger plane he was on took off on a flight from Athens to Boston, the 42-year-old public-affairs manager began to experience a mild panic attack—his heart started palpitating and his palms and forehead became sweaty.

But he knew what he needed to do. The therapist who was trying to help him overcome his fear of flying had told him to take deep breaths, visualize pleasant scenery, and keep a firm grip on the armrest, releasing four times a minute. When turbulence and the frightening sounds were about to defeat him, Alex imagined that he was by a serene lake. “I thought I was making substantial progress,” Alex stated.

Millions of air passengers have had a fear of flying. In recent years

many have turned to fear-of-flying schools for help, often persuaded by family members, employers, and airlines, who all had motives for getting them in the air. For most passengers, the classes were a boon; many clinics boasted success rates of up to 90 percent.

But 9/11 changed all of that. Alex immediately quit the class he was attending. And to the disappointment of his employer, he also scrapped plans to fly to meet a prospective high-profile client. “My fear of flying com-



**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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bined with terrorist attacks," said Alex, "was beyond my ability to handle. Therapy did not prepare me for that."

### Security Under Scrutiny

Nervous air travelers also point out that the routine questions asked of boarding passengers were posed to the hijackers on 9/11, such as: "Has anyone unknown to you asked you to carry an item on this flight? Have any of the items you are traveling with been out of your control since the time you packed them?" The hijackers doubtless gave the answer most people give: "No!" Some security experts likewise see their successful boarding as evidence of lax air-travel safety. "No one or nothing could force a change," said Jim McKenna, former director of the Aviation Safety Alliance. "The combination of four aircraft hijacked and destroyed, with thousands killed, may be enough to force that change."

In the aftermath of those deadly crashes, the whole area of airport and aircraft security has come under intense scrutiny. At a congressional hearing, the inspector general of the U.S. Department of

### Facts on Flying

According to estimates, fear of flying is shared by as many as 1 in 5 air passengers. However, not all these people feel that flying is unsafe. Often, their anxieties stem from other phobias, such as fear of heights or of crowded spaces.



Transportation, Kenneth M. Mead, stated: "Despite existing and new security requirements there are still alarming lapses of security and some . . . vulnerabilities that need to be closed." What is being done to close those gaps?

### Screening Potential Security Threats

When a senior security officer with a major U.S. airline is asked if she is afraid to fly, she unhesitatingly answers: "No, I believe in CAPS." She is referring to a system called Computer Assisted Passenger Screening, which registers each ticket sold by its subscriber airlines. The system indicates whether a ticket was purchased from an airline ticket

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

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office or a travel agency or through the Internet. It records such other data as whether the passenger is flying alone or with family members or other companions, along with details such as any known criminal connections or instances of misconduct toward the airlines, their personnel, or their property.

Each time a passenger checks in at an airport, this information is verified and updated with the latest data, including the individual's response to the screening questions. Precise details of the data collected and of the processing and profiling methods used remain one of the industry's most closely guarded secrets. Various systems similar to CAPS are used around the world, some with direct links to other government and international policing agencies, such as Interpol. At many European airports, passport-control systems can record and track a passenger's flight history and movements from one country to another.

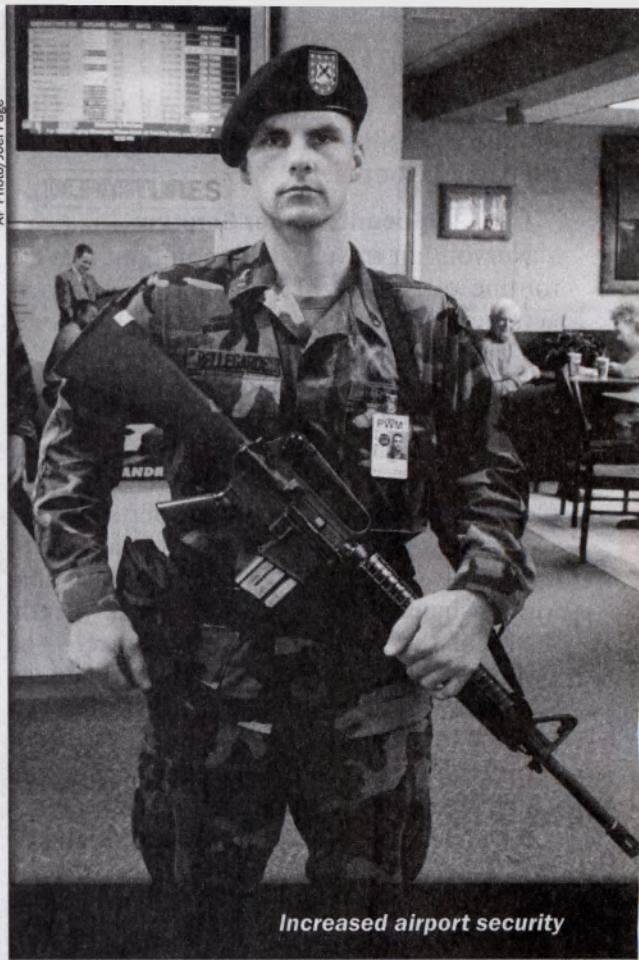
This profiling is done on the premise that evil-minded individuals are more of a potential security threat than items like carryons and checked bags. Thus, to enhance airport security further, various biometric devices and smart cards are options currently being considered or implemented.

Apart from passenger profiling, the quest to prevent hazardous items and substances from getting on board aircraft is another important concern involved in airport security. Screening done with X-ray machines has its limitations. Airport security personnel find it difficult to remain attentive for long periods of time because watching foggy X-ray images of luggage passing before their eyes can be a mind-numbing experience. At the same time, magnetometers continue to cry wolf again and again, detecting house keys, loose change, and belt buckles.

#### Tougher Legislation

To offset such limitations, governments have responded with legislation that tightens airport security. In the United States, this requires that baggage matching, complete in-

AP Photo/Joe Page



*Increased airport security*

specting of cabin items, and screening of all checked baggage for explosives be implemented by the end of 2002. Cockpit doors are in the process of being strengthened and secured. Additional crisis training is provided for airline personnel. Armed sky marshals have also been deployed on commercial flights.

In the weeks and months after 9/11, passengers were frisked and luggage was hand-inspected in many airports around the world. In some instances, a secondary manual screening of passengers and carry-on items was made. Precautions of this type are already familiar to European travelers, who saw them widely implemented during the 1970's, when hijackings reached a peak. Passengers are now banned from carrying any sharp instruments on board. Only ticketed travelers are allowed



Passenger profiling and screening



Improved maintenance

past security. Many have become accustomed to longer check-in lines and the presence of armed military personnel in airport terminals.

#### **Stress on Maintenance**

Picture this all-too-familiar scene: After having waded through numerous airport checks, the passenger eventually finds himself at the gate, waiting to hear the airline agent's call for boarding. "Did you hear?" says the passenger in the gray business suit next to him. "There's a mechanical delay." He rolls his eyes and adds: "I hope they don't send us off without an engine!"

What most passengers do not realize is that aviation agencies have rigorous and painstaking inspection systems. Repair needs are anticipated through careful monitoring of the plane's mechanical log book. Such agencies

require, in fact, that airplanes and their engines undergo strictly scheduled maintenance overhauls—far more frequently than the average automobile—even if the aircraft has an absolutely trouble-free record.

A maintenance officer at a major airline can testify to this. "In my nearly 15 years in this industry," he says, "I have never seen, talked to, or observed anyone who works on maintenance who did not take safety very seriously. After all, the employees' friends and families also fly on the aircraft that they work with, so they don't take foolish chances."

Personal responsibility weighs heavily upon aircraft technicians and maintenance workers. One of them recalls: "I'll never forget the night we lost a DC-10 in Sioux City, Iowa. I was working as an aircraft technician at the



Pilots are highly trained professionals

time, and I had the job of doing an inspection and service inside the tail assembly of the same type of aircraft. At this point, we had very little information about what had actually happened to the aircraft that was lost. I remember the intensity with which I went about my work that night, wondering, 'What happened to that aircraft? Did someone else possi-

bly miss something that I might be able to find now and thus avert such a tragedy again? Was I doing everything *exactly* the way I was supposed to?' I spent a long time up in the tail that evening, looking and thinking."

Aircraft technicians are constantly given training in all areas of their work, from routine tasks to very advanced inspection and troubleshooting skills. Crew training courses are updated yearly to cover every conceivable type of situation that could be encountered, from the mundane to the extraordinary.

After an airline tragedy, the data gathered is analyzed and entered into a simulator. Test pilots and aircraft engineers fly the simulator to see what other possible solutions they can come up with so that crews can handle similar problems better in the future. Then, a training program dealing with this is arranged for crews so that specific instruction can be given.

## HOW LIKELY IS A FATAL ACCIDENT?

	Chance in a year is 1 in:	Chance in a lifetime is 1 in:
<b>Motor vehicle</b>	6,212	81
<b>Homicide</b>	15,104	197
<b>Machinery</b>	265,000	3,500
<b>Airplane crash</b>	390,000	5,100
<b>Drowning in bathtub</b>	802,000	10,500
<b>Venomous animals, plants</b>	4.2 million	55,900
<b>Lightning</b>	4.3 million	56,000

Source: National Safety Council

Examinations like this also lead to aircraft and part-design changes, in the hope that such failures can prove instructive and can thus be minimized.

A maintenance worker concludes: "We are all told that 'safety does not happen by accident—it must be planned for.'"

#### **Back in the Air**

After a self-imposed, four-month no-fly moratorium, Alex decided that it was time to

deal with his phobia. The presence of police officers and national guardsmen at Boston's Logan International Airport did not seem to bother him. Long check-in lines and the hand-searching of his luggage did not upset him at all.

For Alex these were reassuring signs in his own quest for safer skies. There is still a little sweat and a little heart pounding. However, as Alex stows his hand-checked carryon in the overhead bin, he says: "I feel much better now."

## **BEING SAFETY CONSCIOUS**

**F**LYING 35,000 feet above the earth can be a scary experience for some. It may seem to violate the laws of nature. As the safety standards and the reliability of air travel

have reached new heights, the possible dangers of darting through the atmosphere inside a thin metal tube have become minimal. Once in a while, however, harsh reality reminds us that accidents can happen.

#### **Coping With Fear**

Despite that reality, since time immemorial, man has expressed a desire to fly. Ten centuries before Christ, King David wrote: "O that I had wings as a dove has! I would fly away." (Psalm 55:6) As has already been shown, modern technology has made flying one of the safest modes of transportation. No, it is not perfect. Nothing in this world is perfectly safe or fully predictable.

That is vital to remember if we find it difficult to react rationally when someone





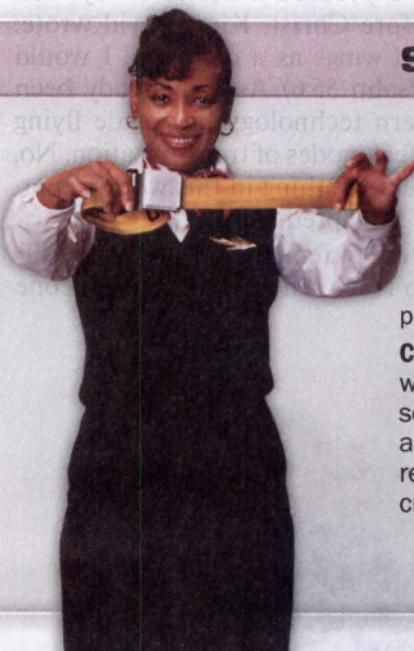
**Be willing to cooperate at security checkpoints**

else is in control. Some people may tend to think, 'The more I can take charge here, the less scary the situation.' If that is the case, such people may have a difficult time in situations where they have very little or no opportunity to exercise control. Air travel presents one of those situations.

Despite efforts to improve flight safety,

there is no room for complacency. All involved in air travel can cooperate in minimizing potential safety hazards. Still, authorities warn of ongoing threats. A wise Bible proverb says: "A prudent person foresees the danger ahead and takes precautions." (Proverbs 22:3, *New Living Translation*) It is wise to recognize that an element of risk will be involved

## SOME SAFETY TIPS



**Fly nonstop routes.** Most accidents occur during the takeoff, climb, descent, or landing phase of flight. Flying nonstop would reduce exposure to these most accident-prone phases of flight.

**Choose larger aircraft.** Aircraft with more than 30 passenger seats are generally designed and certified under stricter regulations than are smaller craft. Also, in the unlikely

event of a serious accident, larger aircraft provide a better opportunity for passenger survival.

**Pay attention to the preflight briefing.** Although the information seems repetitious, the locations of the closest emergency exits may be different depending on the aircraft and the seat you are in.

**Keep the overhead storage bin free of heavy articles.** Overhead

in practically any activity. To put things in perspective, remember that flying calls for the same precautionary common sense that you would use to protect your safety in other situations.

Frequent fliers may be better equipped to take care of themselves in these difficult times. This is because regular travelers are usually more familiar with airports and aircraft than are other passengers. You can achieve familiarity and calm similar to theirs by following the simple steps that are described in the accompanying boxes.

### Navigating With Ease

While security checkpoints provide a necessary service, some travelers—especially those in a hurry—tend to consider them a nuisance. Having in mind the increased security at most airports, you may want to implement the following suggestions for easier passage:

- Arrive early. By planning to have some extra airport time, you can slow down, relax, and avoid the stress that can come with the unexpected or the inconvenient.
- When choosing an airline, look for one that caters to business travelers. They know the ropes, carry little with them, and want to move fast.

■ Before you walk through the metal detector doorway, shed those items you think might set off the alarm. This includes keys, coins, jewelry, and cell phones. Hand them to an attendant as you prepare to step through the doorway.

■ Lay bags and other carryons as flat as possible on the conveyor belt; if the person behind the X-ray monitor sees a jumbled image, he may want you to unpack your bag or put it through again.

■ Alert the attendant to any unusual items that you anticipate will attract attention, such as that antique silver mandolin from your grandmother. Satisfied by a reasonable explanation for the strange shape on the monitor, the attendant is less likely to insist upon examining it. If you're really pressed for time, unpack the item ahead of time and ask for a hand inspection.

■ If the alarm goes off, be cooperative and provide an explanation immediately. If the attendant knows the alarm was caused by an isolated object and has a partner with a scanning wand, he will wave you on to him.

■ One sure way to miss your flight is to joke about a hijacking or a bomb. In addition to undergoing a rigorous search by airport

storage bins may not be able to hold very heavy objects during turbulence, so if you are carrying an article that you would have trouble lifting into the bin, check it in beforehand.

**Keep your seat belt fastened while you are seated.** Keeping the belt on when you are seated provides that extra protection you might need if the plane hits unexpected turbulence.

**Listen to the flight attendants.** The primary reason flight atten-

dants are on an aircraft is for safety, so if one of them asks you to do something, do it first and ask questions later.

**Do not carry any hazardous material.** There are rather long lists of hazardous materials that are not allowed, but common sense should tell you that you should not take gasoline, corrosive materials, poisonous gases, and other such items on the aircraft unless they are allowed by the airline and shipped in a proper container.

**Do not drink too much.** Any alcohol you consume will affect you more strongly in the air than at sea level. Moderation is a good policy at any altitude.

**Keep alert.** In the unlikely event that an emergency situation arises, such as a precautionary emergency evacuation, you should follow the directions of the flight attendants and flight crew and exit the aircraft as quickly as possible.

Source: AirSafe.com

security officials, you may be charged with an offense.

### Have a Safe Flight!

Is it possible to choose a safe flight? Well, yes. No matter what flight you choose, your chances of arriving unharmed are superb. If in doubt, research the safety record of the airline you plan to use. Keep in mind that despite air accidents, flying is still considered one of the safest ways to travel.

Meanwhile, we can all look forward to

a time—under God's rulership over the earth—of safety, security, and trust. Within a God-fearing, peaceful human family, there will be no place for any who put human life at risk. People "will be safe and secure without fear of disaster."—Proverbs 1:33, *Holy Bible—Contemporary English Version.*\*

\* For related articles see "Making Air Travel Safer," *Awake!*, September 22, 2000; "Have a Safe Flight!" *Awake!*, September 8, 2000; "What Does It Take to Keep Them Flying?" *Awake!*, September 8, 1999; "How Safe Are Planes?" *Awake!*, March 8, 1999; "Fear of Flying—Does It Keep You Grounded?" *Awake!*, September 22, 1988.

## REASSURING YOUR FAMILY

**If you travel, here is how you can help your family to deal with their concerns.** Taken from the United Behavioral Health Web site

**Talk with your family.** Before you leave on your trip, spend some time with your loved ones to discuss your safety as well as theirs. Explain the new safety measures that have been taken and what they mean for your safety while traveling.

### Allow them to express their concerns.

Let your family talk about their feelings of anxiety. They love you and only want you to be safe. Listen carefully and without judgment, acknowledging all of their fears and concerns seriously.

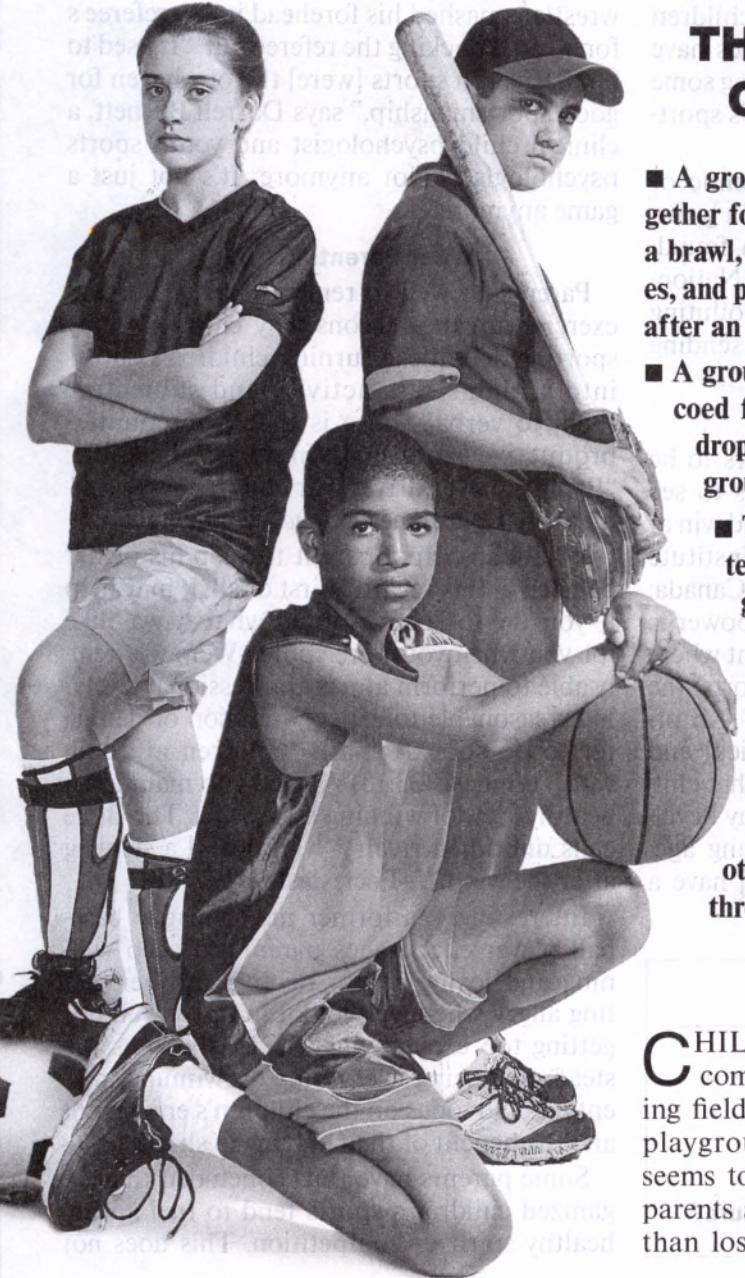
**Give honest reassurance.** Talk about how various agencies are trying to prevent further terrorist attacks. These efforts include heightened security measures at airports as well as on board planes. The likelihood of something bad happening while you are on a plane is quite small.

**Stay in touch.** Promise to call when you arrive at your destination. Continue to call home regularly while you are away. It is also important that your family knows how to contact you if emergencies arise.



# CHILDREN'S SPORTS

## THE NEW EPIDEMIC OF VIOLENCE



- A group of high school students come together for a football game. The game ends in a brawl, with more than 100 parents, coaches, and players shouting and throwing punches after an overtime touchdown wins the game.
- A group of preteens are playing a game of coed football. When a ten-year-old player drops a pass, his coach throws him to the ground, breaking both of his arms.
- The coach of a Little League baseball team pulls one of his players from the game. The boy's father threatens to kill the coach and is sentenced to 45 days in jail.
- During practice at a children's ice hockey game, two fathers get in a dispute over the enforcement of game rules. One father beats the other to death in front of the victim's three children.

**C**HILLING reports like these have become alarmingly commonplace. On playing fields, basketball courts, ice rinks, and playgrounds, a new epidemic of violence seems to be spreading. It is the violence of parents and coaches who would rather fight than lose. Says Jeffrey Leslie, president of



the Jupiter-Tequesta (Florida) Athletic Association: "I've seen parents screaming at their kids, pushing them too hard to perform; children fighting in games, incited by their parents; kids crying on the mound because their parents embarrassed . . . them." He adds: "There is nothing like youth sports to bring out the worst in parents." To protect children from such violence, some communities have had to take the drastic action of banning some parents from attending their children's sporting events.

What has resulted from this epidemic of rage? "These disgraceful behaviors of a growing number of adults," says Fred Engh, founder and president of the Florida-based National Alliance for Youth Sports, "are polluting youth sports, poisoning the fun, and sending ugly messages to millions of children."

### Win at Any Cost

At the root of this problem appears to be a desire on the part of some parents to see their children outdo other children and win at any cost. Says a representative of the Institute for the Prevention of Child Abuse, in Canada: "When winning is everything, when power is everything, this creates an environment where vulnerable people suffer. In these sports, the children are the vulnerable people." An official of the Ontario (Canada) Physical and Health Education Association notes that children subjected to such pressures "may develop psychological problems at a young age. And when they get older, they [may] have a hard time coping with failure."

## In Our Next Issue

- **Electronic Games  
—Is There a Dark Side?**
- **Faith Under Trial  
in Slovakia**
- **How Can I Deal With Peer Pressure?**

Not surprisingly, the rage of parents and overzealous coaches often filters down to the young athletes themselves. During one girls' volleyball game, players made seven attacks on the referees. A girl kicked out of a tennis match responded by vandalizing an official's car. After being called for a foul, a high-school wrestler smashed his forehead into a referee's forehead, knocking the referee out. "It used to be that youth sports [were] the one haven for good sportsmanship," says Darrell Burnett, a clinical child psychologist and youth sports psychologist. "Not anymore. It's not just a game anymore."

### What Parents Can Do

Parents do well to remember that fun and exercise are the reasons why children enjoy sporting activities. Turning children's sports into a high-stress activity and subjecting them to verbal abuse is therefore counterproductive—and unloving. Says the Bible: "Parents, never drive your children to resentment."—Ephesians 6:4, *The Jerusalem Bible*.

What can help a parent to keep his or her balance in this regard? First of all, it may help if you try to keep in mind what it was like for you when you were young. Were you really able to perform at near-professional levels? Is it reasonable to expect your son or daughter to do so? After all, "children are delicate." (Genesis 33:13) Also, try to maintain a healthy view of winning and losing. The Bible calls unbridled rivalry "vanity and a striving after the wind."—Ecclesiastes 4:4.

Interestingly, a former major league baseball player encourages parents to keep winning and losing in perspective, neither getting angry when a child doesn't play well nor getting too excited when he or she wins. Instead of hinging everything on winning, parents should focus on the children's enjoyment and the benefit of their staying in shape.

Some parents have thus concluded that organized children's sports tend to fuel an unhealthy spirit of competition. This does not

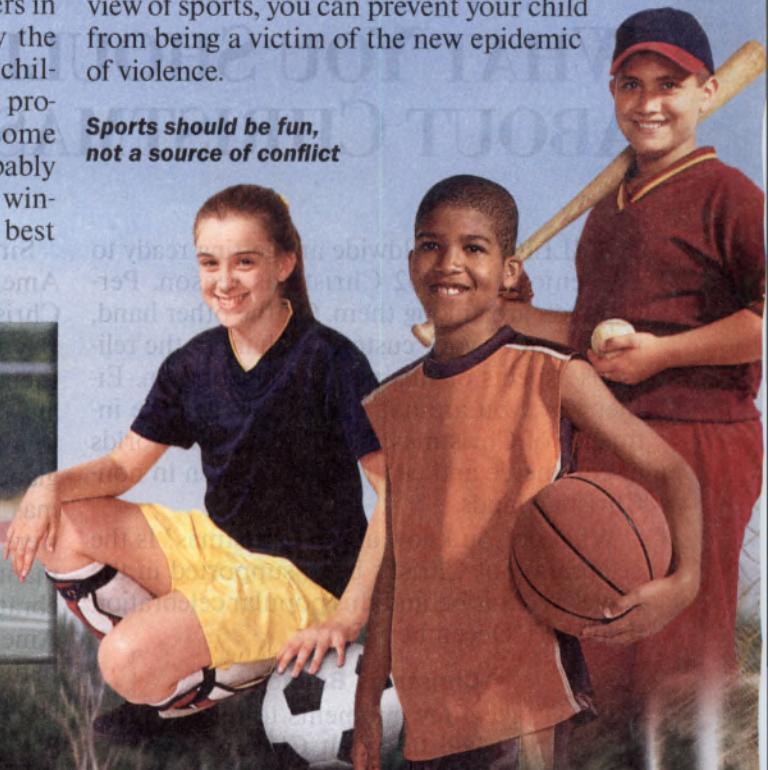


A collage of four photographs illustrating various sports and active play. The top left shows two men, one in a white shirt and tie, the other in a blue polo, interacting with a young boy in a red basketball jersey with the number 5. The top right is a close-up of three children (two boys and one girl) smiling; the girl is in a dark t-shirt and yellow shorts, holding a soccer ball. The bottom left shows a group of adults playing soccer on a grassy field. The bottom right shows a group of children playing soccer on a grassy field.

mean, however, that their children do not get to enjoy playing with others. Many Christian parents, for example, have found that their children enjoy playing with fellow believers in a backyard or at a local park. This way the parents have more control over their children's association. Family outings may provide further opportunities for wholesome play. Granted, a backyard game will probably not give the same thrill as being on a winning team. Never forget, though, that at best

"bodily training is beneficial [only] for a little; but godly devotion is beneficial for all things." (1 Timothy 4:8) By maintaining this balanced view of sports, you can prevent your child from being a victim of the new epidemic of violence.

***Sports should be fun,  
not a source of conflict***



# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CHRISTMAS

**M**ILLIONS worldwide are getting ready to enjoy the 2002 Christmas season. Perhaps you are among them. On the other hand, it may not be your custom to share in the religious aspects of this popular celebration. Either way, you are not likely to escape the influence of Christmas. It permeates the worlds of commerce and entertainment, even in non-Christian lands.

What do you know about Christmas? Is the celebration of Christ's birth supported in the Bible? What is behind this popular celebration held every December 25th?

### **Christmas Banned**

If you take a few moments to research this subject, you will find that Christmas has no roots in true Christianity. Many Bible scholars of various religious denominations acknowledge this. With that in mind, it should not surprise you that in England, Cromwell's Parliament decreed in 1647 that Christmas be a day of penance and then banned it outright in 1652. Parliament purposely met on December 25 every year from 1644 to 1656. According to historian Penne L. Restad, "ministers who preached on the Nativity risked imprisonment. Churchwardens faced fines for decorating their churches. By law, shops stayed open on Christmas as if it were any regular business day." Why such drastic measures? Puritan reformers believed that the church should not create traditions that did not exist in the Scriptures. They actively preached and distributed literature denouncing Christmas celebrations.

Similar attitudes were evident in North America. Between the years 1659 and 1681, Christmas was banned in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.\* According to the law enacted then, Christmas was not to be observed in any form or fashion. Violators were subject to a fine. Not only were Puritans in New England uncomfortable with celebrating Christmas but some groups in the middle colonies were also. Pennsylvania Quakers were as adamant as the Puritans in their view of the celebration. One source says that "shortly after Americans had won their independence, Elizabeth Drinker, a Quaker herself, divided Philadelphians into three categories. There were Quakers, who 'make no more account of it [Christmas] than another day,' those who were religious, and the rest who 'spend it in riot and dissipation.'"

Henry Ward Beecher, a renowned American preacher who was raised in an orthodox Calvinist household, knew little about Christmas until he was 30 years old. "To me Christmas was a foreign day," wrote Beecher in 1874.

The early Baptist and Congregationalist churches also found no Scriptural grounds for celebrating Christ's birth. One source notes that it was not until December 25, 1772, that the Baptist Church of Newport [Rhode Island] observed Christmas for the first time. This was approx-

\* Established in 1628 by English Puritans, Massachusetts Bay Colony was the largest and most successful early settlement in New England.

***England's Parliament banned Christmas in 1652***



## **"To me Christmas was a foreign day"**—HENRY WARD BEECHER, AMERICAN CLERGYMAN

imately 130 years after the founding of the first Baptist church in New England.

### **The Origin of Christmas**

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* acknowledges: "The date of Christ's birth is not known. The gospels indicate neither the day nor the month . . . According to the hypothesis suggested by H. Usener . . . and accepted by most scholars today, the birth of Christ was assigned the date of the winter solstice (December 25 in the Julian Calendar, January 6 in the Egyptian), because on this day, as the sun began its return to northern skies, the pagan devotees of Mithra celebrated the *dies natalis Solis Invicti* (birthday of the invincible sun). On Dec. 25, 274, Aurelian had proclaimed the sun-god principal patron of the empire and dedicated a temple to him in the Campus Martius. Christmas originated at a time when the cult of the sun was particularly strong at Rome."

M'Clintock and Strong's *Cyclopædia* says: "The



Musée du Louvre, Paris

**Pagan devotees of Mithras and the sun-god (shown in bas-relief) celebrated December 25**

observance of Christmas is not of divine appointment, nor is it of N[ew] T[estament] origin. The day of Christ's birth cannot be ascertained from the N[ew] T[estament], or, indeed, from any other source."

### **An "Empty Deception"**

In view of the above, should genuine Christians share in Christmas traditions? Is it pleasing to God to fuse his worship with the religious beliefs and practices of those who do not worship him? The apostle Paul warned at Colossians 2:8: "Look out: perhaps there may be someone who will carry you off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ."

The apostle also wrote: "Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers. For what fellowship do righteousness and lawlessness have? Or what sharing does light have with darkness? Further, what harmony is there between Christ and Belial [Satan]? Or what portion does a faithful person have with an unbeliever?"—2 Corinthians 6:14, 15, footnote.

In view of the irrefutable evidence at hand, Jehovah's Witnesses refrain from sharing in Christmas celebrations. In harmony with the Scriptures, they strive to practice "the form of worship that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God," by keeping themselves "without spot from the world." —James 1:27.



# FROM DEADLY MISSION TO PEACEFUL PURSUIT

*A former Japanese pilot who was trained for a kamikaze attack on an American naval vessel during World War II tells how he felt while awaiting the deadly mission.*

**W**ITH a crushing defeat at the Battle of Midway in June 1942, Japanese expansion in the Pacific came to a halt. From that time onward, Japan lost one battle after another against the United States and its allies as they began taking back the territories that Japan had conquered.

In September 1943 the Japanese government announced that university students who had been exempted from military service were

now being drafted. In December, at the age of 20, I joined the navy from the campus. A month later I became a naval aviation student. In December 1944, I trained to pilot a type of fighter called a Zero.

## Kamikaze Special Attack Corps

Japan was heading toward defeat. By February 1945, air raids on Japan by B-29 bombers had intensified. At the same time, U.S. naval task forces approached the mainland, making it the target of carrier-based bombers.

A few months before, the military leaders of Japan had decided to wage a final battle using suicide tactics. Although by that time it was evident that Japan could not win the war, that decision prolonged the conflict and no doubt cost thousands of additional casualties.

Thus, the Kamikaze Special Attack Force was born. It was named after the divine wind, *kamikaze*, a typhoon that according to tradition blew away the ships of Mongolian invaders in the 13th century. For the first kamikaze attack, five Zero fighter planes were each equipped with a 550-pound bomb for a suicide plunge into a target vessel.

A command to organize a special suicide squadron was given to the Yatabe Naval Flying Corps, to which I belonged. All of us received a form to fill out, indicating whether we would volunteer to be a member of the suicide attack corps.

I felt that I should sacrifice my life for my country. But even if I offered to give up

AS TOLD BY  
TOSHIAKI NIWA

my life by flying a suicide mission, I could be shot down before hitting the target, dying for nothing. Would my mother be pleased if I ended my life without fulfilling my family duties? I had a hard time convincing myself that volunteering for a suicide mission was the best way to use my life. Yet, I did volunteer.

In March 1945 the first group of the Yatabe Special Attack Corps was formed. Although 29 of my colleagues were selected, I was not. After receiving special training, they were scheduled to take off for the deadly mission from Kanoya air base in Kagoshima prefecture in April. Before their transfer to Kanoya, I visited my friends, hoping to find out their feelings as they faced the suicide mission.

"We shall die," one of them said calmly, "but don't you rush to die. If any of us survives, he should tell others about how precious peace is and work to attain it."

On April 14, 1945, my comrades took off. Hours later, all of us listened to a broadcast to hear what the results were. The announcer said: "The First Showa Unit of the Kamikaze Special Attack Force dived into an enemy task force on the sea, east of Kikai Shima. All died in battle."

#### **Ohka—A Human Bomb**

After two months, I was transferred to Konioke Naval Flying Corps as a member of its Jinrai Special Attack Squadron. *Jinrai* means "the divine thunder." The squadron consisted of land-based planes

#### **When I was in the naval air force**

(called Attackers), escorting fighters, and carrier-borne bombers.

From each "mother" plane—that is, the twin-engine Attacker—hung an *Ohka*, which means "cherry blossom." It symbolized the young pilots who were willing to sacrifice their lives. The *Ohka* was a single-seat glider with a wing span of 16.5 feet, weighing 970 pounds. It was equipped with about a one-ton explosive in its nose.

As the mother plane approached the target, a pilot boarded the *Ohka*, which was then detached from the mother aircraft. After gliding for a while with the aid of three rockets, each lasting for ten seconds, it plunged into the target. This could well be called a human bomb. Once launched, there was no return!

In practice drills an *Ohka* pilot would board a Zero fighter and dive toward the target from an altitude of about 20,000 feet. I saw several pilots lose their lives in these drills.

Before I was attached to the squadron, the first group had taken off. It consisted of 18

**"Ohka"—A human bomb**



© CORBIS





***With my comrades  
before the deadly mission. I am  
second from the left, the only survivor***

Attackers equipped with *Ohkas*, escorted by 19 fighters. The Attackers were heavy and slow. None of them reached their targets. All the Attackers and their escorts were shot down by U.S. fighters.

Having no escorting fighter planes left, the Jinrai Squadron had to fly its later missions without them. Those who took off afterward never returned. They all died, disappearing in the battleground of Okinawa.

#### **Final Days of the War**

In August 1945, I was transferred to the Otsu Naval Flying Corps. The base I was sent to was situated at the foot of Hiei-zan near the city of Kyoto. In anticipation of the landing of U.S. forces on the mainland of Japan, plans were made to launch *Ohkas* from the mountain to make suicide attacks on U.S. naval vessels. Rails for launching the craft were laid on the top of the mountain.

We waited for the order to take off. But that order never came. After Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed by atom bombs on August 6 and 9, Japan surrendered unconditionally to the United States and her allies on

August 15. The war finally ended. I had just barely survived.

By the end of August, I returned to my hometown of Yokohama, but my house had been reduced to ashes in air raids by B-29 bombers. My family was in the depths of despair. My sister and nephew had perished in the flames. Nevertheless, we found comfort in my younger brother's making it home safely.

Amid the ruins and serious food shortages, I returned to the university to complete my education. After studying for a year, I graduated and got a job. In 1953, I married Michiko and in time became the father of two sons.

#### **My Pursuit of Peace**

In 1974, Michiko started to study the Bible with one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Soon she began to attend their meetings and share in their preaching activity. I objected to her going out so often. She explained that the Christian ministry contributes to genuine peace and happiness. If that were the case, I thought, I should not oppose her. I should cooperate instead.

Just about that time, I recruited a few young Witnesses to work as night watchmen. When the young Witnesses came, I asked them about their organization and ministry. I was surprised to find that, unlike other youths their age, they were focused and had a volunteer spirit. They had learned those qualities from the Bible. The Witnesses around the world, they explained, had no racial discrimination and firmly complied with the Bible's command to love God and their neighbors. (Matthew 22:36-40) They viewed their companions as brothers and sisters, regardless of national boundaries.—John 13:35; 1 Peter 2:17.

'That's nothing but idealism,' I thought. Since the many denominations of Christendom were fighting each other, I could hardly believe that Jehovah's Witnesses were an exception.

I expressed my doubts to them. Using the *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, the young Witnesses showed me that the Witnesses in Germany had been imprisoned and even executed

for their neutral stand under the Hitler regime. I became convinced that Jehovah's Witnesses are true Christians.

In the meantime, my wife symbolized her dedication to God by water baptism in December 1975. I was offered a Bible study on that occasion. However, when I thought of the financial obligations I had, such as schooling expenses for my sons and mortgage payments on our house, I did not take a step forward. Married men in the congregation were adjusting their secular jobs in order to have more free time. I assumed that the same would be expected of me. But after being shown how the Christian life can be balanced with secular work, I finally decided to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses.

#### **Decision to Serve the God of Peace**

After two years of study, my Bible-study conductor asked me if I had given thought to dedicating my life to God. However, I would not take that step, and it bothered me.

One day I was hurrying down the stairs where I worked. I stumbled, fell down, hit the back of my head, and became unconscious. When I regained consciousness, I had a terrible headache and was taken to the hospital in an ambulance. Although the back of my head was badly swollen, there was no fracture or internal hemorrhage.

How thankful I was to Jehovah for the life I had! From that point on, I was determined to use it to do Jehovah's will, and I dedicated my life to him. In July 1977, I was baptized at the age of 53. My older son, Yasuyuki, also studied the Bible and was baptized about two years later.

Some ten years after my baptism, I retired from my work. During the intervening years, I pursued a Christian course, balancing it with my secular work. At present, I have the privilege of serving as an elder in Yokohama, spending much time in the Christian ministry. My older son is serving as an elder and a full-time minister in a neighboring congregation.

Having survived the special attack squadron and its deadly mission, I am grateful to be alive and consider it an honor to share in preaching "this good news of the kingdom." (Matthew 24:14) I am fully convinced that the best way of life is to walk as one of God's people. (Psalm 144:15) In the new world soon to come, humans will never again experience war, since "nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore."—Isaiah 2:4.

If it is God's will, I would like to meet those I knew who died in the war who will be resurrected. It will be thrilling to talk to them about the peaceful life they can enjoy on a paradise earth under the righteous rulership of God's heavenly Kingdom!

—Matthew 6:9, 10;  
Acts 24:15; 1 Timothy 6:19.



*With my wife,  
Michiko, and  
my older son,  
Yasuyuki*

# Crossword Puzzle

## Clues Across

- After instituting an improved judicial system, King Jehoshaphat laid this command upon the judges, since they were judging for Jehovah and not for man [4 words] (2 Chronicles 19:11)
- Christ's Millennial Rule involves his having not only subordinate king-priests in heaven but also these appointed representatives on earth (Psalm 45:16)
- Jesus' 11 faithful apostles were all from this region (Luke 4:14)
- In answer to Joshua's request, this became "motionless over Gibeon" until the Amorites could be defeated (Joshua 10:12, 13)
- Domain (Esther 1:20)
- In Ezekiel's vision, the expanse above the heads of the living creatures resembled this (Ezekiel 1:22)
- An ancestor of Jesus' mother, Mary (Luke 3:28)
- As Deuteronomy 3:17 shows, one of its names is "the sea of the Arabah" [2 words]
- Marriage (Joel 2:16)
- This term, applied to Haman and his father, apparently showed them to be of Amalekite descent (Esther 3:10; 8:3)
- Belonging to oneself (1 Thessalonians 4:11)
- One of the cities conquered by the Assyrians and used by Rabshakeh as proof that all the gods of the nations could not resist Assyria's mighty power (2 Kings 18:33-35)
- A prophet prominent during David's reign (2 Samuel 24:11)
- What God made on the second creative day (Genesis 1:7)
- The distant past [2 words] (Psalm 74:12)
- Fertile ground [2 words] (Nahum 1:5)

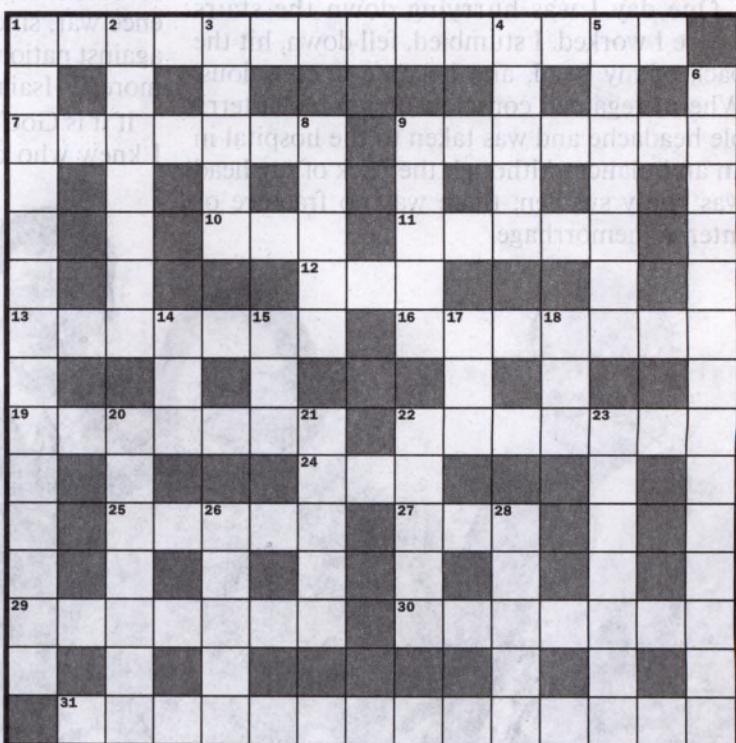
## Clues Down

- The words that John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, used

to describe his work [3 words] (John 1:26)

- The location from which Joshua sent the two spies to Jericho (Joshua 2:1)
- Jude compared impostors in the Christian congregation to these hidden below water (Jude 12)
- Fourth letter of the Greek alphabet
- An ingredient of the "holy anointing oil" (Exodus 30:23-25)
- A gift that Belshazzar offered to the man who could interpret the handwriting on the wall [3 words] (Daniel 5:7)
- A land from which scattered Israelites would return to their homeland (Isaiah 49:12)
- Pierced by a horn (Exodus 21:31)
- Insect noted for industriousness and instinctive wisdom (Proverbs 6:6)

- Judean king who faced an Ethiopian force of one million warriors (2 Chronicles 14:9, 10)
- Jesus said that a father would not hand his son a scorpion if the son asked for this (Luke 11:12)
- A stupid person who repeats his foolishness is likened to this animal returning to its vomit (Proverbs 26:11)
- One of the two rivers of Damascus that Naaman considered superior to "all the waters of Israel" (2 Kings 5:12)
- To stay with temporarily (Luke 19:7)
- One killed 185,000 Assyrians (2 Kings 19:35)
- One of the territories under the tetrarchy of Philip (Luke 3:1)
- Intensely yearned (Psalm 119:81)
- Thick (2 Peter 2:4)



# THE BAGPIPE

## *Traced to Antiquity*

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN BRITAIN

THE Scottish Highland bagpipe we know today—played in Britain, Canada, the United States, and other English-speaking countries—is barely 300 years old. We can, however, trace the origins of the instrument back thousands of years to the ancient city of Ur, the home of Abraham, and also to ancient Egypt. In both places simple reed pipes have been found that are viewed by scholars as forerunners of the modern bagpipe. But at what time and by whom the air bag was added is not known.

In the Bible book of Daniel, written more than 500 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, six Babylonian musical instruments are specifically mentioned. (Daniel 3:5, 10, 15) Included in this list is the Aramaic word *sumpon-yah'*, rendered "bagpipe" in many Bible translations.\*

Although we cannot be sure what this ancient Babylonian instrument was like, it probably resembled one of the bagpipes still found in the Orient. Records reveal that in Persia (Iran), India, and China, bagpipes were used in various forms, some of which still exist.

### **International Variety**

Roman Emperor Nero, during his reign in the first century C.E., promised that if he

\* In modern usage the bagpipe is often referred to in the plural.



**Scottish piper  
in full Highland  
dress**

kept his throne, he would play "successively on water-organ, flute, and bagpipes," wrote Roman historian Suetonius. Some 50 years before Nero's birth in 37 C.E., a poem attributed to the poet Virgil mentions "the pipe, which twitters sweetly."

From early times France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, and Spain all had bagpipes, as did the Balkans and Scandinavia. By what route did the bagpipe come to Britain? It is known that about 500 B.C.E., migrating Celts brought a form of bagpipe to the country and that many counties in England had their own different forms of bagpipe early on, as did Scotland. *The Oxford Companion to Music* even suggests that "the bagpipe was popular in England some centuries earlier than in Scotland."

Roman infantry had their pipers, but whether the Romans introduced a bagpipe following their conquest of the British Isles in 43 C.E. or simply augmented what was already there, nobody can be sure.

If you visit Scotland today and chance to hear the sound of the Highland bagpipe echoing through the glens, you will agree it is an experience not easily forgotten.

← **The practice chanter:**  
A piper learns to play  
on this, a separate  
instrument

Colin Dickson



Thousands of pipers and drummers, described as "the biggest pipe band ever," paraded down Edinburgh's famed Princes Street in August 2000 to raise money for a cancer charity (shown above). To join with the Scottish pipers, players traveled not just from Europe, Canada, and the United States but even from as far afield as Hong Kong and the Pacific island of Guam.

The Scottish Highland bagpipe is the major survivor of the family of bagpipes credited to Scotland. These include the Scottish Lowland pipes and the Scottish small-pipes. The Northumbrian pipe is the only remaining English instrument. Its gentle tone is something between a clarinet and an oboe. Unlike the Highland bagpipe, each of the three pipes just mentioned has a small bellows, expanded and contracted by the motion of the player's arm to fill the bag with air, rather than by the breath of the player, blown directly into it.

In *The Bagpipe—The History of a Musical Instrument*, author Francis Collinson records that in the year 1746, an English court handed down the following judgment: "A [Scottish] Highland regiment never marched without a piper," and "therefore his bagpipe, in the eye of the law, was an instrument of war." Since no clan ever went into battle without a piper, this led to the Scottish Highland bagpipe's extraordinary distinction of being the only musical instrument "banned" as a weapon of war.

# The Scottish Highland Bagpipe

**The blowstick:** This has a non-return valve at the end and is connected to the bag by a stock, a hollow wooden socket tied to a hole in the bag. Through this blowstick the bag is inflated by the piper who, by squeezing the bag, then forces air through the chanter and drones

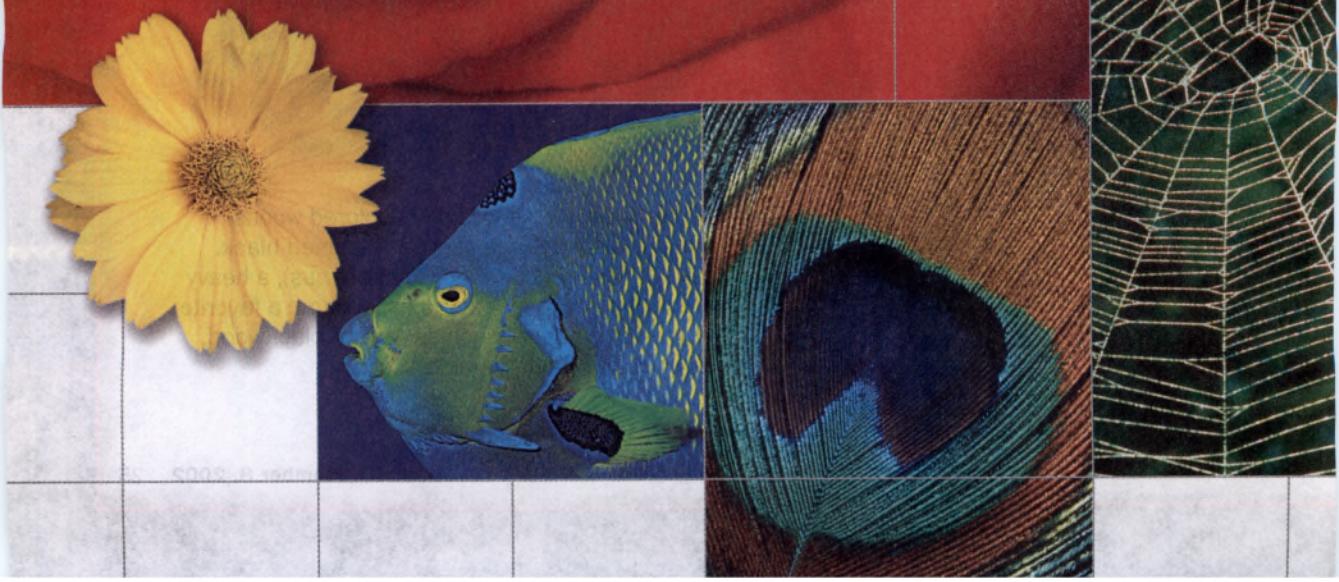
**Reeds:** The best are made from the reed *Arundo donax*, grown for this use in France, Italy, and Spain



**The chanter:** A musical pipe on which a melody is played by means of seven finger holes and a thumbhole at the back. The sound is produced through a double reed. The air for the bagpipe chanter comes from a bag tucked under the piper's arm



**Woods:** In early days local light-colored woods—often boxwood—were used and stained black. Later, cocus or cocuswood (*Brya ebenus*), a heavy hardwood from the West Indies, became a favorite, but there are others, such as African blackwood, a species of *Dalbergia melanoxylon*



# Design in Nature

**W**HEN taking a stroll in the countryside, most of us notice the beauty of nature. It may be in a clump of flowers, a colorful bird, a magnificent tree, or a striking vista. Many people attribute such beauty to a Creator or a Master Designer.

You may assume that only scientists can discover the intricate design in nature. However, you do not need sophisticated scientific equipment to spot nature's designs. All you need is a sharp eye, a little imagination, and an appreciation for beauty and form. You may also need to take a closer look at familiar objects that you have perhaps taken for granted.

One of the simplest designs is the spiral. It can be seen in such familiar man-made objects as a coil of rope or a corkscrew. However, you can find much more elegant spirals in seashells or pinecones. And if you look carefully at the center of a sunflower, once again the spiral pattern is evident. Less obvious spiral patterns also grace the center of a rose and a spiderweb.

Take a close look at a spiderweb. First, a spider puts in place the principal struts of its web, somewhat like the spokes of a wheel. It then starts at the center to connect these struts together with a sticky silken thread. Round and round the spider weaves in circles until the web is complete. These ever-expanding circles of thread make the spiral.

Another intriguing pattern in nature is that of the ocellus, or the eyespot. Eyespots can be found in the most unlikely places—on the feathers of a bird, the wings of a butterfly, or even the scales of a fish. Scientists suggest that eyespots can help a courtship, fool an attacker, or ward off unwanted attention. The peacock is perhaps the most famous example of eyespots, and his courtship display is one of the wonders of the natural world. Alexander the Great was so impressed by the beauty of the peacock that he insisted that the bird be protected throughout his realm.

The circle and the sphere are also familiar patterns. The golden orb of a setting sun or a silvery

full moon invariably arouses our admiration. Many flowers of the daisy family have a sunlike appearance, with a yellow center and radiating petals of various colors. The golden "eye" of these ubiquitous blooms offers a feast of nectar that attracts butterflies almost as readily as a golden beach attracts tourists.

Since the sphere is the most economical shape for packaging, fruits and berries often come in spheres of different sizes and colors. Their vibrant colors attract birds, which disperse the seeds in exchange for a tasty meal.

Of course, spirals, eyespots, circles, and spheres are only a few examples of the many patterns found in nature. Though some have a specific purpose, others may serve as decoration or camouflage. Whatever the case, look for them and enjoy them.

## Crossword Solutions

B	E	S	T	R	O	N	G	A	N	D
B	E	S	T	R	O	N	G	A	N	D
E	X	P	A	N	S	E	L	O	N	G
E	X	P	A	N	S	E	L	O	N	G
T	R	I	I	G	E	E	R	G		
T	R	I	I	G	E	E	R	G		
A	A	R	P	A	D	G	A	D	U	F
A	A	R	P	A	D	G	A	D	U	F
W	H	O	W	N	T	O				
W	H	O	W	N	T	O				
N	U	P	T	I	A	L	A	G	A	I
N	U	P	T	I	A	L	A	G	A	I
I	N	S	G	O	O	C				
I	N	S	G	O	O	C				
E	L	M	A	D	A	M	D	E	A	S
E	L	M	A	D	A	M	D	E	A	S
Z	I	I	I	C	E	U	L			
Z	I	I	I	C	E	U	L			
I	T	S	U	N	R	E	A	L	M	K
I	T	S	U	N	R	E	A	L	M	K
T	T	K	I	O	O	T	A	C		
T	T	K	I	O	O	T	A	C		
P	R	I	N	C	E	S	G	A	L	I
P	R	I	N	C	E	S	G	A	L	I
A	H	O	E	A	N	D	A	C	T	
A	H	O	E	A	N	D	A	C	T	

# Watching the World

## Top Killer

"AIDS is set to put the Black Death in the shade as the worst pandemic in history," states *New Scientist*. "In the 14th century, the Black Death swept through Europe and Asia, killing about 40 million people. Now, nearly 700 years later, history is repeating itself." According to a *British Medical Journal* report, some 65 million lives will have been claimed by HIV by the end of the decade. While more people are currently affected by tuberculosis and malaria, the economic and social impact of these diseases is said to be less than that of AIDS.

## Parents and Teenagers

According to a report in *The Times* of London, parents suffer far more emotional and psychological damage from family conflict than do their teenage offspring. The report suggests that parents should not "tip-toe around moody adolescents for fear of hurting their delicate feelings." Rather, "parents should protect themselves... by adopting a more authoritative style of parenting." A researcher on adolescence, Professor Laurence Steinberg of Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., says that children are much more resilient than people assume. After studying thousands of parents for more than ten years, Professor Steinberg observes: "The authoritative parent is warm and involved, but is firm and consistent in establishing and enforcing guidelines, limits and expectations." Adolescents raised in such homes are higher achievers, are happier, and are therefore less likely to engage in anti-

social behavior and crime, says the report.

## The Need for Touch

"We need touch just as we need sunlight, water, and food," states the Polish weekly magazine *Polityka*. All of us have under our skin a network of detectors that are sensitive to various types of touch. When someone touches us, "our brain can perceive it, appreciate it, and change it into a smile, a better mood, or some other friendly gesture." Children in particular need physical contact, especially during their early years. Unfortunately, many parents touch their children only when dressing, washing, feeding, or punishing them. But numerous studies have suggested that children who are held, hugged, kissed, and caressed enjoy better health

and growth and turn out more intelligent than those kept "at a cold distance," notes *Polityka*.

## World's Lakes in Peril

"There is not a lake left on the planet that is not already being affected by human activities," states William Cosgrove, vice president of the World Water Council. "We're killing the lakes, and that could be disaster to the human communities that depend on them." Contamination comes from industry, farms, and sewage; and serious damage may already have occurred to a lake even though it looks pristine, Cosgrove said, adding: "Then something happens —like a change in water temperature—and all of a sudden a lake can be completely transformed. Once the process starts, it's hard to stop." Lake Victor-

## For Better Health—Laugh!

Good-natured laughter does more than brighten a person's day. According to some Japanese doctors, it also normalizes imbalances in the endocrine, nervous, and immune systems, stabilizes heartbeat and breathing, and can bring temporary relief to sufferers of rheumatism. Laughter stimulates sympathetic nerves, thereby boosting the blood flow to muscles and increasing brain activity. When we laugh heartily, we also exercise our muscles. In a test cited in the *IHT Asahi Shimbun* newspaper, one laughing subject's abdominal muscles "showed the same level of exertion as required by sit-ups." Osaka psychiatrist Michio Tanaka praised

the positive influence of laughter. According to Tanaka, "it's like an effective drug with no side effects."





### Animal "Doctors"

"A growing number of animal behaviourists now think that wild animals can and do deal with their own medical needs," reports *The Economist* of London. Chimpanzees in Tanzania cure themselves of intestinal worms by eating the pith of a plant containing chemicals lethal to such worms. And chimps across Africa eat leaves covered with microscopic hooks that scour their intestines of worms. Macaws that eat seeds containing toxic alkaloids also eat clay, which apparently detoxifies their dangerous diet. Alaskan brown bears, Canadian snow geese, and wolves all consume vegetation to rid themselves of intestinal parasites. Blood tests on a range of wild animals showed that in their natural habitats, many had survived serious viral and bacterial infections that are often fatal in captivity. "Such observations," notes *The Economist*, "suggest that wild animals can do something to keep themselves healthy that captive animals cannot."



ria, Africa's largest lake, is one example. Over the last two decades, several species of fish in the lake have died because of pollution that included raw sewage. Also seriously threatened is Lake Tai Hu in China. "Experts say you can practically walk on its surface because of severe pollution," the World Water Council statement said. According to a Reuters report, some 90 percent of the fresh water that humans use comes from lakes.

### **"The Heart Is So Full —The Head So Empty"**

Love letters composed by professional letter writers are in demand, according to the German weekly *Die Woche*. For those who just cannot put their feelings into words, several ghostwriter services offer help for a fee. The text might be on the passionate side or rather businesslike, according to the customer's request. Poems are also available, with the price subject to negotiation. The approach to creating these surrogate confessions of love varies greatly. While

some ghostwriters are professional writers and journalists, others write love letters as a hobby. Some even provide an online questionnaire from which a computer-generated letter is produced. In any case, success cannot be guaranteed. After three years of "touching proposals and vows" composed by one ghostwriter, his loyal customer's girlfriend still won't say yes to his proposals.

### **Fitness and Sick Days**

Exercise reduces sick days, according to a study by the Finnish Fitness Association. To keep their staff on the job, many employers in Finland are acting on this knowledge. "One-half of working Finns are employed by businesses with employee fitness programs," reports *Finnfacts*, a publication of the Confederation of Finnish Industry and Employers. "Businesses are running quit-smoking and weight loss courses and various types of fitness groups." Finnish businesses invest more than \$67,000,000 annually in

such programs, knowing that reduced absenteeism will pay them back severalfold.

### **Take Care of Your Back!**

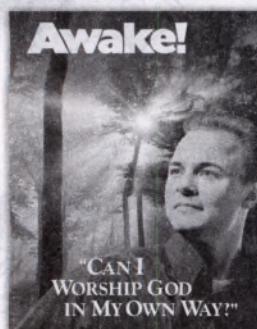
"Bad posture, being overweight, and not getting sufficient physical exercise slowly cause our spine to deteriorate," says the Spanish newspaper *El País Semanal*. An estimated 80 percent of the population in developed countries have back problems at some time in their life. The Spanish Kovacs Clinic, which specializes in spinal problems, recommends that we learn to adjust our posture in order to prevent and alleviate back pain. Some simple recommendations are: Sleep on your side with the spine straight. When seated, support your back against the back of the chair. At a computer, keep your shoulders in their natural position. If you have to bend down, bend your knees rather than your back. And if you have to stand still for a long time, put your weight on one leg while resting your other foot on a stool or step.

## From Our Readers

**Worship** Prior to becoming one of Jehovah's Witnesses, I was never able to explain how I felt about God. The cover series "Can I Worship God in My Own Way?" (April 22, 2002) truly defines why I felt

compelled to study the Bible in the first place. I plan to send a copy to each member of my family.

*B. R., United States*



2002) Brother Hanák's courage at the age of 20 reminded me that we can rely on Jehovah to give even young ones the determination to uphold Jehovah's righteous standards. Thank you for continuing to print such fine articles that give all of us the boost we need during the critical times we live in.

*K. G., United States*

**Young People Ask** I am an 11-year-old boy, and I want to thank you for the article "Young People Ask ... What if I Meet Someone From School?" (February 22, 2002) I found myself facing the same situation described by the youngsters in the article. After reading it, I came to understand that I have no reason to be ashamed of the precious and urgent message we take to people. Thank you very much for this information.

*D.D.S., Italy*

I am 10 years old. Thank you for this article. The day after reading it, I went out in the field ministry and felt more relaxed because of applying the magazine's counsel.

*D.D.C., Italy*

The article "Young People Ask ... Why Is My Roommate So Hard to Live With?" (April 22, 2002) was made just for me! I am a full-time evangelizer,

and I have lived with my roommate for six months. As the article states, living with someone who was raised in a different manner can be interesting, but it can also cause stress. With help from my parents, the elders, and Jehovah, I slowly changed my outlook. Now I have the desire to move with my partner to a congregation where the need is greater. I think that Jehovah provided this article as a present for me!

*I. S., Japan*

The article "Young People Ask ... How Can I Preach to My Schoolmates?" (March 22, 2002) had special meaning for me. I remember sharing my faith, somewhat reluctantly, with a few fellow students and especially with one friend who showed respect for my beliefs. We lost contact until some years ago, when I discovered that he was studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Today we are both congregation elders, and we are great friends. As the article showed, speaking to others about Jehovah always brings good results.

*J.R.M., Brazil*

**Enlightening for All Ages** I really enjoy your magazines because they are interesting not only for me but also for my children. Many newspapers and magazines corrupt our youth. You, on the other hand, make them change. Thank you for the light that you bring us.

*G. M., Russia*

## *Her Solution to* **NOISE POLLUTION**

"I work for a toy manufacturing company. It is quite a routine type of work, and the employees are allowed to listen to music. One of my coworkers, situated in the cubicle next to mine, loves to listen to debasing music. Two other workers in my section like that sort of music too. For me, though, it was a trial to have to listen to it eight hours a day.

"I considered the advantages of keeping the job. One was that my supervisor had always allowed me time off to attend district conventions and special meetings for Jehovah's Witnesses in the full-time ministry. Also, it does not take me long to travel to work, and the hours allow me time for my ministry.

"I approached my coworkers and asked them politely if they would either change the music or lower the volume. They responded by complaining to the supervisor. The supervisor called me to her office. She said: 'Sharon, you cannot convert this company to your religion. Our employees can listen to whatever they want.'

"I then asked if I could bring in my own tape player plus a set of headphones. She agreed. I brought in audio recordings of *The Watchtower*. This has helped me to avoid having to hear the unwholesome music. Listening to the tapes has also helped me to keep strong spiritually."

*—As told by Sharon Quan.*





# **“DREAMS OF PARADISE”**

A letter was received last year at the Papua New Guinea branch of Jehovah's Witnesses from a reader of *Awake!* who lives in Lae, Morobe Province. He explained:

"I must earnestly admit that I made a very good decision five years ago (when I was in Port Moresby) to read the Awake! magazine, published by your organization. I have read every issue since 1997. My house is full of Awake! magazines.

"I have learned a lot. My vocabulary, my general knowledge, my grammar, and my understanding of the Creator have expanded so much. I have personally become more tolerant, more considerate of others, and more focused, and I have developed more respect for plants and animals. I do recommend that more people read *Awake!* as well as your other publications."

The writer concluded: "I believe that if everybody in this world became Jehovah's Witnesses, our dreams of Paradise would definitely become a reality overnight. Keep up the good work."

