Awake!

May 22, 1999

CHILD LABOR
Its End in Sight!

Awake!

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Weaving a straw rug in West Africa

UN PHOTO 148040/Jean Pierre Laffont

Child Labor—Its End in Sight! 3-13

Millions of children are forced to work under the worst conditions. It is cruel to children and insulting to human dignity. But there is hope for the children!

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COVER: UN PHOTO 145234/Jean Pierre Laffont

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"I Am Seven Years Old"

Hello. My name is Amelia, and I live on an island in the Caribbean. I am seven years old. Some time ago my poor parents handed me over to a rich family living in the city.

Today, like every day, I got up at five o'clock in the morning. I fetched water from a nearby well. It was very difficult to balance the heavy jug on my head, but I made it—otherwise, I would have been beaten badly. Then I prepared breakfast and served it to the family. I was a little late in serving breakfast, so the master beat me with a leather strap.

Afterward, I walked the family's five-year-old son to school. Next, I helped prepare and serve the family's lunch. Between mealtimes, I had to buy food in the market, run errands, tend the charcoal fire, sweep the yard, wash clothes and dishes, and clean the kitchen. I also washed my lady's feet. Today she was very upset about something, and she slapped me in anger. I hope that tomorrow she feels better.

I was given leftovers to eat—at least they were better than the cornmeal I ate yesterday. My clothes are ragged, and I have no shoes. My owners have never allowed me to bathe in the water I bring to the family. Last night I slept outside; sometimes they let me sleep inside on the floor. Too bad I could not write this myself. I am not allowed to go to school.

Have a nice day. *Amelia.*

ALTHOUGH her real name is not Amelia, her plight is real.* Amelia is just one of the millions of children who must work—often under the worst conditions. Child labor is a major challenge of our times. It is a complex issue with no simple solutions. Massive in scale, corrosive to society, and fatal in its consequences, it is cruel to children and insulting to human dignity.

How extensive is child labor? What are the roots of this problem, and in what shapes does it come? Will there ever be a time when children—the most tender and vulnerable segment of the human family—no longer are subjected to a life of misery and exploitation?

* Her case was reported in *The State of the World's Children 1997.*

By the Sweat of Children

"Children, now part of the productive process, are treated as economic goods rather than society's future."—Chira Hongladarom, director of Human Resources Institute, Thailand.

THE next time you buy a doll for your daughter, remember that it may have been manufactured by young children in Southeast Asia. The next time your son kicks a soccer ball, reflect on the fact that it may have been stitched by a three-year-old girl who, along with her mother and four sisters, earns 75 cents a day. The next time you buy a carpet, consider that it may have been woven by the nimble fingers of six-year-old boys who work long hours day after day under abusive conditions.

How prevalent is child labor? What is it doing to children? What can be done to remedy the situation?

The Scope of the Problem

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), the number of working children between 5 and 14 years of age in developing countries is estimated to be 250 million.* It is believed that 61 percent of them are in Asia, 32 percent in Africa, and 7 percent in Latin America. Child labor exists in industrialized countries also.

In southern Europe a large number of children are found in paid employment, especially in seasonal activities, such as farming, and in small workshops. Recently, child labor has increased in Central and Eastern Europe following the transition from Communism to capitalism. In the United States, the official number of child laborers is 5.5 million, but that does not include the many children under 12 who are illegally employed in sweatshops or as seasonal and migrant workers on large farms. How do these millions of children become part of the work force?

The Causes of Child Labor

Exploitation of poverty. "The most powerful force driving children into hazardous, debilitating labour is the exploitation of poverty," says *The State of the World's Children 1997*. "For poor families, the small contribution of a child's income or assistance at home that allows the parents to work can make the difference between hunger and a bare sufficiency." The parents of child workers are

* In general, the ILO establishes 15 years as the minimum age for allowing children to work—provided that 15 is not less than the age for completion of compulsory schooling. This has been the most widely used yardstick when establishing how many children around the world are currently working.

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.

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

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What Is Child Labor?

MOST children in all societies work in one way or another. The types of work they do vary within societies and over time. Work can be an essential part of children's education and a means of transmitting vital skills from parent to offspring. In some countries, children are often involved in workshops and small-scale services, gradually becoming full-fledged workers later in life. In other countries, teenagers work for a few hours a week to earn pocket money. The United Nations Children's Fund maintains that such work "is beneficial, promoting or enhancing a child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development without interfering with schooling, recreation and rest."

Child labor, on the other hand, is about children who work long hours for low wages, often under conditions harmful to their health. This type of work "is palpably destructive or exploitative," comments *The State of the World's Children 1997.* "No one would publicly argue that exploiting children as prostitutes is acceptable in any circumstances. The same can be said about 'bonded child labour', the term widely used for the virtual enslavement of children to repay debts incurred by their parents or grandparents. This also applies to industries notorious for the dire health and safety hazards they present . . . Hazardous work is simply intolerable for all children."

Child labor's sad history includes toll in mines and cotton mills

U.S. National Archives photos

often unemployed or underemployed. They are desperate for a secure income. So why is it that their children are offered the jobs instead? Because children can be paid less. Because children are more docile and malleable—many will do whatever they are told to do, seldom questioning authority. Because children are less likely to organize resistance against oppression. And because they do not strike back when they are physically abused.

Lack of education. Sudhir, an 11-year-old boy from India, is one of the millions of children who have dropped out of school and started working. Why? "In school, teachers would not teach well," he answers. "If we asked them to teach us alphabets, they would beat us. They would sleep in the class. . . . If we did not understand, they would not teach us." Sudhir's assessment of school is tragically accurate. In developing countries, cuts in social spending have hit education particularly hard.

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A UN survey carried out in 1994 in 14 of the world's least developed countries revealed some interesting facts. For example, in half of these countries, classrooms for the first grade have seats for only 4 out of every 10 pupils. Half of the pupils have no textbooks, and half of the classrooms have no blackboards. Not surprisingly, many children who attend such schools end up working.

Traditional expectations. The more hazardous and the harder the job is, the more likely it is to be left for ethnic minorities, the lower classes, the disadvantaged, and the poor. Regarding an Asian country, the United Nations Children's Fund notes that "the view has been that some people are born to rule and to work with their minds while others, the vast majority, are born to work with their bodies." In the West, attitudes are not always much better. The dominant group may not wish their own children to do hazardous work, but they will not lose any sleep if young people from racial, ethnic, or economic minorities do such work. In northern Europe, for instance, child laborers are likely to be Turkish or African; in the United States, they may be Asian or Latin-American. Child labor is aggravated by a modern society that is preoccupied with consumerism. Demand for low-priced products is high. Few seem to care that these may be produced by millions of anonymous, exploited children.

Forms of Child Labor

What shapes does child labor take? By and large, most child workers are in *domestic service*. Such laborers have been dubbed "the world's most forgotten children." Domestic service need not be hazardous, but it often is. Children in domestic servitude tend to be poorly paid—or not paid at all. Their masters set the terms and conditions of their work entirely at whim. They are deprived of affection, schooling, play, and social activity. They are also vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse.

Other children find themselves as *forced and bonded laborers*. In South Asia, as well as in other areas, children, often only eight or nine years old, are pledged by their parents to factory owners or their agents in exchange for small loans. The lifelong servitude of the children never succeeds in even reducing the debt.

What about the *commercial sexual exploitation* of children? It is estimated that every year at least one million girls worldwide are lured into the sex trade. Boys too are often sexually exploited. The physical and emotional damage inflicted by this type of abuse —not to mention HIV infection—makes it one of the most hazardous forms of child labor. "We have the same place that bums do in society," says a 15-year-old prostitute from Senegal. "No one wants to know us or be seen with us."*

A high percentage of child workers are exploited in *industrial and plantation labor*. Such children toil in mining operations that would be considered too risky for adults. Many suffer from tuberculosis, bronchitis, and asthma. Child laborers on plantations are exposed to pesticides, snakebites, and insect stings. Some have been mutilated while cutting cane with machetes. Millions of other children have made the *streets* their workplace. Take, for example, ten-year-old Shireen, a professional scavenger. She has never been to school, but she is well versed in the economics of survival. If she sells 30 to 50 cents' worth of wastepaper and plastic bags, she eats lunch. If she earns less, she goes without food. Street children, often fleeing abuse or neglect at home, suffer further abuse and exploitation on the street. "Every day I pray not to end up in evil

* For further information on the sexual exploitation of children, see pages 11-15 of the April 8, 1997, issue of *Awake!*

Scavenging garbage

Hard labor in collecting firewood

UN PHOTO 148046/
J. P. Laffont - SYGMA

Employed in a yarn factory

CORBIS/Dean Conger

hands," says Josie, a ten-year-old who sells candy on the thoroughfares of an Asian city.

Childhood Ruined

As a result of such forms of child labor, tens of millions of children are exposed to serious hazards. These may stem from the nature of the work involved or from poor working conditions. Children and other young workers tend to have more serious occupational accidents than adults. This is because a child's anatomy is different from that of an adult. His spine or pelvis can easily become deformed by heavy work. Also, children suffer more than adults do when exposed to dangerous chemical substances or to radiation. In addition, children are not physically suited to long hours of strenuous and monotonous work, which is very often their lot. They are not usually aware of dangers, nor do they have much knowledge of the precautions they should be taking.

The effects of child labor on the psychological, emotional, and intellectual growth of the victims are also grave. Such children are deprived of affection. Beat-

Child street vendors work for as little as six cents a day

UN PHOTO 148027/Jean Pierre Laffont

Laboring in a carpentry shop

UN PHOTO 148079/ J. P. Laffont - SYGMA

"Still Much More to Be Done"

THE International Labor Organization (ILO) is spearheading efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The ILO prods governments to pass legislation banning labor by children under the age of 15. It also promotes new conventions to ban child workers under the age of 12 and to outlaw the most dangerous forms of exploitation. To learn more about the success of such efforts, *Awake!* spoke with Sonia Rosen, director of the International Child Labor Program, at the U.S. Department of Labor. She has worked closely with various ILO programs. Here is an excerpt from that discussion.

Q.: What is the most effective way to fight child labor?

A.: We do not have a single right answer. However, on an international level, the issues that we have discussed are key issues, namely, adequate law enforcement combined with universal primary education, preferably compulsory and free. Certainly, having adequate jobs for the parents is vital too.

Q.: Are you satisfied with the progress that has already been made in fighting child labor?

A.: I am never satisfied. We say that one child working in abusive conditions is one child too many. We have made great strides through the programs of the ILO. But there is still much more to be done.

Q.: How is the international community responding to efforts to eliminate child labor?

A.: I don't know how to answer that question anymore. Around the world we now have a certain level of consensus that child labor is something that has to be dealt with. I think at this point the questions really are: How,

Sonia Rosen

and how fast? What are the best tools that we can use to address certain types of child labor? I think that is our real challenge.

Q.: What can child workers expect next?

A.: All the countries of the world are about to return to Geneva this year to conclude a new convention on the worst forms of child labor. That really has a tremendous amount of promise—all the countries, plus the workers' organizations and the employers' organizations. Hopefully, that will set up a new structure aimed at getting rid of the very worst forms of child labor.

* * *

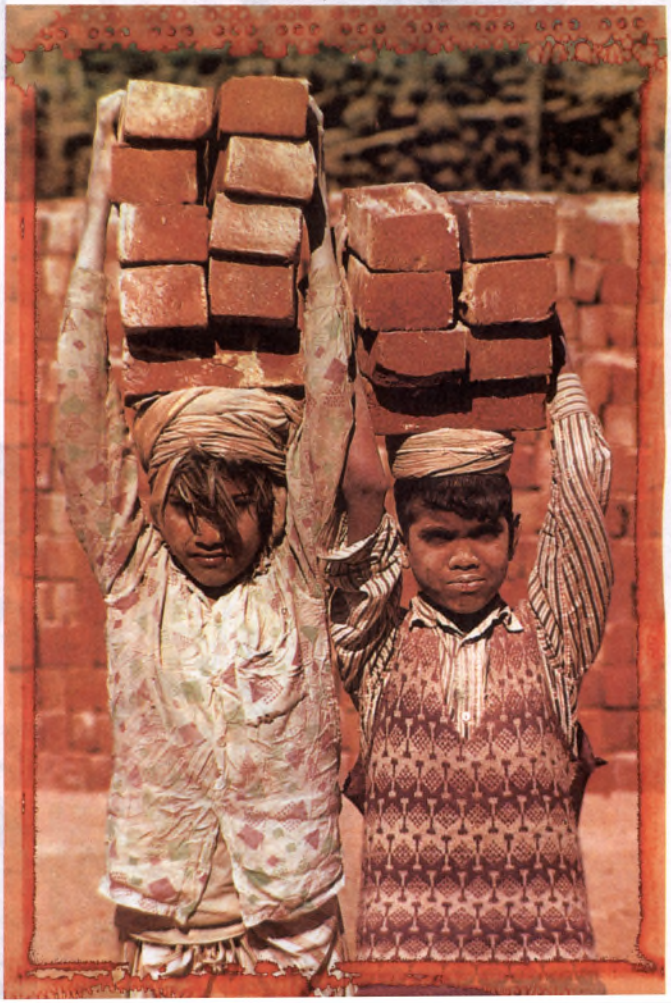
Not all share Sonia Rosen's optimism. Charles MacCormack, president of Save the Children, has reservations. "The political will and public knowledge aren't there to make it happen," he says. Why? The United Nations Children's Fund comments: "Child labour is often a complex issue. Powerful forces sustain it, including many employers, vested interest groups and economists proposing that the market must be free at all costs, and traditionalists believing the caste or class of certain children denudes them of rights."

ings, insults, punishment by being deprived of food, and sexual abuse are very common. According to one study, nearly half of the approximately 250 million child laborers have dropped out of school. Additionally, it has been observed that the learning capacity of children working long hours can be impaired.

What does all of this mean? That most child laborers are condemned to lifelong poverty, misery, sickness, illiteracy, and social dysfunction. Or, as journalist Robin Wright put it, "for all of its scientific and technical advances, the world at the end of the 20th Century is producing millions of children who have little hope of normal life, much less of leading the world into the 21st." These sobering thoughts raise the questions: How should children be treated? Are there any solutions in sight for the problem of abusive child labor?

Struggling to earn a living

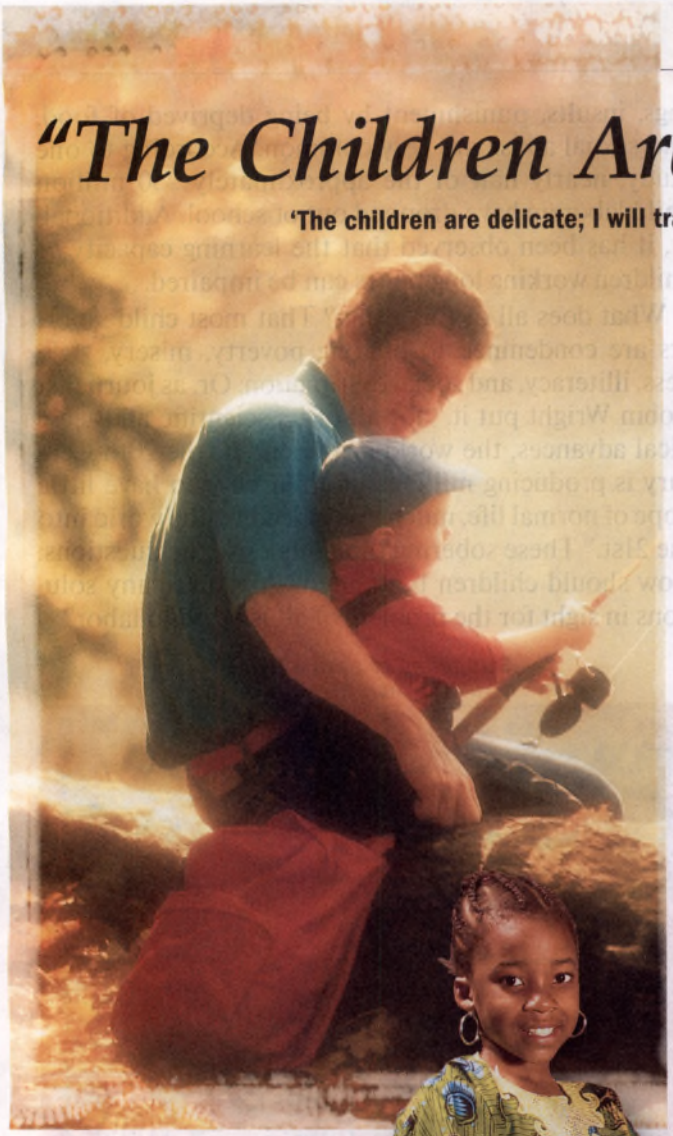
UN PHOTO 148048/J. P. Laffont - SYGMA



"The Children Are Delicate"

'The children are delicate; I will travel slowly, at the pace of the children.'

—Jacob, father of many children, 18th century B.C.



THE mistreatment of children is not new. Ancient civilizations—such as the Aztecs, the Canaanites, the Incas, and the Phoenicians—are infamous for the practice of child sacrifice. Excavations in the Phoenician city of Carthage (now a suburb of Tunis, North Africa) revealed that between the fifth and the third centuries B.C.E., as many as 20,000 children were sacrificed to the god Baal and the goddess Tanit! This number is all the more shocking when one bears in mind that in its heyday Carthage was said to have a population of only about 250,000.

However, there was one ancient society that was different. Despite living amid neighbors that were cruel to children, the nation of Israel stood out in its treatment of little ones. The father of that nation, the patriarch Jacob, set the example. According to the Bible book of Genesis, while returning to his homeland, Jacob adjusted the pace of his whole entourage so as not to be too hard on the children. "The children are delicate," he said. At that time his children were somewhere between 5 and 14 years of age. (Genesis 33:13, 14) His offspring, the Israelites, showed the same respect for children's needs and dignity.

Surely, children in Bible times had a lot to do. As they grew, boys were given practical training by their fathers in agriculture or in a trade, such as carpentry. (Genesis 37:2; 1 Samuel 16:11) While at home, girls were taught by their mothers the domestic arts that would be of value in adult life. Rachel, Jacob's wife, was a shepherdess when she was a young girl. (Genesis 29:6-9) Young women worked in the fields during the grain harvest and in the vineyards. (Ruth 2:5-9; Song of Solomon 1:6)* Such work was generally done under loving parental supervision and was combined with education.

At the same time, young children in Israel knew the joy of relaxation and amusements. The prophet Zechariah spoke of 'public squares of the city being filled with boys and girls playing.' (Zechariah 8:5) And Jesus Christ mentioned young children sitting in the marketplaces who played the flute and danced. (Matthew 11:16, 17) What was behind such dignified treatment of children?

Lofty Principles

As long as the Israelites observed the laws of God, they never abused or exploited their children. (Compare Deuteronomy 18:10 with Jeremiah 7:31.) They viewed their sons and daughters as "an inheritance from Jehovah," "a reward." (Psalm 127:3-5) A parent regarded his children as 'slips of olive trees all around his table'—and olive trees were very precious in that agrarian society! (Psalm 128:3-6) Historian Alfred Edersheim notes that besides the words for son and daughter, ancient Hebrew had nine words for children, each for a different stage of life. He concludes: "Assuredly, those who so keenly watched child-life as to give a pictorial designation to each advancing stage of its existence, must have been fondly attached to their children."

In the Christian era, parents were admonished to treat their children with dignity

* This did not degrade women to second-class family members fit only for work in the house or in the fields. The description of the "capable wife" in Proverbs reveals that a married woman could not only manage a household but also handle real estate transactions, establish a productive field, and operate a small business.—Proverbs 31:10, 16, 18, 24.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

When All Disabilities Will Disappear

You Have Value in God's Eyes!

Rescue From the Killer Storm!

A Madam Lets Her Girls Go

FOR 15 years, Cecilia* owned and operated brothels in one of the Caribbean islands. She purchased 12 to 15 girls at a time, most of them under 18 years of age. The girls were held against their will for debts their families had incurred. Cecilia paid off the debts and took the girls to work for her. From what they earned, she covered their food and maintenance expenses and also put aside a fraction toward their original purchase price. It took years for them to regain their freedom. The girls were never allowed out of the house unless a guard went along.

Cecilia remembers one particular case very well. The mother of a prostitute girl came each week to receive boxes of food—food that had been earned by her daughter's "work." That girl was raising a son. She could not get ahead with her debts and had no hope for a life of freedom. One day she committed suicide, leaving a note that entrusted her son to the care of her madam. Cecilia raised the boy along with her own four children.

One of Cecilia's daughters began to study the Bible with missionaries of Jehovah's Witnesses. Cecilia was encouraged to participate in the study, but initially she refused because she had never learned to read or write. Gradually, though, by overhearing discussions from the Bible, she came to discern God's love and patience and to cherish his forgiveness. (Isaiah 43:25) Out of a desire to study the Bible herself, she soon started learning to read and write. As she progressed in Bible knowledge, she saw the need to conform to God's lofty moral standards.

One day, to the surprise of the girls, she told them that they were free to go! She explained that what they were doing was very displeasing to Jehovah. None of them ever repaid what they owed her. However, two moved in to live with her. Another eventually became a baptized Witness. Cecilia has been a full-time Bible teacher for 11 years now, helping other people break free from God-dishonoring practices.

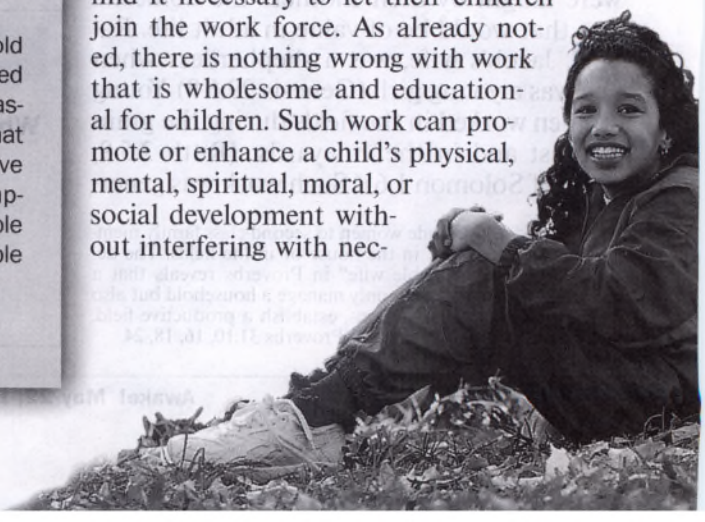
* Not her real name.

and respect. Jesus set an excellent example in dealing with other people's children. On one occasion toward the end of his earthly ministry, people began bringing their young ones to him. Evidently believing that Jesus was too busy to be bothered, the disciples tried to stop the people. But Jesus reprimanded his disciples: "Let the young children come to me; do not try to stop them." Jesus even "took the children into his arms." There is no question but that he viewed children as precious and worthy of kind treatment.—Mark 10:14, 16; Luke 18:15-17.

Later, the apostle Paul said to fathers: "Do not be exasperating your children, so that they do not become downhearted." (Colossians 3:21) In keeping with this command, Christian parents, back then and today, would never allow their children to become victims of abusive work conditions. They realize that for children to thrive physically, emotionally, and spiritually, there is a need for a loving, caring, and safe environment. Real love on the part of parents should be tangible. This would include protecting their children from debilitating working conditions.

Modern Realities

Of course, we are living in "critical times hard to deal with." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Because of harsh economic realities, in many countries even Christian families may find it necessary to let their children join the work force. As already noted, there is nothing wrong with work that is wholesome and educational for children. Such work can promote or enhance a child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development without interfering with nec-



essary schooling, balanced recreation, and needed rest.

Undoubtedly, Christian parents want to have their children work under their own caring supervision, not as virtual slaves of cruel, insensitive, or unscrupulous employers. Such parents want to make sure that any type of work their children perform does not expose them to physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. Also, they want to have their children nearby. In this way they can fulfill their Bible-based role of spiritual educators: "You must inculcate [God's words] in your son and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up." —Deuteronomy 6:6, 7.

Moreover, a Christian is told to show fellow feeling, to have affection, and to be tenderly compassionate. (1 Peter 3:8) He is encouraged to "work what is good toward all." (Galatians 6:10) If such godly qualities are to be shown to people in general, how much more so to one's children! In keeping with the Golden Rule—"all things . . . that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them"—Christians would never allow themselves to exploit the children of others, fellow Christians or not. (Matthew 7:12) Additionally, since Christians are law-abiding citizens, they want to be careful not to violate governmental laws when it comes to the age limit of people who work for them.—Romans 13:1.

The Real Answer

What about the future? Better times lie ahead for children and adults alike. True Christians are confident that the permanent solution to the child labor problem is an incoming world government that the Bible calls "the kingdom of the heavens." (Matthew 3:2) God-fearing people have prayed for this for centuries when they have said: "Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth."—Matthew 6:9, 10.

Among other things, this Kingdom will remove the conditions that lead to child labor. It will eradicate poverty. "The earth itself will certainly give its produce; God, our God, will bless us." (Psalm 67:6) God's Kingdom will ensure that all receive proper education based on godly qualities. "When there are judgments from [God] for the earth, righteousness is what the inhabitants of the productive land will certainly learn."—Isaiah 26:9.

God's government will abolish economic systems that foster inequality. Racial, social, age, or gender discrimination will have no place then, since the overriding law of that government will be the law of love, including the command: "You must love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:39) Under such a righteous world government, the child labor problem will be completely eliminated!

Protect Yourself From Parasites!

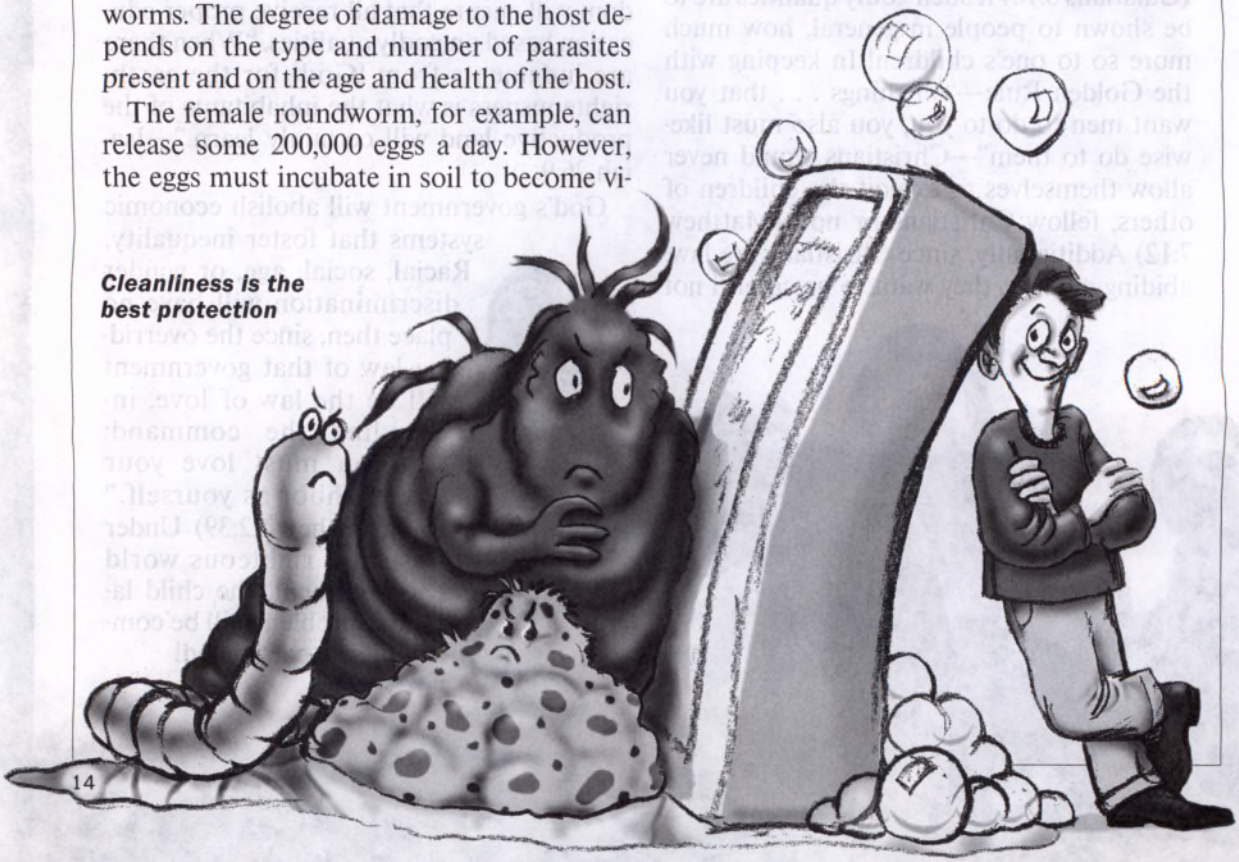
BY *AWAKE!* CORRESPONDENT IN HONDURAS

YOU wake up with feelings of nausea. You tire more quickly. Your stomach is slightly swollen. Symptoms of pregnancy? Perhaps. But if you live in a tropical or semitropical part of the world, the problem could very well be some form of intestinal parasite. What are intestinal parasites, and how can you tell if you are playing host to these unwanted guests?

Simply stated, a parasite is a living organism that obtains some benefit from its host, a living organism on or in which it lives. Two types of intestinal parasites are protozoans, which include amoebas, and helminths, or worms. The degree of damage to the host depends on the type and number of parasites present and on the age and health of the host.

The female roundworm, for example, can release some 200,000 eggs a day. However, the eggs must incubate in soil to become viable. The number of roundworms a person carries depends on the number of viable eggs or larvae ingested. Many people play host to a few roundworms without even being aware of it. But a large number of roundworms can cause serious intestinal blockage.

Some common symptoms of intestinal parasites are abdominal pain, nausea, loss of appetite, a swollen abdomen, fatigue, and chronic indigestion, diarrhea, or constipation. Weight loss, restless sleep, itching, wheezing, and fever may also be indications of parasites. Of course, these symptoms can be indicative of a number of illnesses. But



Cleanliness is the best protection

parasites can be diagnosed by means of several stool examinations.

A correct diagnosis is essential. For example, if roundworms and some other type of parasite are present, the roundworm needs to be treated first. Why? Because some medicines do not kill the worms but may only irritate them, so that they migrate to other body organs and cause serious damage.

Prevention Better Than Cure

While drug treatment has proved effective in getting rid of parasites, it is better to avoid being infected with them in the first place. So how can you protect yourself from parasites?

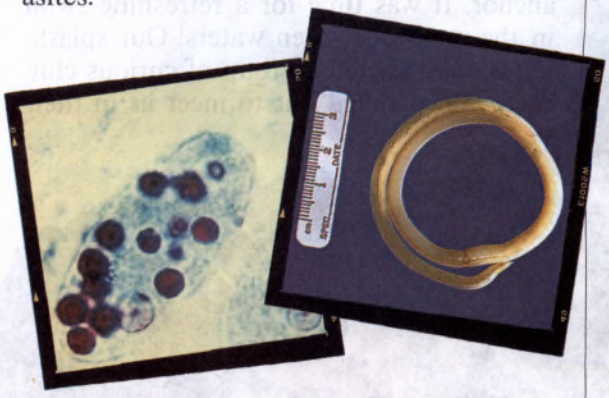
Cleanliness is the best protection. Excrement should not be left exposed to the air. Toilet facilities should be a safe distance from the water source. Human waste should not be used as fertilizer. Proper hygiene is essential as well. In addition, don't let children eat dirt. If one child is found to have parasites, it would be a good idea to have all family members checked.

Care should also be exercised in buying and preparing food. Try to buy products grown in an area that has a reputation for sanitary conditions. Meat should be well cooked in the center. Never eat raw meat. Raw fruit and vegetables should first be thoroughly washed. Be careful not to reuse the water, however, as it may be contaminated.

Drinking water should be brought to a full boil. After the water has cooled, it may be aerated to restore oxygen. Most household filters are not sufficient to eliminate all parasites. The purity of commercially bottled water depends on the degree of sanitary precautions observed in the plant where it is processed.

Traveling or eating out will require additional precautions. Bottled and cartoned drinks are usually safe if served without ice. Since some parasites survive freezing temperatures, ice is only as pure as the water it is made from. You may want to be careful about eating food sold by street vendors. Cut-up pineapple or melon may look inviting, but it is often freshened up by sprinkling water over it—water that may be contaminated. Be careful, but do not become so paranoid that you can no longer enjoy your trip. By taking reasonable precautions, there is much that you can do to protect yourself from parasites.

Ice is only as pure as the water it is made from



Amoebas and worms are two types of parasites

DPDx, the CDC Parasitology Website

Visiting Vietnam's *Bay of the Descending Dragon*

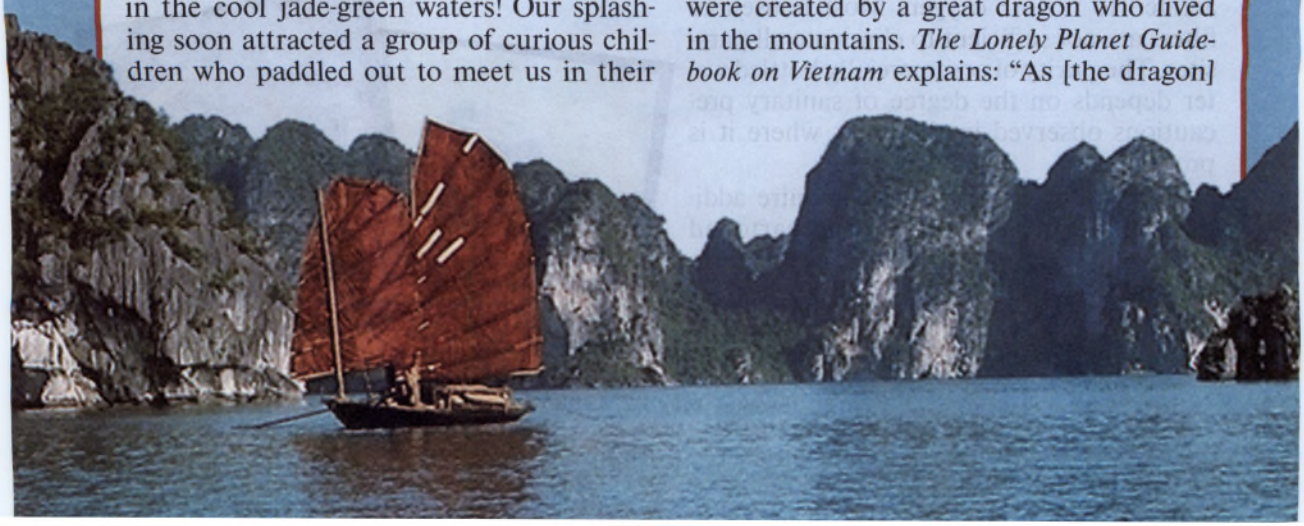
ONE sultry morning in Hanoi, we boarded a bus and headed 100 miles east to one of the most picturesque spots in Vietnam, the world-famous Ha Long Bay—or Bay of the Descending Dragon. We had often heard about the bay's breathtaking splendor, and now, at last, we were going to see it for ourselves.

At noon our bus came to a stop at the edge of the bay. But we had not quite reached our destination. What makes Ha Long Bay famous is not only its emerald-green water but also the natural beauty of the 3,000 islands scattered over its 580 square miles. Because each island is unique, we wanted to visit a few of them. So we boarded a boat, and before long we were involved in an unforgettable adventure.

We had sailed for about an hour when we came upon an idyllic bay surrounded by small islands. The boatmen dropped anchor. It was time for a refreshing swim in the cool jade-green waters! Our splashing soon attracted a group of curious children who paddled out to meet us in their small boats. The children and their families all live on the bay in houseboats, or junks.

You might have guessed that the inhabitants of Ha Long Bay are fishermen. But you may not have guessed that they also practice a vanishing art—sailmaking. Michael Buckley's *Moon Travel Handbook on Vietnam* says: "Halong is one of the last places where junk sails are still handmade by families of sailmakers. Coarse cotton panels are sewn together with silk thread, with every seam sewn by hand. To discourage rot and mildew, the completed sail is dipped in a liquid that comes from a beetroot-like plant of the yam family. The sail is dipped and dried three or four times, a process that gives the sail its dark red-tan color."

Are you wondering how Ha Long Bay got its name—Bay of the Descending Dragon? We didn't spot any dragons on our trip! However, we did learn that according to legend, the islands of Ha Long Bay were created by a great dragon who lived in the mountains. *The Lonely Planet Guidebook on Vietnam* explains: "As [the dragon]



ran towards the coast, its flailing tail gouged out valleys and crevasses; as it plunged into the sea, the areas dug up by the tail became filled with water, leaving only bits of high land visible."

Of course, the real monsters are the wind and the water, which have molded these islands into various shapes and sizes. For example, if you use your imagination, you will see that Hon Ga Choi, Fighting Cock Islet, does look like two cocks fighting.

We got back to the dock at dusk, already looking forward to the next day's exploration. After breakfast the following morning, we set out on a sailboat to take a closer look at some of the caves, or grottoes, in the area. The bay was covered by a mist, making everything appear mystically beautiful. We visited several caves. One of them is called Hang Dau Go—Grotto of the Wooden Stakes. It consists of three chambers connected by 90 steps. How did the cave get its name? The book *The Lonely Planet Guidebook on Vietnam* explains: "The cave derives its Vietnamese name from the third of the chambers, which is said to have been used during the 13th century to store the sharp bamboo stakes which [Vietnamese military hero] Tran Hung Dao planted in the bed of the Bach Dang River" to foil the invading Kublai Khan.

We climbed up to the cave and turned to contemplate the scene below. What we saw was truly spectacular. Quick, get the camera! With the cave's stalactites in the foreground and our boat rocking gently in the turquoise-green bay in the background, we had the makings of a perfect photograph! Ha Long Bay truly is a photographer's paradise and an artist's dream.

Later in the day, we climbed aboard a small motorboat to get a close look at a large island. Suddenly, we were in complete darkness. It was as if the mountain had swallowed us whole! We were passing through a cave. Soon enough, though, we got to the opposite side. Amazingly, we found ourselves on a large lake. There were high walls of limestone on every side. We saw vegetation clinging to the walls. The boatmen cut the engine. The silence was punctuated only by the calls of birds. Memories of that tranquil moment will remain with us for a long time.

Before we knew it, the time had come to make the return trip to Hanoi. Our excursion had not been long enough. However, we did have many images to carry away with us—rugged island peaks, sailing junks and, especially, Ha Long Bay, which is but one example of the beauty of Vietnam.

We look forward to seeing other places of interest in this beautiful country. We thank the Creator, Jehovah God, for providing such variety and beauty in creation and for promising that one day the whole earth will be as unspoiled as Ha Long Bay. —*Contributed.*

"The biggest issue in my life is whether or not to put mayonnaise on my sandwich. How am I supposed to concentrate on anything when I'm obsessed with mayonnaise? Final verdict? No mayonnaise—it has too many calories. Anorexia wins again. I lose."—Jaimee.

How Can I Conquer My Obsession With Weight?

EATING disorders afflict millions of youths.* Most did not start out with the intention of starving themselves (anorexia) or of developing a pattern of bingeing and purging (bulimia). On the contrary, many began with the simple goal of losing a few pounds. Before they realized it, however, they were trapped in a bizarre cycle of starving or bingeing. "I began this whole diet to control my weight, but now it's controlling me," says Jaimee.

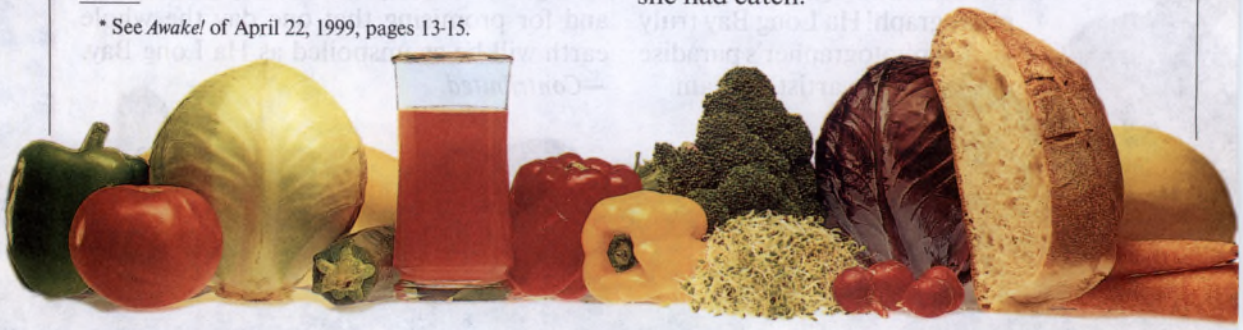
If you find that you are obsessed with food and its effect on your weight, what can you do? First, realize that many other youths have battled with eating disorders and have won! But how?

A Look in the Mirror

A major step in winning the battle against an eating disorder is coming to terms with your appearance. "Most people with eating disorders have a distorted self-image," says the book *Changing Bodies, Changing Lives.* "They do not perceive their bodies realistically and are highly judgmental about themselves, especially their appearance."

Indeed, some teens base their entire self-image on their physical form; any flaw is seen as catastrophic. "I am so fat I can't stand it," says 17-year-old Vicki. "My waist is so thick I can't ever wear anything tucked in." Even after losing 20 pounds, Vicki was not satisfied. She either refused to eat or gorged herself and then vomited up what she had eaten.

* See *Awake!* of April 22, 1999, pages 13-15.



Certainly it is not wrong for you to be concerned to a degree about how you look. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the Bible comments favorably on the physical form and appearance of a number of women and men, including Sarah, Rachel, Joseph, David, and Abigail.* The Bible even says that David's nurse Abishag was "beautiful in the extreme."—1 Kings 1:4.

Defining True Beauty

Nevertheless, the Bible does not place *primary* emphasis on one's physical appearance or bodily shape. Rather, it extols "the secret person of the heart." (1 Peter 3:4) It is the inner person that truly makes one either attractive or detestable in the eyes of God and men.—Proverbs 11:20, 22.

Consider King David's son Absalom. The Bible states: "There proved to be no man so beautiful in all Israel as to be praised so much. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there proved to be no defect in him." (2 Samuel 14:25) Yet, this young man was treacherous. Pride and ambition impelled him to try to usurp Jehovah's appointed king. The Bible, therefore, does not paint a pretty picture of Absalom but portrays him as a man of shameless disloyalty and murderous hatred.

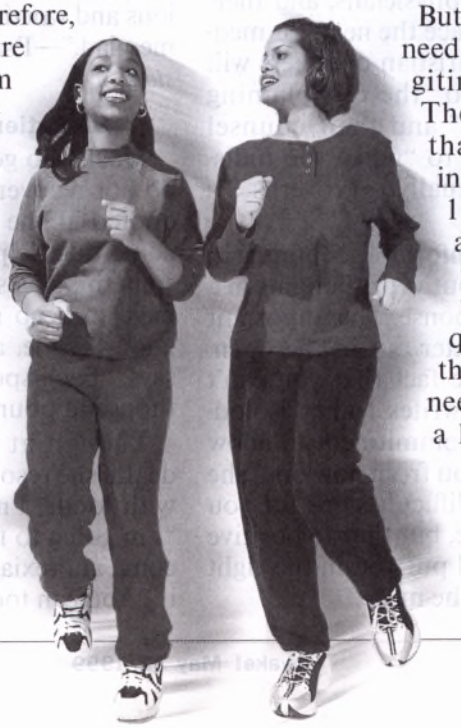
A person's true beauty, or handsomeness, does not depend upon physical form. With good reason, the Bible states: "Acquire wisdom; and with all that you acquire, acquire understanding. To your head it will give a wreath of charm; a crown of beauty it will bestow upon you." —Proverbs 4:7, 9.

* See Genesis 12:11; 29:17; 39:6; 1 Samuel 17:42; 25:3.

Admittedly, though, eating disorders are often motivated by more than dissatisfaction with one's appearance. Says one reference work: "People who become food obsessed and fall prey to eating disorders like anorexia nervosa, bulimia, and overeating, generally have low self-esteem—they do not have a high opinion of their own worth and feel that others do not value them, either."

There are a number of factors that can contribute to feelings of low self-worth. The onset of puberty, for example, can flood you with feelings of uncertainty—especially if you have bloomed before your peers have. Then, too, some youths are raised in homes where there is constant turmoil, perhaps even physical or sexual abuse. Regardless of the cause, recovery usually involves coming to terms with whatever is fueling feelings of worthlessness. This means coming to appreciate your true value as a person. Surely, everyone has at least some commendable qualities. (Compare 1 Corinthians 12:14-18.) True, you may not see these in yourself, but a mature friend may be able to point these out to you.

But what if you really do need to lose weight for legitimate health reasons? The Bible recommends that we be "moderate in habits." (1 Timothy 3:11) Hence, it is best to avoid going to extremes in dieting or falling victim to lose-weight-quick schemes. Perhaps the best way to shed unneeded pounds is to eat a healthy diet and get a



A balanced diet and a reasonable amount of exercise can help you control your weight

reasonable amount of exercise. "As with most everything else," says the magazine *FDA Consumer,* "there's a right way and a wrong way to lose weight. The wrong way is to skip meals, resolve to eat nothing but diet bread and water, take diet pills, or make yourself vomit."

The Power of Confiding in Someone

Social worker Nancy Kolodny compares having an eating disorder to "entering a maze alone, without a map or compass, unsure of the location of the exits, and unsure when or if you'll find your way out. . . . The longer you're in it the more it confounds and frustrates you as you try to spring free of it." If you have symptoms of anorexia or bulimia, therefore, *you need to get help.* You cannot get out of the "maze" by yourself. So confide in a parent or another trusted adult. A Bible proverb states: "A true companion is loving all the time, and is a brother that is born for when there is distress."—Proverbs 17:17.

Many of Jehovah's Witnesses have found such trustworthy companionship among the elders in the Christian congregation. Of course, elders are not physicians, and their assistance will not replace the need for medical help. However, Christian overseers will not turn a deaf ear to "the complaining cry of the lowly one," and their counsel and prayers can help to "make the indisposed one well" spiritually.—Proverbs 21: 13; James 5:13-15.

If you do not feel comfortable confiding in someone face-to-face, put your thoughts in a letter, requesting a response. The important thing is to get the matter out in the open. "By acknowledging the fact that you can't go it alone anymore," writes Nancy Kolodny, "you're making a commitment to allow someone else to help you from now on." She adds: "These may be difficult steps for you to think about and take, but they're positive ones, the kind that will put you in the right direction to get out of the maze."

Christian youths have another powerful resource—prayer. Praying to God is not a psychological crutch. It is real and vital communication with the Creator, who understands you better than you understand yourself! (1 John 3:19, 20) Hence, while this is not Jehovah's due time to wipe away all illnesses, our loving God can guide your steps so that you do not totter. (Psalm 55:22) From his own experience, the psalmist David wrote: "I inquired of Jehovah, and he answered me, and out of all my frights he delivered me. This afflicted one called, and Jehovah himself heard. And out of all his distresses He saved him."—Psalm 34:4, 6.

By all means, then, express your deepest feelings to Jehovah God. "Throw all your anxiety upon him," wrote the apostle Peter, "because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7) To build appreciation for Jehovah's loving-kindness, why not read carefully Psalms 34, 77, 86, 103, and 139? Meditating on these psalms will strengthen your conviction that Jehovah is loyal and *wants* you to succeed. By reading his Word, you will come to feel as did David, who wrote: "Whenever I am anxious and worried, you comfort me and make me glad."—Psalm 94:19, *Today's English Version.*

Be Patient—Recovery Is Gradual

Most who get help for an eating disorder do not recover overnight. Consider Jaimee, quoted at the outset. Even after she started getting help, she found it difficult to eat something as simple as a bowl of cereal. "I have to keep saying to myself that this is good for me, and I need food to live," she says. "Each spoonful I eat seems to weigh a thousand pounds."

Though at one time Jaimee was near death, she resolved to conquer her obsession with food. "I'm not going to die," she said. "I'm going to fight this and win. I will overcome anorexia. It will be hard, but I will do it." You can too!

Photo: WHO/Thierry Falise

Photo supplied by WHO, Geneva

Photo: WHO/Thierry Falise

A New Defense in the Fight Against TUBERCULOSIS

TUBERCULOSIS (TB) is man's oldest infectious killer, and it remains such a serious health threat that the World Health Organization (WHO) compares it to a time bomb. "We are in a race against time," warns a WHO report on TB. If man fails to defuse this bomb, he may one day face a drug-resistant disease that "spreads through the air, yet is virtually as incurable as AIDS." The time has come, urges WHO, to wake up to TB's devastating potential. "Everyone who breathes air, from Wall Street to the Great Wall . . . , needs to worry about this risk."

An overstatement? Hardly. Just imagine how wide-awake the world would be if a disease threatened to rage out of control and erase the entire population of, say, Canada in ten years! Though this sounds like fiction, the threat is real. Worldwide, TB kills more people than AIDS, malaria, and tropical diseases combined: 8,000 persons each day. Some 20 million people now suffer from active TB, and some 30 million could die from it in the next ten years—a number larger than the population of Canada.—See the box "TB's Global Grip," on page 22.

Every second, someone on earth is infected with tuberculosis

• • • •

'Lifesaving medicines sit on the shelf while millions die.'

Dr. Arata Kochi

Now the Good News

Today, however, there is hope. After ten years of testing, researchers have come up with a strategy that may reduce TB from being a killer on the loose to being a criminal under siege. Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima, former director-general of WHO, called this new strategy "one of the most important public health breakthroughs of this decade." And Dr. Arata Kochi, director of the WHO Global TB Programme, says that it offers the first-ever chance to "reverse the TB epidemic." The cause of all this excitement? A method called DOTS.

(Continued on page 23)

Why on the Rise —AGAIN?

The cure for tuberculosis (TB) was discovered more than four decades ago. Since then, over 120 million people have died of TB, and nearly 3 million more people will die this year. Why are so many people still dying from TB when there is a cure? For three main reasons: neglect, HIV/AIDS, and multidrug-resistant TB.

Neglect. The eyes of the world are focused on such infectious diseases as AIDS and Ebola. In 1995, however, for every person who died of Ebola, 12,000 died of TB. In fact, TB is so common in developing countries that people there have come to view the disease as a fact of life. Meanwhile, in the richer countries, TB has been allowed to spread even while effective medicines to cure it sit on the shelves. This global neglect has proved to be a fatal mistake. While the world's concern about TB was weakening, the TB bacilli were growing stronger. Today they attack more people in more countries than ever before in human history.

HIV/AIDS. TB is a traveling companion of HIV and AIDS. When people become infected with HIV—which lowers their immunity—they are 30 times more likely to develop TB. No wonder that the current worldwide HIV epidemic has caused an increase in the number of TB patients as well! It is estimated that 266,000 HIV-positive people died from TB in 1997. "These are the men and women," says Peter Piot, director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, "who didn't benefit from the inexpensive anti-TB medicines they needed to cure their tuberculosis."

Multidrug-Resistant TB. "Superbugs," immune to man's antibiotic arsenal, are the stuff of science fiction, but in the case of TB, they are rapidly becoming a fact. More than 50 million people may already be infected with multidrug-resistant (MDR) TB. Patients who stop taking their medicines after a few weeks because they feel better, because the drug supplies run out, or because the disease carries a social stigma do not kill all TB bacilli in their body. In one Asian country, for instance, 2 out of every 3 TB patients drop out of treatment early. When they become sick again, the disease may be harder to treat because the surviving bacteria fight back and triumph over every available anti-TB medicine. As a result, the patients end up with a type of TB that is incurable—for them and for whomever they may infect. And once this deadly MDR genie is out of the bottle , we are left with the grim question, Will man be able to put it back?

TB's Global Grip

The tuberculosis (TB) epidemic is growing more sizable, more expensive, and more deadly by the year. Reports gathered by the World Health Organization trace the spread of this silent killer. Here are some examples: "Pakistan has been losing the war against tuberculosis." "Tuberculosis has returned to Thailand with a vengeance." "Today, tuberculosis ranks among the leading causes of illness and death in Brazil." "Tuberculosis has maintained a tenacious grip on Mexico's people." In Russia "the incidence of TB is rising sharply." In Ethiopia "tuberculosis rages throughout the country." "South Africa has one of the highest recorded incidence rates of TB in the world."

Although 95 out of every 100 TB patients live in the world's poorer countries, TB is tightening its grip on rich countries as well. The United States saw a sharp rise in reported TB cases during the early 1990's. U.S. journalist Valery Gartseff notes that TB "has once more returned to haunt Americans." Likewise, Dr. Jaap Broekmans, director of the Royal Netherlands TB Association, said recently that the TB epidemic has "begun to worsen in Eastern Europe and parts of Western Europe." Not surprisingly, the journal *Science*, of August 22, 1997, states that "tuberculosis continues to be a major health threat."

Photo supplied by WHO, Geneva

Photo: WHO/Thierry Falise

These combined drugs can kill the TB bacilli

DOTS is an acronym for directly observed treatment, short-course. It is a health management system that can cure most TB patients in six to eight months without their spending a single day in the hospital. DOTS depends on five elements for its success. If any of the elements are missing, notes WHO, the ability to cure TB victims "slips through our fingers." What are these elements?

● **1. Directly:** The most dangerous TB case is the undiagnosed case. WHO thus stresses that first of all, health-care workers should *direct* their efforts to identifying the people in their community who suffer from contagious TB.

● **2. Observed:** The second element of DOTS makes the health system—not the patient—responsible for achieving a cure. Health-care workers or trained volunteers, such as shopkeepers, teachers, or former TB patients, *observe* patients swallowing each dose of anti-TB medicines. "Patient observers" are crucial for success because a main reason why TB persists till today is that patients stop taking their medicines too soon. (See the box "Why on the Rise—Again?" on page 22.) After just a few weeks of medication, they start feeling better and stop taking their pills. Yet, the medication must be taken for six to eight months in order to rid the body of all TB bacilli.

"The DOTS strategy will represent the most important public health breakthrough of this decade."

WHO press release

● **3. Treatment:** During these six to eight months, health workers monitor the results of the *treatment* and document the patients' progress. In that way, they make sure that patients are fully cured and cannot pass the infection on to others.

● **4. Short-Course:** Using the right combination and the right amount of anti-TB drugs, known as *short-course* chemotherapy, for the right length of time is the fourth element of the DOTS strategy. These combined drugs give a knockout punch to kill the TB bacilli.* The drugs must always be in supply so that treatment is never interrupted.

● **5. !:** WHO expresses this fifth element of the DOTS strategy by means of an exclamation mark at the end of DOTS! It represents funding and sound policies. WHO urges health systems to secure financial commitment from governments and nongovernmental organizations and to make TB treatment part of the country's existing health system.

Speaking of funding, the DOTS method appeals to policymakers holding the purse strings. The World Bank has ranked DOTS as "one of the most cost-effective interventions available in fighting . . . disease." The total cost of using the strategy in poor countries,

* The drugs include isoniazid, rifampin, pyrazinamide, streptomycin, and ethambutol.

Photo: WHO/Thierry Falise

Photo supplied by WHO, Geneva

It takes $100 to cure a patient

calculates WHO, is about $100 per patient. "This seldom amounts to more than 10 cents (U.S.) per capita in developing countries, which is affordable even in the worst economic conditions." Low costs, however, do not rule out high payoffs.

How Well Does It Work?

WHO representatives announced in March 1997 that the limited use of the DOTS strategy was "causing the global TB epidemic to level off for the first time in decades." "Where DOTS is used, cure rates nearly double." DOTS pilot projects carried out in areas rife with TB already show that the strategy is working. Consider a few success stories cited by WHO.

In India "DOTS has been applied in demonstration areas covering over 12 million people. . . . Tuberculosis is now cured in 4 out of every 5 patients." In a pilot program covering one million people in Bangladesh, "87 percent [of the TB patients] were cured." On an Indonesian island, a DOTS project "is curing 9 out of 10 infectious patients." In China, pilot projects were "a stunning success," with a cure rate of 94 percent. In one South African city, "more than 80 percent [of the TB patients] are being successfully treated." Recently, DOTS was also instituted in New York City, with impressive results.

The findings of field tests in several dozen countries, concludes Dr. Kochi, show that the strategy "can be used everywhere and can produce cure rates of 85 percent and more."

No Boom—But Progress

With a treatment that can practically defeat one of man's deadliest infectious killers easily and inexpensively, you would expect the DOTS strategy to be booming. "Yet," says a WHO official, "surprisingly few countries are implementing WHO's proven and cost-effective TB control strategy." Indeed, at the beginning of 1996, only 34 countries had implemented the strategy nationwide.

Even so, there is progress. Prior to 1993, when WHO declared a global TB emergency, only 1 out of every 50 TB patients received DOTS. Today that ratio is 1 out of every 10. Reportedly, in 1998 some 96 countries were using the DOTS strategy. If more countries rally around DOTS, the annual number of TB cases 'will be cut in half in just a decade.' Says Dr. Kochi: "We have a proven health care package which only needs to be used more widely."

Since man has the knowledge and the tools to fight against TB successfully, the only thing that is lacking is the 'people who will see that these medicines are put to use throughout the world.' No wonder that in a publication directed to physicians and other health workers worldwide, WHO asks: "What are we all waiting for?"

TB Blueprint Discovered

Researchers recently succeeded in documenting the entire genetic blueprint of the tuberculosis (TB) bacterium. This feat marks "a new phase in the battle against one of mankind's most successful predators," says Dr. Douglas Young, of the Imperial College School of Medicine in London. The World Health Organization reports that this discovery "could prove invaluable to future research on anti-TB drugs and vaccines."—*The TB Treatment Observer,* September 15, 1998.

THE SALTWATER Crocodile

KING OF THE REPTILE WORLD

BY *AWAKE!* CORRESPONDENT IN PALAU

RULERSHIP over the Palau archipelago, in the Pacific Ocean, has often been challenged. The first colonial power to rule these tropical islands, located 550 miles east of the Philippines, was Spain. In time, Spain was replaced by Germany, and Germany by Japan. After Japan, the United States took over and ruled the region until 1994 when the Republic of Palau became a sovereign state.

During all these challenges, though, another type of rulership on the islands was never challenged. What was that? The rulership by the saltwater crocodile—the undisputed king of Palau's reptile world. Today, however, the throne of the crocodiles is shaky. In fact, researchers say that "unless urgent and strict measures are taken to protect the species, the saltwater crocodile will soon become extinct in the wild in Palau."

Why are Palau's crocodiles in trouble? And why could they be given the title king of the reptile world in the first place?

Jaws!

The saltwater crocodile goes by the scientific name *Crocodylus porosus,* meaning "a crocodile full of callosities."* This name refers to the scaly humps on the upper surface of its snout. They form two ridges running from the eyes to the nostrils. The snout is shaped like a triangle and makes up about one seventh of the entire body length. One croc, showcased in Palau Museum, measures 18 inches across the widest part of its king-size head!

When the crocodile's lower jaw drops open, you stare at scissor-sharp teeth

* *Porosus* comes from the Greek word *porosis,* meaning "a callosity," and the Latin suffix *-osus,* meaning "full of."

By courtesy of Australian International Public Relations

Look at those teeth!

© Adam Britton, http://crocodilian.com ◄ By courtesy of Koorana Crocodile Farm, Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia ◄

anchored in jaws that can be shut with devastating force. The only weak parts of the jaws are the muscles for opening them. One source says that a rubber band is usually sufficient to keep the mouth of a seven-foot-long crocodile closed.

Masterly Designed

The crocodile's head is not only huge but also masterly designed for its aquatic world. Take a closer look (at a stuffed croc, that is!), and you will notice that the ears, eyes, and nostrils form the highest points on its head. They project just above the water's surface when the croc floats. Curiously, though, even when the animal shuts its mouth, it cannot keep water out, since it has no lips covering the jawbone. But water that enters the mouth cannot flow into the throat because a valve blocks the entrance to the throat. And since air is inhaled through the nostrils and enters the body behind this valve, the croc can breathe while its mouth is full of water.

And what about underwater vision? No problem at all. While submerged, the crocodile draws a clear membrane, or third eyelid, across its eyes. This membrane protects the eye without causing loss of vision.

Royal Dimensions

The saltwater crocodile is the largest reptile in the world. When males reach ten and a half feet, they are mature but keep growing for many more years. Mark Carwardine, author of *The Guinness Book of Animal Records,* states that a wildlife sanctuary in India houses a male saltwater crocodile that measures 23 feet in length!

The croc's habitat has royal dimensions as well. The same source says that the home range of the saltwater crocodile is larger than that of all other species of crocodiles. Saltwater crocodiles live throughout the tropical regions of Asia and the Pacific, an area stretching from India to Australia and the Palau archipelago.

Turning Point

The mangrove swamps on the Palau islands provide the crocodiles with shade, protection, and abundant food. It is no wonder, then, that these reptiles picked the Palau archipelago as one of their breeding and stamping grounds. In fact, the number of crocodiles living on these islands during the 1960's was estimated to be somewhere between 1,500 and 5,000.

December 1965, however, marked a turning point for the crocodiles on Palau. That month a saltwater crocodile attacked and killed a Palauan fisherman. Some weeks later, the animal was captured and put on public display. The public became so enraged with the captured animal that it was put to death.

"A War Against the Species"

Shortly after this, explain crocodile experts Harry Messel and F. Wayne King, the authorities launched "a campaign to eradicate all crocodiles in Palau, no matter where they occurred. It was little more than a war against the species." Bounties were offered, traps were installed, and hunting boats were used to go after the animals. From 1979 to 1981, hunters shot between 500 and 1,000 crocodiles. They skinned the animals and sold their hides.

Since adult crocs have a large hide, they became a special target. However, each time hunters killed a mature female, they also prevented the hatching of the 1,000 or so babies that the female might have produced during her lifetime. Consequently, the crocodile population dwindled. In the early 1990's, Messel and King found that there were "fewer than 150 crocodiles remaining in the wild in Palau."

Granted, man has reason to be wary of saltwater crocodiles, for their attacks can be fatal. Even so, notes author Carwardine, "the harm they do us is minuscule compared to the devastation we have reaped on them."

In 1997 the Ngardok Nature Reserve was established. Although this reserve has not been established primarily for the protection of saltwater crocodiles, they benefit from the reserve. The marshes surrounding Lake Ngardok provide the crocodiles with a place to hide and to breed.

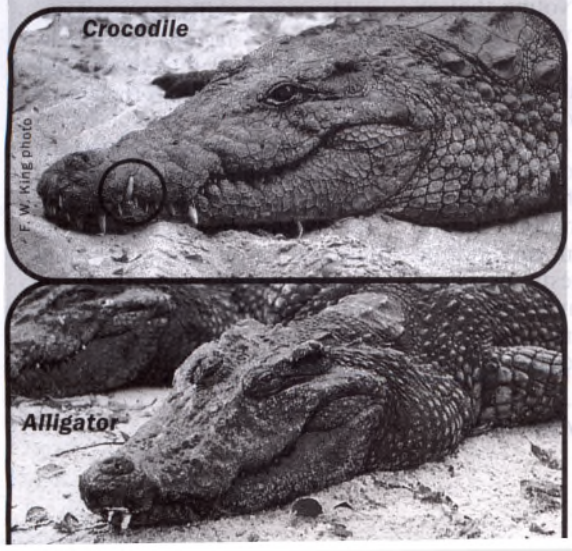
The saltwater crocodile may not be your idea of a close friend, but don't you agree that it makes an impressive king?

CROCODILE TEARS

Saying that someone sheds crocodile tears means that he shows grief or sympathy without being sincere about it. But why are crocodiles depicted as hypocrites? According to *The International Wildlife Encyclopedia,* one possible source of this saying may be the fact that crocodiles keep their eyes moist. Thus, "tears, or water trapped in their lids, may run from the corners of their eyes. This, with the permanent grin of their jaws, could have led to their legendary reputation as hypocrites."

CROCODILE OR ALLIGATOR?

What is the difference between a crocodile and an alligator? The most obvious difference is in their teeth. Simply put, when a crocodile has its jaws closed, you can see the enlarged fourth tooth of the lower jaw. In the case of the alligator, however, the upper jaw covers this tooth.



Smoking Costs Billions

Although the number of smokers is dwindling in many lands, it remains stable in Switzerland, says the *Berner Oberländer* newspaper. About a third of the population smoke. Over 8,000 deaths per year are smoking-related—more deaths than are caused by AIDS, heroin, cocaine, alcohol, fires, automobile accidents, murder, and suicide put together. A study presented by the Federal Department of Public Health in Switzerland concluded that the social cost of tobacco consumption in 1995 was ten billion Swiss francs, more than six billion U.S. dollars. The study attempted to quantify the costs of medical and hospital care, lost production on the job, the reduced quality of life of ailing smokers and their dependents, and the suffering of family members of the deceased.

Protect Your Heart

"We have always known that hotter weather increases the risk of heart attacks—but now we know that cold weather does, too," says Dr. Anthony Graham, a cardiologist and a spokesman for the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, Canada. As reported in *The Globe and Mail* newspaper, a ten-year study of 250,000 men in France shows that a ten-degree change in average temperatures either up or down "increases the risk of a first heart attack by 13 per cent." When temperatures drop, the heart works harder and faster because blood is shunted away from the skin into deeper areas of the body to conserve heat. The risk is compounded when people overexert themselves or do not dress appropriately. Dr. Graham cautions: "You can't be a couch potato for five months and then suddenly go out and shovel the snow in the cold. You have to build up to it."

Loud Music as an Escape

Despite doctors' warnings that excessively loud music "has a negative effect on the whole body," an increasing number of young people seem unable to do without their personal stereos, reports the Polish weekly *Przyjaciółka*. The reason? Some use personal stereos to "detach themselves from the environment. With headphones over his ears, a teenager no longer has to listen to his parents' nagging or respond, for instance, when they ask him to do something," says the paper. Noting that excessively loud music may also cause "fatigue, headache, impaired concentration, or insomnia," *Przyjaciółka* does not advise parents to forbid the use of personal stereos but suggests that parents teach their children to exercise moderation. "Borrow the Walkman from your kids occasionally," suggests the paper. "It will give them a break from the earphones, and you will get to know the world they live in."

Language Extinction

"Sometimes I could just kick myself for not teaching my children the language," says Chief Marie Smith Jones, last in her culture to speak the language of the Eyak, of Alaska. Trends indicate that of the estimated 6,000 languages spoken worldwide, between 40 and 50 percent may vanish within the next century. Australia, which at one time had 250 languages, has already been reduced to about 20. Why is this happening? *Newsweek* magazine suggests that languages are being "pushed into oblivion by the spread of English and other 'big' languages." Professor Stephen Wurm, editor of *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing*, published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, adds: "There's often a belief that you should forget the 'small' languages, the languages of the minorities, because they have no value."

Talk to Your Baby

Talking to babies for at least 30 minutes daily can measurably increase their intelligence and language skills, reports London's *Daily Telegraph*. Researchers studied 140 nine-month-old babies. Parents of half the group were advised on how best to talk to their babies, while the other half received no suggestions to do so. After seven years "the average intelligence of the [talked-to] group was a year and three months ahead of the other group," and their language skills were "very significantly higher," states the report. Researcher

Dr. Sally Ward believes that parents today talk less to their babies than in the past because of major changes in society. For instance, more mothers go out to work, and videotapes have replaced conversation in many homes.

Avoiding Road Rage

"Overly aggressive drivers should not be taken lightly," advises a car-racing veteran quoted in the magazine *Fleet Maintenance & Safety Report*. Keeping a cool head and avoiding bad situations can help to reduce the dangers of road rage. Safety advocates recommend the following:

- Drive courteously at all times.
- Get out of the way of an aggressive motorist if you can do so safely.
- Never challenge another driver by tailgating or speeding up.
- Do not respond to menacing gestures, and avoid making gestures that can be misinterpreted.
- Avoid eye contact with an enraged driver.
- Do not pull over to confront another driver.

Abortion Injury and Death

Nearly 500,000 abortions are performed in Mexico every year, says Francisco Javier Serna Alvarado, president of the Commission for Health and Social Services in Mexico City. As reported in *El Universal* newspaper, a large percentage of these end the mother's life, and many others result in serious complications that require medical attention and even hospitalization. Clandestine abortion is the third-highest cause of maternal death in Mexico. In some cases, crude abortion techniques are employed—introducing sharp pointed objects, taking abortive medication or herbal teas, even throwing oneself down the stairs. Often the consequences include "serious hemorrhages, perforation of the uterus, sterility, infections, and loss of the womb," notes the report.

Get Your Message Across

No matter how important your message is, most people will not want to listen to you if they don't like the way you speak, says vocal expert Dr. Lillian Glass. As reported in *The Citizen* newspaper of South Africa, mumbling, poor grammar, monotonous tone of voice, talking too fast, profanity, and monopolizing the conversation all discourage listeners. On the other hand, people will usually listen if you smile to put them at ease, speak clearly and slowly, look them in the eye, and listen carefully to their point of view without interrupting. "Think before you speak," the article adds, "and you'll express yourself more confidently."

Overeating Increases Risk of Food Poisoning

The risk of getting sick from eating contaminated food is greater if one overeats, according to Dr. Adolfo Chávez, of the Salvador Zubirán National Institute of Nutrition in Mexico. He says that traces of bacteria in the food we eat are normally destroyed by the gastric juices in our stomachs. But after an eating binge, the extra volume of food in the stomach overrides gastric acidity, reducing the stomach's ability to kill bacteria. Dr. Chávez told *Awake!*: "If a person eats 15 tacos and one of them is contaminated, the person will probably get contaminated because of the amount eaten. If that person eats just one taco that is contaminated, there may be no problem."

Laughter Shortage

According to evidence presented at the recent International Congress of Humour, held in Switzerland, during the economically troubled 1950's, the average man laughed for 18 minutes a day, compared with 6 minutes a day during the affluent 1990's. Why the decrease? "Experts blame the constant striving for material, career and personal success for the trend, backing up the old adage that money cannot buy happiness," explains London's *Sunday Times*. Thus, author Michael Argyle concludes: "Those who value money most are less satisfied and in poorer mental health. This may be because money provides only superficial kinds of satisfaction."

Right to Medical Treatment Protected

El Salvador's Supreme Court of Justice recently struck down a Social Security Hospital rule that required patients to donate blood in order to receive medical treatment. Previously, hospital policy called for all patients to provide two units of blood prior to a surgical procedure. Now, those who wish to receive medical treatment in the Social Security Hospital have the legal right to choose not to give blood.

FROM OUR READERS

Teaching Children to Love Creation As part of our children's training, we try to cultivate in them an appreciation for the natural beauty that Jehovah provides so lovingly. We like to use the articles that regularly appear in *Awake!*, such as "Jenny Wren—Tiny Bird, Powerful Song." (September 8, 1998) Our children respond with enthusiasm! It is a joy to share this information with them.

K. A., United States

Nightmares I really appreciated the suggestions in the "Watching the World" item "Children's Nightmares Common." (September 8, 1998) My children have nightmares, but I've always told them not to talk about them but simply to go back to sleep. Now, with the suggestions given, I can better cope with this problem. Please do not stop publishing such helpful information.

R. N., Zimbabwe

Killer Lions I truly enjoyed the article "East Africa's 'Lunatic Express.'" (September 22, 1998) But you were incorrect in listing the man-eating lions as a male and a female. They were both males.

K. B., United States

"Awake!" erred on this point, and we appreciate the clarification.—ED.

Alzheimer's Disease I lead a team of researchers on Alzheimer's disease for a major pharmaceutical company. So I read with the keenest of interest your outstanding series "Alzheimer's Disease—Easing the Pain." (September 22, 1998) I was mightily impressed by the thoroughness with which you covered this pervasive public health problem. And as a congregation elder, I have found the practical counsel in these articles to be invaluable.

S. S., United States

The articles touched my heart because my mother has been suffering from Alzheimer's for more than ten years. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for approaching this subject with tact and respect for those who suffer from it.

E. M., Italy

A coworker who subscribes to *Awake!* passed the issue on to me because my father has Alzheimer's. I was especially moved by the article "Preserving the Patient's Dignity." I don't think one can overemphasize this point. Thank you for the timely tips. I'm sure this article has helped a lot of people.

M. P., Canada

I want to thank you from the depths of my heart for the articles. Since my mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 1986, we have read much literature on it. However, your articles surpassed anything we have read when it comes to warmth, feeling, and empathy. You are so right when you say that those affected by Alzheimer's need love and tender care, right up to the final stage. My mother is unable to eat or speak. But the article gives us the strength to show even more love and affection to her.

H. E., Austria

As president of the Brazilian Alzheimer's Association, I wish to congratulate you on the articles. You described Alzheimer's and its impact on families in a clear way. You were careful to respect the sufferer as an individual, and you presented firsthand accounts showing that love is still the best treatment.

V. C., Brazil

Have You Ever Seen a Fish Walking?

WHAT A SIGHT! I was standing on the edge of a mangrove swamp, looking out at what I thought were empty mud flats. As it turns out, however, they were not empty. A peculiar troupe of acrobats were performing. Peculiar in what way? Each one was no more than six inches long. They were fish.

Although the thought of fish walking and jumping seems about as likely as elephants flying, this is precisely what I was seeing. But how can a fish walk, climb, and jump—yes, even breathe—while out of the water?

The fish that I saw are called mudskippers. Among their unusual attributes are their eyes, which pop out of their head and then retract. Another feature is their pectoral fins, which the mudskipper uses to propel itself over mud—much like a human can use crutches to move around. But how does a mudskipper jump? This unusual fish can flick itself forward with its tail, projecting itself as much as two feet through the air. Mudskippers are also accomplished civil engineers, using their fins as shovels to build burrows in the mud.

The mudskipper has a built-in oxygen tank—its mouth and gill chambers, which are kept full of water when it is "diving" on land. When the oxygen in its "tank" is used up, it scuttles off to a mud pool for a refill.

If you have access to mud flats in Africa or Asia and if you can endure mosquitoes and the tropical sun, why not try to look for the mudskipper? Then you too will be able to say that you have seen a fish walking!—*Contributed.*

Background: Jane Burton/Bruce Coleman Inc.
Inset images: Photographed by Richard Mieczko

COME, HEAR A MESSAGE OF TRUE HOPE

YOU will hear such a message in the public discourse "Making All Things New—As Foretold," which will be featured at the "God's Prophetic Word" District Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses this year. Many people hope that the year 2000 will usher in blessings for humankind.

"The millennium means that we can wash our hands of a really terrible century," noted one university professor. And although "the year 2000 may be just another year on the calendar," *Maclean's* magazine said, "it could happen to coincide with a truly new beginning." Experience would suggest, however, that this is unlikely.

Human efforts to bring a "new beginning" have invariably failed. Why, then, can we believe the promise of God made more than 1,900 years ago, "Look! I am making all things new"? (Revelation 21:5) Convincing reasons will be given in this heartwarming public talk. You may listen to it at a nearby location, for beginning this month, it will be delivered at hundreds of conventions throughout the world.

Contact Jehovah's Witnesses locally, or write to the publishers of this magazine for the location of the convention nearest you. The February 15, 1999, issue of our companion magazine, *The Watchtower,* lists the addresses of all convention locations in the United States, Canada, Britain, and Ireland.