

Marcia Byalick Goes Through The Looking Glass

By Jennifer Fauci - April 1, 2015

"Slay a dragon everyday" is the inspirational quote that is displayed above Marcia Byalick's computer. The author, who discovered her love for the written word later in life, has never shied away from a challenge. So years ago, when 44 new homes were being built a few feet from her own backyard, it was a determination to get her voice heard that led Byalick on the path to writing.



"The first piece I ever wrote, I sent in to the New York Times opinion page," said Byalick, who grew up in Brooklyn and then moved to Albertson. "They were building houses behind me and all I heard was noise and trees getting cut down. The passion that I felt invigorated me to write a piece and they took it. That was the first thing I ever submitted."

Deciding to see how far the nuance of writing could take her, Byalick wrote another piece about marriage, which the Times also published.

"After they took my second piece, I said to myself, 'I should totally be a writer.' Then came years and years and dozens of rejections," said Byalick, who added that she still has a drawer filled to the brim with every rejection she has ever received. "I keep them and remember. They felt like scars and unless you have them, you just don't get better."

Byalick admitted that while at Brooklyn College she never took a writing class. She was completely turned off to writing thanks to her red-pen loving grammar fanatic of a fifth grade teacher.

"She destroyed everything I wrote. It completely dispirited me to the point where I never wanted to take a writing class," said Byalick, who taught elementary school for three years and then became a biofeedback therapist. "After I had kids, I went back to school just to investigate whether I really had any talent or not and I found that I loved it. I'm paraphrasing Gloria Steinem, but when I wrote, I couldn't do anything else," added Byalick of the redemptive feeling of having someone tell her that her writing was good.

Byalick landed an editor's position at The Women's Record, which was the first Long Island monthly newspaper dedicated to women. She stayed there for seven years before taking her skills to Newsday for another 10 years. In the past 20 years she has also written several books and now teaches others to write. Yet Byalick shared the hardship that came with the publishing process and the one phrase that always kept her going.

"Tenacity over talent any day is what I tell every writing class I teach," she said. "It's not the most talented person in the room that I would bet my money on; it's the person who's the hungriest, the person who won't give up and the person who wants it more."

Byalick's first book was rejected, but that didn't stop her from writing three more, all of which went unpublished. Her sixth and most recent book, *Whose Eyes Are These?* took 15 years to write and many years to get published.

"The success of going further really pushed me. If I had 25 rejections and

stopped there, what would have happened to number 26?" said Byalick, who would receive a rejection and have another manuscript in an envelope ready to be mailed.

Whose Eyes Are These? began with a newspaper article about a mix up with sperm. Byalick was fascinated with the topic and wanted to further explore it.

"You can tell an adopted child 'You came from my heart, not from my belly,' but you can't explain to a child about sperm and eggs. If you wait until they understand the concept, you don't want to tell them, because how can you look at them and say 'I'm not your biological father?'" said Byalick, who added that about 86 percent of the time, it goes without mention.

"There are tens of thousands of young people today that were created this way that don't know it."

The book tells the story of Sloane, a hip-hop dancer in middle school who discovers that her dad is not her biological father after he is diagnosed with leukemia. When doctors turn to her 8-year-old sister Emma for a compatible bone-marrow transplant, Sloane is sent into a downward spiral of anger, jealousy and an intense curiosity about the mystery man responsible for her blue eyes. As the story progresses, Sloane gains a better understanding of forgiveness, loyalty and the unbreakable bonds of love.

"To me there is no such thing as a happy 12-year-old girl. Adolescence has been horrendously difficult since time began and it's difficult to open up and be honest when we experience things for the first time," said Byalick, who has always been intrigued by this time of hardship in life. "My job is to soothe the anxiety for that age group."

For Byalick, the silver lining about waiting so many years to have this book published was that in today's world, families are made 100 different ways. The number one rule in writing is to "write what you know" and Byalick knows the landscape of the ever-changing American family.

"I want people to take away from this that unconditional love is what makes you who you are and that your family is your family," said Byalick, who intended for the book to be a young adult novel but was told to change it to middle grade. "The vocabulary is middle grade, but the topic is sophisticated, which is part of the reason why it was difficult to get published, along with not many people possessing the knowledge about the topic itself."

Byalick loves getting people passionate about writing because she believes that everybody's story is worth telling, which is a message she will share at her upcoming book chat for *Whose Eyes Are These?* on April 2 at 7 p.m. at the Book Revue, located at 313 New York Ave. in Huntington.

"The one thing that inspires people is leaving a legacy and telling a story," said Byalick, who is currently teaching memoir writing to seniors. "Writing is very solitary and very isolating. The bad side is you get a little antisocial, so standing up and reading to an audience is flattering and terrifying for me."

Aside from believing in yourself and having a tough skin, Byalick said that writing is more of a calling than a career.

"You have to feel it like a religion because there are so many negatives," she said. "So many people say 'no' to you. There are so many hardships and sacrifices that you have to make and if you have that inside you, your turn will come."



In a Novel for Young Adults, a Family on L.I. Confronts White-Collar Crime

By RAMIN P. JALESHGARI

SCANDAL rocks New York State Student Loan Commission," and, "Assistant Procurement Commissioner, Stephen Gresham, Charged With Racketeering," scream front-page headlines. Not in daily newspapers but in a new novel, "It's a Matter of Trust."

The book is not an exploration of scandal or even true crimes. It is the first novel for young adults by Marcia Byalick of Searingtown. Set in Roslyn, and in the voice of the teenage protagonist, Erika Gresham, the book explores how a family reacts after the father has been indicted in a case of white-collar crime.

"We all watch scandals on the news and read about them in the headlines," Ms. Byalick said. "We see the accused hiding from the cameras and hear their families yelling, 'No comment!' from behind closed doors. I began to wonder what was going on the other side of those doors. How did these people really feel?"

It was that interest coupled with concern about the "redefinition of the family in American society," she said, that led her to write "It's a Matter of Trust," which Harcourt Brace published this month.

"Even though my book is fiction," Ms. Byalick said, "I wanted to write something indicative of what modern kids are coping with. True, not everyone has an accused criminal for a

Exploring the redefinition of the family in American society.

father. But many kids deal with issues that are just as serious. Acne, clothes and friends are not all today's teens are concerned with."

Writing was not her first calling. First, she was an elementary-school teacher and then a biofeedback therapist. Most recently Ms. Byalick worked eight years as editor of *The Women's Record*, a newspaper on Long Island for professional women. After the paper closed she pursued writing full time.

"Professionally and personally I always followed the rules that were laid out for me," she recounted. "I was raised in Brooklyn, attended teachers' college, got married, moved to Long Island, taught for a while, then had my two daughters — three years apart — just like everyone else I grew up with."

But as her children grew up, Ms. Byalick found herself drawn to more creative pursuits, landing her at *The Women's Record*.

"It was during my time at the newspaper when I realized I loved writing," Ms. Byalick said. She said she favored personal essays, a genre that influenced her to write "How Come I Feel So Disconnected?" and "Three Career Couple" (Peterson Press) with Linda Saslow. "It's a Matter of Trust" was her first attempt at fiction. The combination of personal experience and talent was another impetus.

"As a former teacher and mother of two girls," she said, "I was privileged to have a first-hand view of



Susan Kravitz

Marcia Byalick

teen behavior and lingo. That helped me create Erika's voice. As an editor-writer I had an idea of how headlines are made, which helped me invent a media frenzy over Erika's father's actions."

While Ms. Byalick's husband, Bob, is a psychologist who bears no similarity to Stephen Gresham, she said many of her characters and settings were from her own life. Readers will recognize Roosevelt Field, Northern Boulevard and other Long Island locations. Relatives and friends in the novel are drawn in part from members of Ms. Byalick's family and social circle, and she credited a local rabbi as the model for the rabbi in the book.

"In the book Erika needs help to cope with the enormity of her father's downfall," Ms. Byalick said. "At the advice of her best-loved cousin she seeks out Rabbi Arnold Beckman. The conversation they have was actually role-played with my own rabbi, a wonderful man who told me exactly what he'd say to a girl in Erika's position."

In "It's a Matter of Trust" spirituality is offered as a potential part of life, but not for everyone. "The best part of the book is that the main character is completely believable," an editor at Harcourt Brace, Lynda Zuckerman, said. "Right at the first chapter you are drawn into believing that an actual girl is telling you her own story. I believe that's why none of the issues explored in 'It's a Matter of Trust' are preachy or pushy. They are simply the facts of life as Erika Gresham has had to cope with them."

The young woman's life is certain-

ly hard. Almost immediately after having been accused of taking bribes as an assistant procurement commissioner at the loan agency, Erika's father, Stephen, admits that the allegations are true. Erika must not live just with that the fact that her father has been charged with a crime, but also that he is guilty. Her feelings for him, running from hatred to pity, are thrown into turmoil.

"Readers may wonder why I didn't give Erika a chance to stand by her father," Ms. Byalick said. "But I wanted to explore whether a family can stick together when the odds are stacked against them. I also wanted to prove that it is possible to go on 'being there' for someone you love, even when you don't agree with their actions."

What is perhaps most realistic about Ms. Byalick's book is that life — a death, a birth, Erika's first romance — continues throughout the book, despite the extent of the family's problems. "Life always goes on, even when you think your own world is definitely ending," Ms. Byalick said. "It would have been unrealistic for me to portray the Greshams' life as any different."

Although the novel has serious themes, all are examined through a teen-ager's eyes and in a way that young adults can cope with. "Serious issues are the subject of most of today's young-adult novels," Ms. Zuckerman said, "because 20th-century teen-agers live in serious times. Books like Marcia Byalick's don't sugarcoat the truth. Instead they present hard messages in a way that's easy to digest and easy to learn from."

For Ms. Byalick getting her message out was not easy. "It's a Matter of Trust" was rejected 25 times. "Like the family in the book, I had no choice but to go on," she said. "The story had to be told, and even though my life continued on many different paths, I remained firm in my commitment to publish my novel."

Ms. Byalick is working on her second young adult novel, on alternative methods of conception. Harcourt Brace has already accepted it.

Its main character is another Long Island teen-ager who finds out that she was conceived by artificial insemination through an anonymous donor and that she has to face the fact that the man whom she called father is not her birth parent.

"My ultimate goal is to help teens become comfortable dealing with hard issues," she said. "Young people need to know that time always brings change. Through my writing I'd like to teach them that coping with those changes positively is always within their control."

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Dr. Maria Salentos, left, and Justine Carriana, administer an ultrasound. Roxanne Cashin, seated, and Candy Toloschi confer on breast examination. (Photograph by Ted Spelman/The New York Times)

Umbrella Centers for Women's Health

By MARCIA BYALICK

IHAVE always made sure my kids got to the doctor regularly and my husband made an appointment for his physical, but I dreaded the hassle when it came to taking care of myself," said Susan Datz, a teacher from Oceanide.

"Trying to find a doctor who remembered my name without checking my chart, someone who would talk to me when I felt like a person, while I still had my clothes on, and who understood that my complaints were real and not all induced by stress, was not an easy task," she continued. "I knew many of my friends felt the same way. That's why I was so pleased to hear that Long Island Jewish Hospital was opening up a women's health care center. At last someone was listening to us."

Health providers on Long Island have been listening carefully to women, who make many of the key decisions in a family's health care. Inspired by both the demographic of thousands of educated, dissatisfied baby boomers and the intense competition for customers in a restructured health care economy, more and more Long Island hospitals are setting up special programs and other offerings to deal specifically with women's health problems.

Stony Brook University Hospital and Medical Center, one of only 40 hospitals nationwide participating in the Women's Health Initiative, a large-scale study of women aged 55 to 79 financed by the National Institute of Health, is planning to open a comprehensive women's center to house all its women's services.

Good Samaritan Hospital in West Islip, whose Breast Health Center is one of four in the country doing digital clinical trials to test the efficacy and advantages of digital imaging in mammography, has its Women's Health Institute, which offers seminars covering all aspects of health education, psychological support and coping techniques.

Long Island Jewish Medical Center and North Shore University Hospital have gone a step further. Both have recently opened state-of-the-art multispecialty resources, comprehensive medical malls catering to the medical needs of women. There, under one roof, specialists coordinate their expertise to focus not only on the gynecological aspects of a woman's health care but the treatment and prevention of heart disease, breast cancer, osteoporosis, depression, lupus, diabetes, thyroid problems, bladder problems, irritable bowel syndrome and mid-life hormonal upheavals.

A woman can see just one doctor or have all her medical needs attended to. The centers stay open longer to accommodate working women, and treatment is covered by most major insurance carriers.

Women's health centers have been around, from the maternity hospitals of the 1800's to the family planning clinics of the early 1900's to the birthing centers, birth control clinics and breast centers of the last 25 years. Since no laws restrict the use of the term, many small gynecological and radiological practices refer to themselves as women's health care cen-

ters. It is the concept of one-stop shopping, however, the promise of fitting in all medical needs in one place by a group of doctors who cooperate with one another, that many women find attractive.

A recent New York Times/CBS survey reported 56 percent of the women polled believed most doctors discount women's health complaints, talked down to them and were dictatorial in their treatment, and 63 percent felt doctors took men's complaints more seriously than those of women.

"It was clear that women needed something different from what they were getting 10 years ago," said Dr. Vicki Selzer, president of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, chairwoman of the department of obstetrics and gynecology at Long Island Jewish Medical Center and executive director of Long Island Jewish's Ann and Jules Gottlieb Women's Comprehensive Health Center in Manhasset.

"What was missing was the capability of getting their medical needs addressed in a way that was patient

schedule my annual gynecological exam, my mammogram and my bone density test all in the same morning," said Carole Corley, a patient since the center opened. "The little touches — the classical music in the waiting room, the shades in the examining room which drop down from the top, allowing in sunlight, the valet parking if the lot is filled, the computerized, centralized system for making appointments with any doctor on staff — all make patients feel supported, respected and valued."

"My two daughters, both young adults, use the physicians here, and I even brought my neighbor's 14-year-old daughter to a teen sexuality forum the center ran one night."

"I was a pioneer patient," said Aileen Paskoff, of her experience 18 years ago at Penny Wise Budoff's Women's Center in Bethpage. "What I remember most was that I never had to go home and worry. Anything that cropped up was handled immediately, if not by the gynecologist, then by the urologist down the hall. I never had to wait for results, and that was a blessing."



centered and focused on keeping them healthy," Dr. Selzer said. "When you take a look at the major causes of morbidity, what strikes you is how much is preventable. We focus on education so that patients can become part of their own health care. We are dedicated to providing for women what they deserve and what has been lacking."

"Women come here to have all their health care needs addressed," said Gerald Bosh, the director of the center. "No matter what doctor a patient sees, notes are recorded on a single chase allowing for a free flow of information. We can collapse the referral process dramatically so that a woman with a suspicious mammogram can have a sonogram, a fine needle aspiration and a cytopathologist look at her cells, all in one day."

Occupying the fifth floor of the Manhasset Ambulatory Pavilion of Long Island Jewish, the center's 10,000 square feet were completely renovated by Alex Donagan, an architect. The grays, soft lighting, absence of stainless steel, private bathrooms separating every two examination rooms and the private waiting and recovery areas all bolster its nonthreatening user-friendly environment. There is a resource library, staffed by a volunteer, right off the waiting room filled with literature on everything from AIDS to how to travel safely during pregnancy.

"I love the idea of being able to

Dr. Budoff has since retired and that center, has been taken over by North Shore University Hospital and renamed Women's Healthcare of Bethpage.

"Since we're here," said Dr. Valerie Musio, medical director of gynecology at the center. "We've added obstetrics and surgical procedures to the menu of services offered. We present a lecture series as well as a Lamaze course. I find that the support and convenience we provide promotes patient compliance."

That support and convenience is also a boon for the physicians involved.

"It's great to have a dedicated expert in each area available, whether it's for a casual question or a formal conference," said Dr. Lawrence Lind, chief of the division of urogynecology at North Shore University Hospital and co-director with Dr. Carole Moodie, an internist, of the Sharon Joyce Schlanger Center for Women's Care in Manhasset. "You don't have to say, let me check that out and get back to you."

The center, which opened last year, occupies the second floor of the Irving Goldman Family Care Center on Northern Boulevard in Great Neck. Its services include urogynecology, a fast-growing hybrid specialty that deals with incontinence, high-risk pregnancy services, a vulva specialist and a wing, overseen by geriatricians, specifically geared for the special needs of the elderly. Since

pediatrics is situated one floor down, many women make an appointment for themselves and their babies at the same time.

"What makes us unique," added Dr. Moodie, "is that we take all centers. We take care of both private patients and clinic patients indiscriminately in a setting of private practice, and focus on wellness and preventive care. I don't know anyone else who's doing that. Our idea is to have the doctors come to the patient, not the other way around. We move around so that the patient doesn't have to."

"We're fine-tuning the level of care, fitting in social workers, nutritionists, whatever we need," said Dr. Lind. "I take pride in the fact that all our physicians have made an academic commitment, dedicating the time to assure that they're always up to date."

Not all doctors agree, however, that these centers provide the ultimate solution for every woman's health needs.

"I think that the advent of these centers has caused all doctors to rethink how they treat women," said Dr. Henry Prince, an attending physician at North Shore. "There's no doubt that women have different needs and they should be addressed respectfully. My objection is the assumption that the label 'women's center' automatically guarantees better care. You have to look at each facility individually and assess the level of treatment. Just as because you're a woman doctor doesn't mean you automatically know more about a woman's medicine, because you work in a women's center doesn't necessarily mean you're more concerned."

"The idea of women's health centers is an excellent one, but I don't know if we're there yet," said Dr. Corinne Tobin, a breast-imaging specialist and the director of mammography at Nassau Radiological Group, the largest outpatient imaging practice on Long Island. "For me, the most important element in evaluating these places is the core of specialists involved. If they are chosen because of their hospital affiliation, the center may not be staffed with people with the best training in the field of women's health."

"I think most of the women we see like to make their own choices," said Dr. William Worntan, one of 20 radiologists in the same practice. "When they're faced with a serious problem, they ask for other opinions and do their own research. While I clearly see the marketing advantages and acknowledge the obvious benefits of the convenience of having a yearly exam, a mammogram and a bone density test scheduled at the same time, if anything more complex arises, I think the importance of the concept diminishes."

"As a physician for 32 years, I'm proud of the intimate relationship I share with my patients," said Dr. Sidney Wulan, a gynecologist who practices in Great Neck. "As long as these places don't grow so big that they start treating women like they're on an assembly line, as long as patients can speak to their doctor after hours if there's a problem, as long as the doctors involved are competent and caring, then I guess they're a good idea."



Schools Seek New Ways Of Making Renovations

By MARCIA BYALICK

PRESSURED to house a rapidly increasing elementary school population in outdated buildings that often need extensive repairs, many districts on Long Island are investigating new ways to expand and renovate their schools.

Great Neck started work on a \$29 million project renovating its schools last summer. Amityville just passed a \$12 million budget to renovate and add to the Park Avenue Elementary School. North Babylon has allotted \$50 million to renovate its eight schools. Mineola's Board of Education just approved a \$37 million bond for renovations. And at least a half dozen more districts are planning improvements.

Not only are all these districts planning renovations, but they are relying on the same architectural firm, the Spector Group of New Hyde Park.

"Our district spent three months doing an extensive search, looking at the work of about 10 firms," said Joe Jackson, Assistant Superintendent of Mineola. "Every major architectural firm in Nassau was examined and interviewed. The Spector Group seemed more progressive, where some of the others were more conservative. They are more in tune with what we were looking to do."

Stephanie Andrews, president of the Amityville School Board, said it also ended up going to Spector.

"Spector was the only one who respected the old style of the buildings and blended in all the modern changes without destroying the look," she said. "When I saw what they did with the library in Hewlett, with all the levels and inviting places to read, the windows, the low ceilings, I was sold."

The Spector Group is a 38-year-old firm known for such buildings as the 15-story glass-faced twin towers of EAB Plaza in Uniondale, the headquarters for Computer Associates in Islandia, and the new Supreme Court complex in Central Islip.

"We're bringing the same principles of international corporate design to Long Island schools that we've used with Sony, Olympus, Nissan and BMW," said Jane Felsen Gertler, the firm's director of communications. "We've seen first hand that the importance of positively experiencing one's surroundings, whether a third grader or a corporate manager, contributes directly to the ability to function optimally."

For classrooms, which have generally looked the same for 100 years, the firm is creating huge spaces, from 900 to 1,200

square feet, to accommodate the cluster concept of students moving from one learning station to another. Furniture, equipment, cabinets and storage will be portable and work in different configurations. Movable walls between rooms will allow for the creation of even larger spaces. More classrooms will have direct access to the outdoors so students can plant gardens, study the weather and observe the environment.

Dark corridors and their fluorescent lights will be replaced by light wells and sconces, and tiled geometric patterns on the walls and floors will create visually open hallways. Music rooms will be acoustically sound; art rooms will take advantage of sunlight. Gyms will be air conditioned, have softer floors, cushioned walls for greater safety, and plenty of storage.



Photographs by Kevin P. Coughlin for The New York Times

With increasing elementary school populations, new ways of expansion have become a must. Children, above, at the new library of the Franklin Early Childhood Center; the gym at the same school.



Special-education classrooms will be identical to the others in the school, not relegated, as is too often the case, to whatever extra space is available. Elevators, ramps, widened doors and bathrooms will be accessible to people with handicaps. Libraries will be multilevel so students can sit in intimate settings and have small stages on which to perform readings. They will double as media centers where research

will be electronic and tied to the Internet.

The infusion of technology is probably the biggest catalyst for change. Long Island's revamped schools will have classrooms where computer-aided learning with material from CD-ROMs or downloaded from the Internet will be available to every student. In the Hewlett Elementary School, the Spector Group has installed a computer network wiring system capable of providing

data, voice and video links throughout the school with the potential to link up to each building in the district.

Most of these improvements are already a reality in the Hewlett-Woodmere School District. The 14-month, \$8.9 million renovation was financed through a \$6.5 million bond issue and \$2.4 million from a reserve fund.

"I've worked in this building for 27

years," said Dr. Mildred David, principal of Hewlett Elementary School. "In the early days, we had enormous, 12-stall bathrooms that were almost the size of classrooms. The art room had pipes hanging from the ceiling, covered with asbestos. Thermostats were unreliable, paint was cracking, the windows were drafty, and the lighting was dingy."

"Since the renovation was completed in 1993, the entire environment is humanized. One classroom was built as a prototype and all of us had input into its final form. Today, every class is a brighter, happier place to be. Each room is soundproofed, has running water, and solar blinds that allow the light in but keep ultraviolet rays out. All the rooms are wired for five computers. Yet for all the internal modernization, the integrity and magnificence of the building's exterior facade was left intact."

Dr. David said the changes to the building had also resulted in a dramatic change in the students: They seem to be behaving better.

"More space seems to invite more civility," she said. "Our corridors have light wells, which impart an inviting sense of intimacy. Children used to go racing through the halls. I rarely have that today. We have very little defacement of school property."

"There's definitely something about the quality of the environment that causes children to act more respectfully."



Photographs by Chris Maynard for The New York Times

Carole Cotler heads to "work" with Berklee at Long Island Jewish Hospital. They participate in pet therapy, in which patients interact with animals.

When Command is 'Heal,' These Dogs Obey

By MARCIA BYALICK

CAROLE COTLER had been taking her dog, Berklee, to long-term care facilities and nursing homes all over Long Island. She had seen how her friendly bulldog-boxer mix brightened the days and lifted the spirits of the sick and the aged, and had read about the patients jarred from comas and the catatonics smiling for the first time when exposed to the increasingly popular discipline known as animal-assisted therapy.

Ms. Cotler was sure that Berklee's affections would work equally well in hospitals. But the state Health Department barred animals from hospitals. Then a year ago, the state revamped its rules to allow animal-assisted therapy programs into acute-care facilities. Since the regulation was amended, teams of certified dogs and their owners are being courted by the rehabilitation, geriatric and pediatric units of hospitals throughout the Island as even the most conservative hospital administrators are convinced that dogs can help spark remarkable improvement in many patients' lives.

"You just have to watch one of these dogs put his head under a listless hand, demanding to be petted, or rest his chin on a patient's chest and stare lovingly into their eyes, or see a child who wouldn't get out of bed offer to hold the leash and take a dog for a walk down the hall, to see the worth of this program," said Ms. Cotler, a volunteer from Roslyn who with Berklee has been certified by the Delta Society and Therapy Dogs International, two animal-therapy organizations.

"You can actually see them bring people out of themselves and help them forget their troubles," she said of the dogs. "Blank faces come alive and eyes uncloud. Especially with the elderly, who don't get hugged very much, these dogs provide a socially acceptable outlet for the



Sally Arlen, a hospital patient, pets Berklee, a boxer-English bulldog mix.

need to touch and be touched."

In 1998, a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found "significant positive changes in the psychosocial well-being" of patients receiving animal-assisted therapy, and the Harvard Health Letter reported that such therapy can reduce a patient's blood pressure and heart rate.

Although therapy dogs come in all sizes, sexes, ages and breeds, it takes a calm, nonaggressive temperament and a solid grasp of obedience commands to complete a certified training program. The dogs must negotiate in and around elevators, revolving doors, wheelchairs, crutches and IV poles. They have to ignore loud noises, leftover food on bedside tables, bedside commodes and an accidental step on the paw or poke in the eye. The animals must have all their shots, be bathed, have their nails filed smooth and their teeth and ears clean. They are kept on leashes and visit only those selected to receive them. They are not allowed in burn or intensive-care units.

In addition, for certification by the Delta Society, pet owners are required to attend a weekend workshop and pass a written exam.

Pam Rawlings of Oyster Bay is an evaluator for Therapy Dogs International. She has certified close to 200

dogs on Long Island, many of which work in Schneider Children's Hospital in Lake Success.

"Seeing an 8-year-old's clenched fist open up for the first time to pet my dog or an unresponsive Alzheimer patient start smiling and telling stories about a dog he once owned might not be a miracle, but it's close enough," she said. "I'm excited about the opportunity to work with head-trauma patients and those in rehab units. Now doctors will have a chance to see the benefits I've seen."

Dr. Bob Gluck, a hand and microsurgeon affiliated with Long Island Jewish Hospital since 1982, was the prime force behind Canines for Kids, the pet therapy program at Schneider Children's Hospital, part of Long Island Jewish. He credits the "benign neglect" of the state for the fact that the program has been running successfully for three years.

"We were the first hospital on Long Island to do this and started out cautiously," Dr. Gluck said. "Many on our staff had legitimate concerns and we answered each one, instituting a rigorous screening process for both the dogs and their owners. A veterinarian checks out each animal before they begin. At first, the dogs were allowed only in the playroom. As we became more comfortable, they visited the kids who weren't

mobile. Now they go pretty much everywhere. These dogs have a kind of primitive attraction for a lot of the kids. Those who don't respond to clowns and athletes light up when the dogs arrive."

Animal-assisted therapy covers a wide range of activities, from a simple visit to provide company to aiding muscle-coordination retraining of a stroke victim by having the patient pet the dog or throw a ball for a game of fetch. Just the animals' presence can ease tension and provide solace. In physical, occupational and speech therapy programs, the dogs have been found to increase patient motivation to work on exercises to improve fine motor skills, wheelchair skills and verbal skills.

"I'm very excited about the potential of introducing animal-assisted therapy to our population," said Dr. Deborah Benson, a clinical neuropsychologist and program director of Transitions, a program in Manhasset specializing in brain injuries. "We see a full range of deficits in people with head injuries — physical, emotional and cognitive."

The introduction of dogs as therapy in clinical situations is the culmination of an evolutionary process. Bide-A-Wee, which has animal shelters in Wantagh and Westhampton, has been running a pet therapy program serving schools, residential centers and nursing homes for the last 15 years.

"We were the pioneers in pet therapy, offering insurance and screening candidates," said Wendie Grossman of Glen Cove, the director of outreach and education for Bide-A-Wee. "The newer training programs are fine, but our emphasis is different. Our evaluation is not as strict and formal. What I look for is a golden retriever in any size or shape. If he likes people, can behave on a leash and is a happy, tail-wagging dog, we'll accept him. We don't go into acute care facilities, and unlike the Delta and T.D.I. programs, someone from the faculty must accompany our volunteers at all times. Many of our volunteers are retired and have been with us for years. The stories they tell illustrate a real win-win situation. As it stands now, we can't possibly fill all the requests we get for visits."

Correction

A photograph last Sunday in The Guide, showing Grace Soffer's painting "Watergarden II," was printed upside down.

Ways to Be Safe, Rather Than Sorry

By MARCIA BYALICK

THE months of May through August ought to come with a warning label: Caution. Don't let summer's sunshine blind you to its dark side.

Along with longer days, warmer temperatures and lighter moods, the season arrives with a host of health hazards. Everyone has heard the warnings on how to stay safe at the beach and in the woods, but not everybody has listened.

Here are some reminders, just in case:

A number of visible changes in the skin — freckles, wrinkling and splotchy pigmentation — can be traced to the abnormal growth of skin cells and the loss of collagen caused by exposure to the ultraviolet rays of the sun. Those who spent their youths lying in the sun like lizards on a rock are the most likely to have some sort of skin damage.

Just a few years ago, health experts believed that it was adequate to use a sunscreen with a skin protection factor (SPF) of 15. Now most recommend recommend using the strongest protection available, 50 SPF. A product's SPF is calculated by measuring the time it takes to produce redness on the skin protected by sunscreen divided by the time required for unprotected skin to arrive at the same color.

The old rules still apply. Avoid the sun between 10 A.M. and 2 P.M. Put on sunscreen at least 30 minutes before you venture out. Check that it is waterproof. Use enough. It takes about an ounce of sunscreen to cover

an average adult. Reapply every two hours. And if you are especially sensitive, wear large sunglasses, and a hat with a three-inch brim. A baseball cap will help only if the brim is facing front.

It has been 10 years since the threat of Lyme disease made a stroll in the woods an ominous affair, particularly in May, June and July when immature deer ticks are most abundant. The disease can cause skin rashes, arthritis-like symptoms and even serious heart problems.

Lyme disease has responded well to antibiotics but prevention has been difficult — until now. The Food and Drug Administration approved a new vaccine this past December. It is given by injection in three doses — the first two a month apart and the third the following year.

Tested in over 20,000 people, the vaccine was proven 50 percent effective after two doses and 78 percent effective after three.

To avoid encounters with deer ticks in the first place, stick to the center of trails while walking in wooded areas to avoid picking up ticks from overhanging grass and brush. Wear clothing that hugs the ankles and wrists and is light-colored to make it easier to spot the poppy seed sized creatures. Spray your clothing with the insecticide per-

methrin or use an insect repellent containing DEET.

If you find a tick, remove it with a tweezers, being careful not to squeeze the tick's body. Then apply an antiseptic to the bite. Remember that a tick must be attached for about 48 hours to transmit the Lyme disease bacterium, so daily checking can prevent the disease.

Poison ivy, another bane of summer, is the world's most common allergy, affecting almost half of all Americans. One billionth of a gram of the resin known as urushiol can cause a wicked itch and bothersome rash. If you need help identifying the plant (or its associate poison oak) remember the adage, "leaves of three, let them be."

There are a number of effective commercial products that will prevent the urushiol oil from taking hold of your skin. In a pinch, any deodorant containing aluminum chlorohydrate can help. Remember that urushiol oil remains potent for up to five years so wash yourself and your clothes thoroughly.

If you wash within 15 minutes of contact, you might avoid the rash. If it's too late for that, try calamine lotion, compresses with ice-cold milk, plain ice, or over-the-counter one percent hydrocortisone cream. Scratching won't spread the itch but it could lead to infection.

Exercise, normally lauded as good for your health, can actually be deadly in the hot summer months. It is important, regardless of the shape you're in, to drink plenty of water, exercise in the cooler times of the day and reduce the intensity of your workout.

If you lose too much fluid, the volume of the blood in your body decreases, and your temperature increases, causing heat exhaustion or, more seriously, heat stroke.

Heat exhaustion symptoms include fatigue, weakness and collapse, accompanied by pale, clammy skin and profuse sweating. A person should lie down in a quiet, cool environment and be given cool packs and salt water. Someone suffering from heat stroke does not sweat but has a rapid pulse, hot skin, and a high temperature. This potentially life-threatening condition requires immediate medical attention. While waiting, try alcohol rubs, ice packs or immersing the whole body in cold water.

If you can hear thunder, you are close enough to the storm to be struck by lightning. Stay away from isolated trees, small sheds, boats, and convertibles. Don't use the phone (telephone lines can conduct electricity), or take a shower, and turn off the air conditioner (power surges can overload the compressors).

If you're caught outdoors and you feel your skin tingle or your hair stand on end, squat low to the ground on the balls of your feet. Put your hands on your knees with your head between them. Make yourself the smallest possible target and minimize your contact with the ground. ■

It's a jungle out there — and you haven't even left the backyard.

Spinning: 'The Flavor of the Year' for Cardiovascular Fitness

By MARCIA BYALICK

IN a darkened sweat box of a room, 15 men and women sit in a circle, each on a stationary bike. Perched on seats roughly the size of a slice of pie, they are pedaling as if pursued by the 2,400 calories of a celebratory dinner. They execute quick movements on and off the seat, sometimes standing up and riding out of the saddle.

An instructor guides them through their 40-minute ride. "Close your eyes," she exhorts. "Head down, elbows bent, knees in, feet flexed. Take that hill. Sprint to the top. Don't give up. You're strong. Draw on the power within. I know you can make it."

Welcome to spinning, the group exercise flavor of the year.

Despite the boom in running shoes, home exercise equipment and frozen yogurt, the percentage of Americans who are considered out of shape and overweight is higher now than it was five years ago. In a survey last year by Mark Clements Research, 92 percent of the respondents said physical activity was as important to good health as the food they ate and 88 percent said they believed exercise could significantly reduce the risk of disease. But only 50 percent said they exercised regularly.

Health clubs know this is the month people are most repentant and most susceptible to promises to help them get back on track. No surprise then that January is the busiest month for health club enrollment. Those in the fitness industry hope spinning will encourage some of the 60 percent who statistics show will lose motivation and stop going to the gym by St. Valentine's Day.

Regulars at the gym have been through intricately choreographed aerobics that many found tough to follow, hard on their feet and difficult to assess as far as results were concerned. Step classes, a more athletic cousin, were the rage but are becoming "old." There is yoga, but that does not burn enough calories. Boxing is big but requires skill and endurance that not all possess. The challenge was to come up with a full cardio workout that was intense, efficient and easy to learn so that even those who do not exercise might be tempted to give it a whirl.

A spinning class takes participants on an imaginary bike trip of varying intensity meant to mimic real back roads riding. The concept was developed in 1990 by Johnny G. Oldstein (the Oldstein is silent), a South African-born trainer living in California.



Richard Lee for The New York Times

An endurance cyclist working in his garage, he fashioned a stationary bike to make it more like a racer. It is built with a fixed gear on a weighed flywheel so you pedal continuously. There are no computerized displays and no magazine racks. The racing-style handlebars have a single lever beneath them that lets the rider control the resistance level, making the workout suitable for the dance challenged but intense enough for the most athletically inclined.

"There's a new karma in the industry," said Richard Marshel, co-owner with Arnold Marshel and Jay Karl of the 3,300-member East Coast Athletic Club in Port Washington. "It's bringing the mind component into exercise. Meditation, imagery and concentrating on personal fulfillment are replacing mindless jumping."

"We are always looking for group fitness alternatives," Mr. Marshel said. "A year ago we were one of the first clubs on Long Island to bring in spinning. As a runner and a skier myself, I can attest to its being great for building lower body strength. Now we have 26 bikes and 13 classes a week that have become so popular we've instituted a reservation sheet policy for those who want to be sure to get into a class."

It takes nine months for instruc-



tors to complete the three phases necessary to be fully certified to teach spinning. Schwinn, which manufactures the bikes for Johnny G., won't sell them to any club without certified instructors. A serious course outlines the time frame for teaching hand positions, jumps, hills and sprints. Instructors are introduced to the concepts of "inner balance and the champion within" and the power of group energy.

"Everyone needs to cross-train," said Candy Benjamin, owner of the Something Physical aerobic studio and 4,000-square-foot gym in Great Neck. "In my 27 years of teaching, rarely have I come across

a truly self-motivated person." That's the reason Ms. Benjamin decided to invest in 11 new bikes.

"Spinning offers a chance for husbands and wives to exercise together in a noncompetitive environment," she said. "The lights are off, the music's great and there's no threatening choreography involved. For the women, after eight years of stepping, it's time to try something new."

"It's all about you and the bike," added Lynn Kroskity, an aerobic instructor for 10 years who is going to run the spinning program at Something Physical. "There are no mirrors, so it's not intimidating. The people who have been spending

hours on the treadmill and the Stairmaster can lose themselves in a spinning class in a way they can't anywhere else in the gym. I love teaching it because each instructor gets to be her own deejay, constructing the class to follow her vision, her trip. I've taught classes where the age has ranged from 17 to 70. Everyone is working at their own level and everyone is having fun."

Ken Davis, an advertising executive from Rockville Centre, said he found he worked harder in a spinning class than he did when running or swimming. "My heart rate is higher, I sweat more, and after I feel better," he said.

Dr. Harry Jacob, a physician with an interest in sports medicine who has advised various health clubs throughout Long Island, understands its appeal. "The aerobic and anaerobic value of the exercise is increased by altering the variations of intensity," he said. "This allows you to accomplish an improved, more vigorous workout in a shorter period of time than you might get from swim-

ming or running."

Judy Birnbaum, a New York City reading teacher from Roslyn, found spinning to be her exercise of choice when arthritis in her feet cut short her stepping career. "Spinning is a blessing is for working people, when time is at a premium," she said. "In a relatively short amount of time, you get the job done. Each teacher is different, so you never get bored. You get a chance to assess your own progress by how many jumps you can complete and how far you can turn up the tension. It's a great stress reliever too."

"There are people recovering from knee surgery, even back surgery, who can spin safely," said Elly Munsinger, the group fitness director of the East Coast Athletic Club. "Spinning has expanded the group environment to attract everyone from the fitness elite to those in rehab, from high-school seniors to actual seniors, from those who have never taken a class to those not into aerobics at all. It's a great equalizer — anyone can do it. It's an opportunity to be in a group environment and still work at your individual level."

Ms. Munsinger loves the freedom to customize each class's travels. "Sometimes we go to Italy, sometimes to South America," she said. "Sometimes the terrain has lots of hills and bumps, sometimes it's a fast, straight road. Wherever we go, I guarantee you a challenging ride. When the class is over, all of us are energized, relaxed and proud of the 400 calories we just burned up."

The 20 bikes at North Shore Fitness in Great Neck are filled by 6:10 A.M. with exercisers in a hurry. All will be Manhattan bound, on the train to work, in just over an hour. "The music I use, everything from jazz to swing, from the 40's to the 90's, has to motivate me for me to motivate my students, especially when it's still dark outside," said their teacher, Debbie Rubin, a fitness instructor for almost 20 years. "Many of them are serious cyclists who were tired of the same old routine. The Lifecycle's no fun. Spinning is a way they found to build their fitness base and grow stronger very quickly. You can see results right away by how fast your recovery time decreases."

Mr. Marshel of the East Coast Athletic Club noted that the 1996 Surgeon General's Report said for the first time that inactivity could cause premature death. "Twenty years ago the report told us tobacco was hazardous and look what happened," he said. "We're trying to achieve the same success with exercise."

When a Father Is His Child's Employee

By MARCIA BYALICK

IRWIN STARR, 69, of Syosset spent 46 years as a wallpaper hanger and was miserable when, in 1991, an illness forced him to give it up. Sitting around the house was not for him.

"I was so depressed, I cried for a year," he said.

So instead of staying home, he started hanging around his son's photography company, sweeping the floors, answering the phones, just helping out. Eventually, his son, Jan, hired him.

Milton Kaplan, 69, of Whitestone started working for his son, Danny's, shoe company about five years ago when his own shoe store closed. Alan Schwaber, 58, of Roslyn, who recently retired from the Social Security Administration, also works for his son, Marc, as the accountant for his mortgage brokerage.

Whether because of downsizing, attractive early retirement packages or just bad luck, many men are finding themselves out of the work force earlier than they had expected. But business consultants are noticing that more and more of these men are not staying idle for long, instead going to work for their children.

And the children, some of whom may have hired their dads just to be nice, are discovering that these men, steeped in the work ethics of the 1940's and 50's, are valuable, hard-working employees.

"Having my father work for me rekindled a relationship that wasn't

as active as it once had been," Jan Starr, 43, said. "He's an old-timer, with an old-timer's work ethic. Not only is he a tremendous help, but the fact that I can trust him with anything makes my job so much easier."

"A lot of people retiring earlier today," said Dr. Stewart Bass, associate professor of business law at Hofstra University and director of its Family Business Forum, a resource center for family-owned businesses. "But feeling like you're being put out to pasture is what emotionally kills people. What could be more meaningful and productive than to work for a child? If a child can provide the opportunity, it's a return on all the blood, sweat and tears that a parent laid out."

Mr. Starr, the former wallpaper hanger, especially enjoys the relationship he has formed with his two sons. Roy, 40, Mr. Starr's youngest son, also works at the photo company, Starr Photography, a photography and printing business in Long Island City.

"I'm picked up at 6:30 every morning and my two sons and I talk like three friends in the car into work," Irwin Starr said. "Their respect overwhelms me. It's more than I'm entitled to. I'm not as talented as my sons, but they always make me feel important."

Danny Kaplan, 42, the owner of DC Footwear, a wholesale athletic footwear company in Greenvale, was happy to bring his dad into the company to run its store in Glen Cove.

"What could be better than hiring your father who you know is honest,



George M. Gutierrez for The New York Times

Irwin Starr, 69, center, a retired wallpaper hanger, now works with his sons, Jan, left, and Roy, at Starr Photography in Long Island City.

responsible, reliable and cares?" Danny Kaplan said. "I started out working for my father in his shoe store 20 years ago. That was harder. Five years ago when my father's business closed, I was happy to be in a position to supply an avenue for him to make a living."

Marc Schwaber, 34, of Oyster Bay Cove is co-owner of Skyscraper Consultants, a mortgage brokerage business in New York, with offices on Fifth Avenue and Old Country Road in Westbury. Almost two years ago he offered his father, Alan, who had retired as the director of management and budget for the Social Security Administration, a job as the internal accountant of his firm.

"We've always been very close and initially we were both a little concerned about how this would work," Marc Schwaber said. "We went out to dinner together and talked about what it would be like. We decided it was definitely worth trying."

Although a child and father working together has its rewards, psychologists caution that the relationship may be hard to maintain.

"While working for his son can give a father an opportunity to do meaningful work and continue to contribute to the family," explains Dr. George Stricker, professor of psychology at Adelphi University. "It's important to remember his sense of self has already taken a blow and he may feel threatened. Likewise, although his son is getting

a valued employee who is providing an unquestioned level of loyalty, he is thrust into a role in which he now has to be his father's boss."

While the Schwabers talked about such problems over dinner before the elder Mr. Schwaber began working, the Kaplans' working relationship just evolved.

"From a relationship standpoint, I guess it helped that we didn't work in the same building," Danny Kaplan said. "Although it can become uncomfortable when you need to be critical or say something negative, you always know their intentions are only to do the right thing, more so than any other employee."

Milton Kaplan also learned how to work smoothly with his son.

"At first I hesitated trying to push my ideas on him without his asking or giving me a hint that maybe I should make a suggestion," Milton Kaplan said. "When I didn't agree with him, I told him what I thought and said, 'Look, it's up to you.' I've learned that there are certain ways of suggesting that could be taken wrong and other ways where it seems like it's their idea."

And there's the problem that parents always seem to have with their children, no matter how old they are. "The only negative is that old expression, 'You can only be as happy as your unhappiest child,'" Milton Kaplan said. "If Marc has a tough day, I feel it. So now I have twice as many chances of having a bad day."



Joyce Dopken/The New York Times

Alan Schwaber, right, works for his son, Marc, at a mortgage company.

Culling Memories of the Growing-Up Years



By MARCIA BYALICK

WHILE touring as the drummer for a rock-and-roll band in the 1970's, Roman Brygidier never envisioned winning an Emmy. Even as a building contractor in the 80's, Mr. Brygidier said, it did not cross his mind that he would create documentaries for WLIW-TV. His latest, "Another Mitzvah," a one-hour film to be broadcast at 8 P.M. next Saturday, is his second personal examination of the Jewish experience. An earlier documentary, "A Laugh, a Tear, a Mitzvah," started what he calls his personal exploration.

The new program describes how women's groups went to the Soviet Union to teach women the rituals of Judaism; documents a trip to Newport, R.I., to visit the Touro Synagogue, the oldest in the United States; provides a history lesson from Alan King on the relationship among Peter Stuyvesant, the Indians and Jewish settlers in New York.

"I've always been producing something," Mr. Brygidier said, "whether it was writing lyrics, planning a major renovation or 'story boarding' a show. Being a producer is a lot like being a general contractor. It's figuring out a giant puzzle, hands on, deciding where to begin. I like at the end of the day to have something that is mine, something I can share. My biggest fear was that one day I'd get a real job and have nothing to show for it."

"Roman gets so immersed in whatever show he's working on," a spokeswoman for the station, Laura Savini, said, "that he becomes whatever it is his show is about, Jewish, Italian, even a Brooklynite. His signature is on all our big hits."

For his documentaries, Mr. Brygidier combines history, archival footage, photographs, music and anecdotes. "Another Mitzvah" focuses on powerful Jewish women in business, the arts and medicine. Erica Jong, Alfred Kazin, Alan King, Bill Mazur and Marilyn Michaels contributed vignettes.

Mr. Brygidier, who has worked

with WLIW for six years, was on a production team that won the station its first Emmy, for historical documentary, in 1993, for "The Way It Was" series. Two years later he won an Emmy for "AIDS, Safe in the Suburbs."

His programs have examined Lyme disease, back trouble, ovarian cancer, sex education and hysterectomies, as well as "New York, the Way It Was," memories of old neighborhoods and vacation spots.

Mr. Brygidier, who graduated from Garden City High School in 1971, attended Nassau Community College, focusing on a woodworking business and devoting spare time to music. After years of sharing houses in Glen Cove and Hempstead, the band, Dakota, was signed by CBS Records to record 10 songs.

"We tried to develop our own sound but wound up sounding too much like the other bands of the time," Mr. Brygidier said. After two and a half years of appearing in venues like CBGB and My Father's Place, music was relegated to an avocation,

Roman Brygidier, producer-director of "Another Mitzvah," to be televised on WLIW next Saturday. Below, Alan King at his bar mitzvah, and a candle-lighting ceremony for relatives at a bar mitzvah in 1988.

After 10 years as a contractor, Mr. Brygidier, at 35, enrolled at St John's University, seeking a degree in television production. "I had always watched a lot of public TV," he said. "I liked shows that brought me up to speed on what's happening in terms of history or biography or geography. I'd watch a show like 'This Old House' and think, 'I'd love to put together a program like that and build something different.'"

His mentor for three years was Mary McGee, who was director of the television center at the university. He worked with her as she assem-



bled a 12-part series for PBS on the effects of television on society.

"She continually inspired me to come up with ideas," Mr. Brygidier recalled. "I worked on projects having to do with music, the ecology and

even started a talk show called 'Prominent Views.' By the time I got to WLIW, I was prepared to wear the many hats needed to help build and grow our production department."

Since joining the station Mr. Brygidier and his colleagues, Sam Toperoff, a writer; Ron Rudaitis, a producer; Beth Lerner, an editor, and Bob Hawanczak, a cameraman, have revealed a human side of celebrities.

Red Buttons told of his pride in moving from the Lower East Side to the Bronx. Julius La Rosa recalled learning Italian to be able to talk to his grandmother. Letty Cottin Pogrebin told of not being allowed to say Kaddish for her father because she was a woman, and Tommy Lasorda expressed reverence for his father who, after a day in the rock quarry put his feet in the oven to thaw them out.

"I am honored and privileged to be a part of shows that have garnered nationwide recognition," Mr. Brygidier said. "Each program is the result of a total collaborative effort."

"Given our budget" — \$7.5 million compared to \$120 million at WNET — "we don't have specialized departments. Our small production staff really puts together like a family."



The Healthy Family

By Marcia Byalik

Hiccups and Yawns, Sneezes and Rumbles

Is Your Body Trying to Tell You Something?

How many times has this happened to you: You're at a party, or hunching with friends, when out of the blue your body starts making "small talk" on its own—surprising you with hiccups, a series of sneezes or a deafening stomach rumble. These and other body quirks, such as yawns and "popping" joints, rarely signify anything serious, but they're unpredictable and can be embarrassing. You can't prevent them altogether, but knowing what's behind such physical noisemakers is the first step to turning down the volume.

ACHOO! ATTACKS

Sneezes are prompted by nasal irritation: Anything from a viral infection or an allergy to pepper and dust can tickle the trigeminal nerve in the nose, which then informs the brain of an invader's presence. The brain responds by causing blood vessels in the nose to dilate and the lungs to draw in a breath. The muscles surrounding the top of the airway then temporarily "freeze" and seal off the nose and mouth from the rest of the respiratory system. Finally, the muscles of the diaphragm contract, and pressure builds up until a blast of air (that is, the sneeze) expels the offending substance and clears the breathing passages.

Sneezes rush out at up to 100 miles per hour, and tend to occur in observable, individual patterns. Most people sneeze a certain number of times per attack, for example, and up to 20% of us sneeze when suddenly exposed to bright light, too. According to Alan Rosenthal,

Marcia Byalik is managing editor of "The Women's Record."

M.D., attending neurosurgeon at Long Island Jewish Medical Center, New Hyde Park, New York, individuals also vary in the amount of noise they make, and whether a sneeze escapes through the mouth or nose.

In most cases sneezing is merely a nuisance, although in rare instances severe attacks have caused nosebleeds and even fractured cartilage in the nose and throat, and bones in the middle ear. Such injuries are more likely to occur if you try to hold in a sneeze by pursing your lips, thus allowing pressure to build up in your head. Pressure in the abdomen just before a sneeze can also aggravate hernias and hemorrhoids, and can trigger incontinence in those who are susceptible to it.

The best way to cut a sneezing session short: Get rid of the cause, be it infection, allergen or outside irritant. Barring that, tried-and-true home remedies may do the trick: Press a finger hard against the flat area above your nose and between your eyebrows, or under the nose and against your gums. If sunlight sends you into sneezing fits, invest in a good pair of sunglasses and a hat. But it's a good idea to always have a tissue handy, just in case.

HICCUP HELPERS

You probably have a favorite cure for hiccups: holding your breath, drinking giant glasses of water, eating peanut butter followed by granulated sugar, even yanking on your tongue. The only one that really works, though, is breathing into a paper bag for two minutes: Scientists believe this may build up carbon dioxide in the blood, which quells hiccups when the blood circulates to the brain.

Hiccups are actually contractions of the breathing muscles, including the diaphragm and the *intercostals*, which are connected to the ribs. These muscles are kicked into action when the "hiccup center," a group of nerves at the upper end of the spinal cord, is stimulated. Triggers include drinking alcohol or carbonated beverages, overeating, cold showers, emotional stress and—less commonly—tiny objects (a piece of hair, for instance) trapped deep within the ear. Hiccups perform no useful physical function, and for (Continued)

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unknown reasons they afflict men four times more frequently than they do women.

Most sieges last just a few minutes, disappear on their own and don't indicate serious disease. (The longest recorded bout of hiccups was an amazing 65 years.) Hiccups that last longer than two days, however, have in rare cases been harbingers of ailments including pneumonia, multiple sclerosis, meningitis, herpes, ulcers or even brain tumors.

When hiccups do drag on, prescription drugs may provide relief. For example, *amantadine*, an antiviral drug used to treat Parkinson's disease, has shown dramatic results in curing persistent cases, though it's not yet approved by the Food and Drug Administration for this purpose. Other drugs that have shown promise include *chlorpromazine*, an antipsychotic and antinausea drug; *quinidine*, which quells muscle cramps; and certain drugs used to treat epileptic seizures.

YAWNS: THE "CATCHING" BODY QUIRK

Science has confirmed what we all know anyway: You're most likely to yawn when you're bored, sleepy, hungry, in a stuffy room—or when you see someone else do it. You'll find yourself yawning most in the first hour after you wake up in the morning, and the last one before you go to bed at night. Doctors don't know why people yawn, or why yawning is contagious; they do know that virtually every living creature—from fish, birds and reptiles to mammals—yawns.

A good, satisfying yawn, in which the jaw is fully stretched, equalizes pressure between the ears—but to no known purpose. There is no evidence to back up the commonly held belief that a yawn is a response to a lack of oxygen or a buildup of carbon dioxide in the blood. One unproven theory has it that yawns help perk you up when you're drowsy, by causing facial muscles to contract, boosting blood flow to the brain.

Rarely, yawning is a symptom of

brain lesions, hemorrhage or encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Most often, though, it indicates nothing more serious than a need for sleep or stimulation.

STOMACH TALK

The gurgles and growls you sometimes hear (technically, *borborygmi*) usually stem not from the stomach itself but from the digestive process, as food and air squeeze their way out of the stomach and through the long, narrow, twisting tubes of your intestines. Hunger isn't always the cause; bellies can "talk" when they're empty or full.

A doctor can pinpoint the source of stomach rumblings by analyzing their pitch. For example, research by Matthew McKinley, M.D., chief of gastroenterology at North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset, New York, shows that low-pitched gurgles are usually caused by swallowed air, or gas. The air intake is sometimes triggered by tension (nervousness causes some people to gulp air), when they noisily travel through the intestines, or lactose intolerance, in which the stomach lacks the enzyme to break down dairy products, and thus produces a large amount of intestinal gas when such foods are eaten.

A higher pitch can be a warning that air is trapped above an intestinal block, a potentially dangerous situation. When these high-pitched noises are accompanied by stomach distention, they may be a symptom of ulcers, inflammatory bowel disease, even a tumor. You can tell if a blockage, not hunger, is the cause of your rumblings simply by eating. Food, while initially satisfying because it neutralizes stomach acid, will probably worsen symptoms when what you've eaten can't get past the blocked passage. (Persistent, painful rumblings should be brought to the attention of your doctor.)

Run-of-the-mill rumblings can't be prevented altogether, but you may be able to lower the volume by modifying some personal habits. To prevent extra air from sneaking into your system, try to eat and drink slowly, and consider eliminating carbonated beverages from your diet. Cut down on "gassy" vegetables

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such as broccoli, beans and cabbage; limit sugarless chewing gum containing sorbitol, a known gas-producer.

JOINTS THAT SNAP, CRACKLE AND POP

Starting as they sound, creaky joints (knees, knuckles, ankles, etc.) are usually in perfect working order. Most joints are held in place by *ligaments* (which resemble rubber bands, and connect one bone to another) and *tendons* (which attach muscles to bones). When these tendons and ligaments snap across the bumpy ends of bones in the ankles, for instance, they can produce a "crack," similar to the sound you make by snapping your fingers.

The source of the popping noises heard in knees and knuckles is actually air, says Stuart J. Hershorn, M.D., assistant clinical professor, North Shore University Hospital, Manhasset, New York. All joints are surrounded by a gooey substance called *synovial fluid*, which keeps joints "oiled" and moving smoothly. Certain movements, such as deep knee-bends or intentionally cracking your knuckles, can push the air in this fluid to form bubbles. Movement will also cause the bones of a joint to momentarily separate and create a vacuum; when the synovial fluid flows into the space, you'll hear loud "popping" sounds as the air in the fluid shifts. Often there is then a reprieve lasting a few minutes as the air settles down again and the fluid is reabsorbed.

While the creaks themselves are harmless, and while cracking knuckles or other joints *won't* lead to arthritis, any persistent or debilitating joint *pain* should be checked out by your doctor at once. It could indicate joint, cartilage, ligament or tendon damage. In the majority of cases, though, the most serious consequence of this or any body "talk" is just a very red face. ■



Driving to Work With Ears Tuned to Traffic Reports

By MARCIA BYALICK

IF you want to work in Manhattan and live on Long Island," said Suzanne Rosenberg of Port Washington, "you have to say this is what I choose to do, and you can't whine about it every day."

Ms. Rosenberg, a unit manager for Fox-TV's "Good Day, New York," and her husband Michael, a lawyer who works on Madison Avenue and 43d Street, have been driving to Manhattan and back every weekday for almost 10 years, giving them, he said, a measure of control on their time.

"For me it's a game, the object of which is to keep moving," said Mr. Rosenberg. Five miles an hour is better than standing still. If you're stopped, you're not getting any closer to work. And we know that even though we leave the same exact time each day, the ride in can take any-

The object is to keep moving. 'Five miles an hour is better than standing still.'

where from 45 minutes to four hours. "We expect that between the weather, construction, accidents and the President coming to town, we'll have to deviate from the most convenient route — for us, that means Northern Boulevard to the Cross Island Parkway to the Whitestone Expressway to the Grand Central to the Triborough Bridge — at least two out of five days. What's tough is that we both hate to be late."

On one rainy morning the Rosenbergs woke at 5:30 A.M. Neither had breakfast, neither initiated any conversation. They already knew, from turning on "Good Day, New York," that Metro Traffic had predicted delays because of the rain.

The couple got into their car, a late-model Nissan, at exactly 7 A.M. "Optimally, we'll be at my office in an hour," said Ms. Rosenberg. "If we left 15 minutes later, our trip is a half-hour longer." She turned on WCBs and waited for the traffic announcer Neil Bush to come on. "I



Suzanne Rosenberg and her husband, Michael, drive into Manhattan from Port Washington every day.



already know the construction sites from reading Sunday's paper," she said. "We decide the route we take depending on what Neil tell us about the other conditions."

Once they decided the quickest route, the Rosenbergs, who are in their early 50's and have a son in college, turned off the radio and began listening to "The Testament," a book on tape. Since 1992 they have

heard 73 psychological thrillers and murder mysteries on the commute. It usually takes them three weeks to finish a novel.

"The books help dissipate some of the inevitable frustration and anger that builds up no matter how well you prepare yourself," said Ms. Rosenberg, who carries a cell phone to call her office if she expects to be late. "The tape is our way of han-

dling the guaranteed tie-ups. Girl-watching along the water on the Cross Island, the slowdown near La Guardia, the feed into the B.Q.E., the approach to the Triborough. Under the best of conditions, these are daily irritants."

"In this city," Mr. Rosenberg added as he approached a backed-up Whitestone Expressway, "people are fearful of driving in the rain. One

THE UNCERTAIN ROUTE

Road Warriors

TOTAL MILEAGE 25 each way

COST OF COMMUTE FOR A MONTH

EZ Pass toll \$120

Gas \$120

Garage \$200

Insurance,
wear and tear,
oil change \$250

BEST ROUTE To Upper East Side from Port Washington

Northern Boulevard to Cross Island to Triboro Bridge to FDR to 71st Street.

ALTERNATE ROUTE Take Northern Boulevard into Queens. Pick up Grand Central near Shea Stadium or if traffic is backed up continue down Northern Boulevard to 59th Street Bridge or Midtown Tunnel (depending on radio advisories).

PET PEEVES People who slow down . . . to look at accidents, to round a slight curve, to put on makeup.

TIP Relax. Accept the fact that there's no secret, sure-fire way that will get you to work on time each day. Be flexible. Getting nuts never helps.

drop and everything comes to a crawl." He decided to get off at Astoria Boulevard and follow it for two and a half miles until it converges with the Grand Central.

Satisfied that he shaved a good six or seven minutes off the trip: Mr. Rosenberg relaxed, explaining, "If the Triborough is backed up, I'll go down Steinway Street and back to Northern Boulevard and go over the 59th Street Bridge. I learned the back streets through trial and error. As long as we're meandering in the right direction, we're O.K."

"We've learned where there are clean bathrooms (the Mobil station near the airport), what days are the heaviest traffic (Mondays in the fall, Thursdays in the summer), and that a stop at Dunkin' Donuts might be the only way to stay sane if it looks like it's going to be a particularly brutal morning," added Ms. Rosenberg. "On the bright side, we think the E-ZPass is the greatest gift, saving us 10 minutes a day."

Mr. Bush neglected to mention in his traffic report that the F.D.R. was at a standstill. Instead of staying on until 71st Street, Mr. Rosenberg got off at 106th Street and moved quickly down Second Avenue. About three inches from making a left turn into a

parking garage on 67th Street, the car got stuck behind a garbage truck. Those last four minutes, added onto the 65 minutes since they left the house, provoked the most tension of the whole trip. He then took his usual 20-minute subway ride to his office.

"You might be curious why we don't take the train," Ms. Rosenberg continued. "Cost-wise for the two of us, it's a wash. But the L.I.R.R. puts me on the West Side. The subway to the East Side can add another half-hour to my commute. This time together also gives us a chance to catch up on unfinished business or plan for the weekend."

The garbage truck finally moved on.

"Remember 'Little Murders'?" asked Mr. Rosenberg, who does the driving both ways. "This guy finally barricaded himself in his apartment because the little frustrations chipped away at his life."

He shook his head. "This trip is definitely a test of your flexibility, your ability to change gears. That's why it's hard to understand why some people will queue up forever on the L.I.E. while the rest of us look for other routes."



George M. Gutterres for The New York Times

Richard Kahn mentors children in a partnership between a Port Washington synagogue and two South Bronx churches that enriches many lives.

Lending, and Joining, Hands Across Faiths

By MARCIA BYALICK

ANYONE doubting the power of daytime television should talk to Donna Berman, rabbi emerita of the Port Washington Jewish Center. Home sick one afternoon in the winter of 1996, she said, she listened as the author Jonathan Kozol described to Oprah Winfrey the plight of the children of the South Bronx, and resolved to find a way for her congregation, in one of the more affluent areas in the country, to team up with a church just a half-hour away in one of the nation's poorest areas.

"First I enlisted the help of a core group in my congregation," Rabbi Berman said. "Having no connections in the South Bronx, I started cold-calling the names mentioned in Kozol's book. After months of trying, none of those paths bore fruit. The project lay dormant. Then, as fate would have it, some months later I attended a conference and wound up sitting next to a minister from the South Bronx. It was her contacts that led me to Reverend Morris."

Se was referring to the Rev. Harold W. Morris, pastor of the Willis Avenue Methodist Church and the Trinity Church, both in the Bronx. They and the Port Jewish Center are spearheading the South Bronx-Port Washington Community Partnership. Participants say that their accomplishments have been nothing short of inspirational.

"We've raised \$5,000 to save an after-school program for the handicapped from closing and provided City-Wide Harm Reduction with a brand-new stove so they can make meals for those with AIDS/H.I.V. living in single-room-occupancy hotels," said Elaine Kahn, a Port Washingtonian who devotes more than 20 hours a week to the partnership. "We provided the Willis Avenue Church, which serves lunch to 400-600 home-

less people a week, with a new refrigerator, and brought over a TV and VCR for the church's after-school program. We bought 68 pairs of sneakers for the kids in the Melrose section of the Bronx, contributed 75 turkeys at Thanksgiving and collected 330 Christmas presents for children whose families weren't able to buy them gifts."

Mr. Morris said that at first it wasn't easy to accept the Port Washingtonians' generosity. "There was some apprehension at first," he said of his congregations. "Would the perception be that we were lazy welfare recipients without any thoughts of our own?"

If so, he said, "we wouldn't have accepted anything from them."

"Then we saw how the Port Washington community immersed themselves without barriers," Mr. Morris said. "For them to come here every Saturday morning, despite their busy schedules, to tutor our kids and devote Tuesday afternoons to teach our children chess, it's a godsend. We've worshipped together at each other's congregations. The children in our schools have become pen pals. We sit and talk like family. Now we are free to accept their gifts with gratitude."

The Long Islanders had their early concerns, too. "We were also fearful at first, about parking our cars and walking around in a high-crime area," said a Port Washingtonian who asked that her name not be used. "But once we met and connected, we never gave it a second thought. I wouldn't have believed it. We were never treated with anything less than the utmost respect by anyone in the community. We gave what we could and in return they taught us what generosity is, what caring is."

Once the connection had been made, barriers fell away. "I was curious about what it would be like attending an interfaith Passover seder in Port Washington," said Joyce Croque, a member of the Trinity Church. "It was such a welcoming,

warm experience. Seeing people isn't knowing them. Going to their home court gave us a chance not only to share our different faiths and customs, but we learned first hand that we shared exactly the same hopes for peace and happiness and getting along in the world."

One of the programs developed this year was a kindergarten pre-natal program between P.S. 30 in the Bronx and the Manorhaven School that culminated in the two classes meeting in June for a field trip.

"We invited them to come here and take advantage of our wonderful Bronx Botanical Gardens," said Ma-

with their skills that can help somebody else. It's doing, not just raising money. It's learning how good it feels to give."

Joanne Webb, a member of Trinity Church, attended a Kwanzaa-Chanukah-Christmas potluck dinner where the members of her church handed the Port Jewish Center rabbi a card that read in part, "You are to me a friend, a sign on this earth that the universe is good and rightly made."

"It said how everyone in that room felt," Ms. Webb said. "We always hear about how young people are doing such negative things. Here we see the children of Port Washington donating bar mitzvah money to help buy art supplies for our summer program. It just fills you."

The spirit of the partnership is contagious. One Port Washington parent considering private school for her children was so impressed with the program that she donated the money she would have spent on tuition to outfit the Willis Avenue Church gym. When a high school teacher in Roslyn heard that her school was replacing 175 of its chemistry books from the early 90's, she contacted the partnership, which arranged for them to be given to South Bronx High School, replacing books decades old. Two eight-year-olds in Port Washington shared a birthday party and asked that instead of gifts, their friends bring books for the children in P.S. 30. Local towns have waived admission fees so the South Bronx children can visit the Long Island Science Museum, the Vanderbilt Planetarium, the Cold Spring Harbor Fish Hatchery and the Manorhaven Pool.

"We hope that other communities will use us as a model and all kinds of businesses will be interested in becoming involved," said Rabbi Beth Davidson of the Port Jewish Center. "People in the Bronx might be getting more tangible stuff, but certainly what we're getting from them is equally important."

Two communities realize that both have a lot to give.

ria Acevedo, the community school coordinator for P.S. 30. "We paid for their admittance and in return they brought us books. The kids were so excited to meet. Not only did the two classes share the stories of their individual gardens, they learned to be good receivers and good givers."

Linda Wells, principal of the Manorhaven Elementary School, oversaw the Literacy Partnership, a program involving third- and fifth-graders acting as book buddies to put books on tape for Bronx children who are not read to at home.

"The librarian came up with a list of books that we were able to get donated," Dr. Wells said. "The kids then read them into tape recorders. In September we will present baggies filled with the book, the tape and tape recorders that the children will be able to check out to bring home. The kids love the idea that they have the capacity to create something

Diary of a Video-Game Deprived Youth

By MARCIA BYALICK

FOR the last six years, every birthday or holiday gift that Josh Gelb, 14, of Plainview has received has been related to video games — the latest disc or cartridge, magazines and playing guides.

Normally, Josh's day begins with 15 minutes of Ken Griffey Jr. Baseball ("you can play it when you're still tired") before leaving for school at 7:30, 45 minutes of James Bond 007 or Mario Kart after school until his mother gets home and directs him to start his homework and at least an hour after dinner playing *Zelda* or a game he and his brother rent each week.

Following is a diary that Josh kept of the day he agreed to unhook himself ... as long as it was for just one day.

6:45 A.M. I probably should have set my alarm for 7. With the extra time I have, I made myself two scrambled eggs instead of my usual cereal. Even though I'm thinking about how many home runs I could have gotten before 10 outs in Ken Griffey, it really doesn't bother me that much.

2:15 P.M. I'm the first one home. I thought I'd do my homework first and then get out of the house and ride my bike so I won't be tempted to turn on the computer, but it's raining. My luck. There's no volleyball practice today. Even though it's Tuesday and my science test isn't until Friday, I figure I'll study ahead of time. It feels weird going over this stuff so much in advance but then I won't have to do it when I'm back to playing my games.

4 P.M. I just finished my snack and all my homework. I never put on the TV at this time but there's nothing else to do. It's starting to annoy me now. Why adults think video games are bad for you is something I can't understand. They make you use your brain to come up with different strategies. It's fun to compete with your friends. No one I know plays too much. And the violence thing parents worry about is ridiculous. There's no blood in the games I play. It's all exaggerated.

Anyway, I wound up watching "The People's Court" for the first time. It was actually cool. A girl was throwing rocks into the street and this guy accused her



Richard Lee for The New York Times

For six years, Josh Gelb has received video games on birthdays or holidays. He can live without *Zelda* and Ken Griffey, but he would rather not.

of denting his car. The judge found her innocent. He was right.

7 P.M. Now it's getting harder to find things to do. My brother Michael, who is 10, asked me to play *Zelda*. I told him I'd play with him tomorrow. I just stood behind him and gave him some pointers. I thought that would be allowed because I'm not actually playing. I got him to the next board. He's up to the 11th board now. I'm up to 17. I might have gotten up to 18 if I was playing tonight.

I asked Michael if he'd get off the computer so I could E-mail my friends. He wouldn't. My mother said I forgot I could use the telephone if I wanted to talk to them. She doesn't get it. It's not the same.

I think what's hardest about not playing is that you know your friends are getting better and reaching new story-

boards when you take a day off. My next-door neighbor, Ben, is only 7 and he's better at *Zelda* than most of my friends. He plays more than me. He should have been picked to not play for a day. Then the rest of us could catch up to him.

9 P.M. I have to admit I'm glad the day is over. It's not like I'm addicted or anything but I really did miss playing today. I wouldn't have minded as much if everyone had the same rule and no one could get on their computer.

I know it sounds silly but what really bothered me was that I was the only one not playing. It was like I wasted the day. If I thought it was a bad habit, I would understand why. I think the kids who smoke or bite their nails have bad habits, not the kids who play video games. ■

Anger and Confusion Felt Keenly at Lab

Continued From Page 1

ports. In a report last month, the Energy Department identified 21 "significant findings" of contamination and potential contamination at the 5,300-acre property.

The findings included the potential for leaks of radioactive substances, including strontium, from an inactive spent-fuel pool and from underground sumps, tanks, air ducts and transfer lines at the partly decommissioned Graphite Research Reactor, which operated from 1950 to 1968.

The findings also involve radioactive liquid and sludge in other buildings, including one building designed to handle large quantities of radioactive cobalt, and discharges of oil, solvents and mercury.

The lab said all but one finding, involving an oil spill in the 70's, had been known and previously reported. Officials said many problems were being addressed in a Superfund cleanup that began in 1989.

The report was the most unified and complete public account of contamination and its sources at the lab.

Now the lab and Energy Department officials are studying a draft report, commissioned by the lab and performed by a private company, that found levels of mercury and silver far above state safety limits in the Peconic River near a laboratory sewage plant that empties into the river's headwaters.

Employees are also upset about efforts by Senator Alfonse M. D'Amato and Representative Michael P. Forbes to close permanently the High Flux Beam Reactor, a major research component that has been leaking radioactive tritium for up to 15 years.

Much of their anger is directed at Mr. Forbes, a Republican of Quogue whose district includes the lab. His critics say he reversed his position on the reactor in response to constituent pressure. More than 500 employees demonstrated recently outside his office in Shirley, and others have challenged Mr. Forbes at community meetings.

Employees said that in a videotaped address to employees in July Mr. Forbes said that he favored reopening the reactor if it was proven safe. In a copy of the lab newspaper, *The Brookhaven Bulletin*, Mr. Forbes is quoted as having said: "We don't want the reactor shut down because of folks who don't understand its importance and its safety. It's a safe reactor and has operated for many years without a prob-

lem."

A spokesman for Mr. Forbes, Tony Howard, said that Mr. Forbes was misquoted and that his remarks were taken out of context.

Ms. Rowe said quotes were taken verbatim from Mr. Forbes's address. "We have it on tape," she said.

In announcing last month that he favored closing the reactor, Mr. Forbes said that he had reached the decision after "a long and thoughtful review of the environmental, health and safety problems. All of the lab's resources and energies must be directed toward cleaning up as many sources of radioactive and chemical contamination on site," and not to restarting the reactor.

Mr. D'Amato's was more pointed. "The people living in the communities near Brookhaven lab have a right to know that their drinking water is safe," he said. "It is imperative that we insure the people of Long Island that there will be no further threats to their health or the safety of their drinking water."

Mr. Peña declined in a letter to Mr. D'Amato and Mr. Forbes to close the reactor permanently. He said a decision on reopening it would be made only after safety reviews and consultation with community groups and organizations. The Long Island Association supported Mr. Peña for resisting the officials' call for an immediate closing.

Some employees said Mr. D'Amato and Mr. Forbes were pandering to influential opponents of the lab who live in the Hamptons and on Shelter Island.

The depth of anger was underscored when a reactor operator and a union leader, Gary M. Zukas of Greenport, was arrested last week in a case involving a threatening telephone call to an outspoken critic of the lab, William N. Smith of Shelter Island.

Mr. Smith, executive director of Fish Unlimited, said he went to the police after having received an anonymous threat on Sept. 1, a day before Mr. Forbes and Mr. D'Amato announced that they wanted the reactor closed permanently.

Although Mr. Peña has given assurances that jobs will be protected, confusion is rife among staff members, and particularly scientists, about the future and the effects of possible changes in financing.

An Energy Department decision to close the High Flux Beam Reactor, permanently would affect at least 300 employees, employees and lab officials said. The reactor produces beams of neutrons for experiments on the nature of matter.

graphic editors, was born just under \$1 million raised by temple members and the community. Its circular gallery and granite pool, created by the Spector Group of Roslyn, has been awarded first place in a competition by the Society of American Registered Architects.

"The French Nazi hunter Beatta Klarsfeld and Meip Gels, the woman who hid Anne Frank and her family, have both spoken here," Ms. Seigel said. "What is unique about us is that we have our children be active participants in our video library, doing the interviewing of survivors themselves. What can better teach a 13-year-old than listening to a survivor recounting where he was at the same time in his life?"

John F. Kennedy High School in Plainview has the first Holocaust-Genocide Studies Center in a New York public school. "I think that people are increasingly aware, like the song from 'South Pacific' saying that children have to be taught prejudice to practice it," said Cindy Feldman, librarian in charge of the center for five years. "Every child in the district visits in 4th, 6th, 9th and 10th grades with programs appropriate for their age. In the two years since we started a really challenging half-year senior selective program on the Holocaust the number of classes has doubled."

Joshua Gelb, 11, a sixth grader, said after returning from the library: "It's different from reading a book. There's a big plaque with the names of some kids' grandparents who died. I couldn't believe the picture of all the shoes taken from the people in the camps. It made me sad. But I was happy that I had the knowledge. I feel bad for the kids who don't know about it, because it can happen to them again."

A foundation, the Long Island Holocaust Memorial Inc., is planning to break ground in December for the Long Island Holocaust Memorial on the Nassau-Suffolk line near the Long Island Expressway. A real-estate developer, Mark Broxmeyer, and Suffolk County Clerk Ed Romaine are co-chairmen of the group.

Steve Forbes, Gov. George E. Pataki, Peter Max and Elie Weisel have lent their names to support the drive. The plans include a garden, sculptures, a commemorative wall and educational programs.

"To those who ask if all these efforts to remember are redundant, if enough is enough, I answer that there can never be enough," Rabbi Abner Bergman of Temple Judea said. "These memorials force our gaze inward. They remind us of something inherently human that still labels others a cancer, to flee from or destroy. We need as many memorials as we do ethical mirrors, till we can say we are incapable, in activity or silence, of aiding and abetting the triumph of evil in the human soul."

Three Cheers for the Cheerleader Champs

By MARCIA BYALICK

THE crowd cheers as the team members take the field. Superb athletes, smiling broadly, they show the discipline and well-conditioned bodies of seven months of rigorous practice, of three-hour-a-day, six-day-a-week sessions.

To become the reigning national champions, this team of 22 young women from Longwood High School defeated 17 teams in the Northeast, and then romped over 240 other teams from around the country.

Then the band stops playing. Half-time is over and the football team returns to the field. The members of the 1998 World Cheerleading Association National Champion, from Longwood High, take their places on the sidelines, waving to people in the crowd, many of whom came specifically to see them.

They are definitely not your mother's cheerleading team. In Texas and Tennessee, young girls might be brought up believing that cheerleading is a sport, with its human pyramids, 540-degree spins and girls being tossed into the air, performing athletic twists and turns on the way down. But on Long Island? Down south, 8-year-olds might get involved in dance and gymnastics to get ready for high school cheerleading. But in Shirley, Yaphank, Ridge, Middle Island and Coram? Small towns in Florida might turn out to support the cheerleaders' efforts with the same enthusiasm they show the football and basketball teams. But in the diverse 53-square-mile Longwood school district?

For the last 11 years, since Donna Beary took over the cheerleading program as coach, the answer is a resounding yes. It's no wonder. Longwood's accomplishments are staggering. For nine out of the last 10 years the team has won the United Cheerleading Association-sponsored Northeast regionals. In 1989 and 1991 the junior varsity team won the World Cheerleading Association title in Nashville; in 1993 and 1998 the varsity team took home the crown. The cheerleaders have traveled to Hawaii to perform at the National Football League Pro Bowl and had their picture taken

with President Clinton. And this year, 13 of the 22 girls on the team, every single one who tried out for the honor, was named an All-American by the World Cheerleading Association.

"Please don't make this about me," pleaded Mrs. Beary, the very modest coach, who is a second-grade teacher in Longwood's Ridge Elementary School. A daughter of the football coach at St. Dominic's in Oyster Bay and a former cheerleader herself, Mrs. Beary insists on playing down her role in her team's success.

"We are blessed," she said. "We have a network of so many people behind us. The administration backs us wholeheartedly, the parents do an incredible fund-raising job, the business community always supports our efforts and the girls, well, besides being talented, they give up so much... summer mornings, part-time jobs, Christmas week."

"There are no big heads, no prima donnas on this team. Aside from each girl having the mindset of a dedicated athlete, they participate in student government, do volunteer work, are in the chorus and are expected to keep up good grades. Because they are self-disciplined, stay in great shape, and always come ready to work hard, all the spring sport coaches, for track, softball and volleyball, try to recruit them when the season is over."

"We just laugh at the kids who think what we do isn't a sport," said Michelle Graniela, one of the team's

three captains and a member of the team since the seventh grade. "Most of us always wanted to be a cheerleader. We knew it was going to be a sacrifice but we never could know what that meant until we were on the team. Sometimes it's really hard practicing when you don't feel like it and having to miss concerts and parties and special family occasions. But I'm going to Nashville for the fourth time this year."

How Longwood High put itself on the national map.

Punishing tryouts, two and a half weeks at the end of May, narrow the team to 60 girls, 22 on the varsity, 20 on the junior varsity and 18 on the junior high team. During that time they are taught the skills, routines, jumps and cheers. They learn the dances, the tumbling and the stunting (Longwood's hallmark and Donna Beary's complex creations of pyramids and flips). This year 184 girls tried out for three vacant spots.

"Those who say these girls aren't athletes are ridiculous," says Mrs. Beary, whose three daughters, now 18 to 22, were all on the team. "They bike, weight train and run to maintain their endurance. It's right up

there with football, wrestling and lacrosse in demanding toughness. Because we operate out of Longwood's athletic department — cheerleading is not officially a competitive sport — the girls do a lot of the fund-raising as well. They sell candy, raffle tickets, lottery tickets, have car washes and host two cheerleading clinics a year for the younger girls."

The Longwood Youth Sports Association insures that there will always be a motivated, talented group eager to replace each championship team. The association has 140 prospective cheerleaders in the elementary and middle school, and a waiting list. In the year's two most successful fund-raisers, the high school team charges young hopefuls, ages 4 to 12, \$25 each to take part in a weeklong clinic where they are taught the routines by their revered role models.

In addition to the physical and emotional demands on the girls, there is a sizable financial commitment demanded of their families. Even with the cost of the hotel and entrance fees to Nashville defrayed by the Booster Club, the girls are responsible for about \$900 a year for their air fares, as well as summer camp, warm-ups, sneakers and sweatshirts. The 42 sets of parents who make up Longwood's Booster Club raise money year round.

"The whole community is like a small town when it comes to helping the girls," says Pam Gentile, the president of the Booster Club and mother of one former and one present cheerleader. Mrs. Gentile, who is a school secretary at the Ridge Elementary School, is enthusiastic about the feelings the team and its national title engender throughout the town.

"K-Mart and Wal-Mart allow us to sell raffle tickets whenever we want," she said. "We don't have one major contributor; rather, each small business gives what it can afford. When we go to Nashville, we have 13 chaparrones plus loads of other parents and their kids who accompany the team. It's a wonderful experience, none of which would be possible if it weren't for Mrs. Beary. She makes the girls reach for the stars."



Photographs by Maxine Wickes for The New York Times

Longwood High School's cheerleaders practiced, above, and cheered on the football team against Patchogue-Medford High school, left.



All the girls commit to at least one week of camp in Pennsylvania in the summer. After that, more than 75 percent of them attend a second, voluntary camp run by their coach in Longwood's gym.

Once the school year starts, the pace quickens. The team practices its routines over and over after school till 5:30 Monday to Thursday. On Fridays the girls decorate the locker rooms with streamers and posters, fill the lockers with goodies and fulfill some of the more traditional functions of cheerleading. On Saturday morning they get to school by 9 and practice their nine dances and stunting routines for the afternoon football games. Their commitment doesn't end until the middle of February, when the basketball sea-

son is over. "Although our teachers are sympathetic, no one really cuts us a break," said Beth Rice, a senior and one of the team's captains. "We're expected to keep up our studies. It comes first. We've all developed a strong work ethic. Once you get into the routine, you really don't mind it." "When we win, the whole town knows in a minute or two," said Mrs. Beary, who choreographs the team's trademark stunts and designs its distinctive reverse costumes. "We call from backstage, seconds after the winners are announced, and immediately the phone wires just burn up all over Longwood. We have dozens of people come greet the plane the next day. The community spirit is just incredible."

Why the Allergies? The El Niño Effect Triggers Increase

By MARCIA BYALICK

EL NIÑO, the 5,000-mile-wide pool of warm ocean off the coast of South America, has been blamed for the hurricanes in Mexico, droughts in Australia, tornadoes in Florida, and the wettest, warmest winter Long Island has experienced in decades. It is also the culprit behind a bumper crop of greenery responsible for the appearance of itchy and running eyes and noses already plaguing allergy-prone Long Islanders.

"I usually don't have to put on the air filter in Michael's room till the middle of May," says Karen Gelb of Plainview, mother of a 9-year-old who has suffered with allergies since he was 2. "Usually the soccer season is just about over by the time his allergies kick in. This year he started getting congested and complaining that his eyes were itching during the third week of March, before the first game."

"For weeks my coughing and sneezing has been so bad that for the first time I'm thinking I might have to give up playing golf this season," says Elliot Paskoff, a corporate litigator from Massapequa. "I've had allergies since I was 13 and I never remember needing to take medication so early in the season."

"Because I live close to the water and recently my sinus headaches were becoming incessant, my doctor tested me for an allergy to mold," says Christine Roberts, a Federal probation officer living on the North Shore. "My numbers were sky high. He suggested I start taking allergy shots. I will; they're my only line of defense."

"I myself have had worse allergies this year than I've ever had in my life," says Dr. Paul Lang, head of Adult Allergies at North Shore University Hospital. "The trees are pollinating two to three weeks ahead of time, which means a prolonged season. Because we didn't have cold temperatures, the ground is laden with a lot of mold that usually gets killed off in the winter, but didn't."

"So much good weather means trees will have an incredible crop of pollen. The season will be longer and more severe. The more pollen an allergic person gets exposed to, the more symptoms he will have. I'm seeing patients come in who said they never had a problem before."

"You'd better hang on to your seats," agrees Dr. John Ferry Jr., president of Southampton Hospital. "This is going to be a wild season for the whole spectrum of people, those with problems with grass, trees and mold. A lot of people with allergies don't become aware of it till it's a bad year. What they have in not a bad year is a chronic cold, a runny nose, nothing debilitating. In a bad year they come to a doctor's attention."

He added: "On the East End, we have a micro-climate because all the water modifies our weather. In all likelihood this will be an early season, and a powerful one. I have already seen an uptick in complaints of people out here suffering nasal and eye-related allergies. I think this is going to be the killer year of the last five years."

The National Allergy Bureau, a program of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, predicts that this winter's unusually high rainfall will promote the growth of pollen producing grasses and weeds, which in turn will increase the load of airborne allergens throughout the fall.

"El Niño has changed the pollen forecast," says Dr. Marianne Frier, Director of Allergy and Immunology at Nassau County Medical Center. "Usually in March it's trees, grass in April and ragweed in July, August and September. But we may see ragweed start earlier, stay later and be more intense. Usually it's over in November, but look at this year. We've had humidity (the major cause of dust-mite propagation, another allergen), pollination, frost and humidity again. Because of El Niño, we've had pollination starting even in January. It may go on till December, almost a full year, depending on the first frost."

There are some physicians, however, who believe that the somber warnings about the coming allergy

season are fueled more by hype than reality.

"Predicting the severity of this season's allergies is the same as predicting the weather," offers Dr. Raymond Dattwyler, Chief of Allergy and Clinical Immunology at Stony Brook University Hospital and Medical Center. "If you say this is going to be a pretty intense season, you're more likely to be right than wrong, but we have to be more moderate in our approach."

"It was a mild winter so for those plants who pollinate more based on the weather, the season will be longer. Those plants, like ragweed, who pollinate based on the degree of sunlight, will virtually always pollinate at the same time during mid-August. With all the good non-sedating antihistamines, excellent nasal sprays for hay fever and dramatic new drugs for asthma, there is no reason to panic. There should be no need to curtail your lifestyle."

"There will always be those predicting that this will be the worst season because of this, that or the other reason, but I think Mother Nature has a finite time of pollination for each type of tree," explains Dr. Vincent Bonagura, Chief of Allergies and Immunology at Long Island Jewish Medical Center. "If you have severe allergies and are sensitive to pollen, every year is a terrible year."

"The only thing that's changed is that the season began earlier. If the trees pollinate two to three weeks earlier because of a mild winter, yes, people will have symptoms earlier."

Warm winter means that sufferers undergo an early assault.

Then it's over. The peak period is usually the first and second week in April but with this year's warmer temperatures, if you're sensitive, you've probably been feeling it since mid-March.

"I don't see the season being longer. The flowering time is generic to that particular tree. Once it opens, it pollinates, flowers and dies. Then basically you don't have pollen floating around any more. All El Niño has done is bring the season on sooner."

Whether or not the season will be record breakingly horrendous or just plain lousy, there are some ways to minimize symptoms.

"Keep the windows in both the car and at home closed as much as possible," suggests Dr. Lang. "Put the car air-conditioner on 'recirculate' to prevent outside air from coming in. Before you go out, you may want to premedicate both your children and yourself with one of the new prescription drugs on the market. They work best if used before the onset of symptoms. Don't hang clothes outside to dry, and shower kids when they come in to wash the pollen off of them."

Dr. Ferry advises that "Pollen tends to build up during the course of the morning and dissipates later in the day. If you want to jog, go out before 8 A.M. And if you have nasal, eye and respiratory symptoms that you never thought of before as allergy based, and this year you notice they're worse, it might be smart to see a physician for some clinical or laboratory testing."

Many people become so used to the way they feel, they do not realize they could feel much better. Possible consequences of ignoring nasal allergies are sinusitis, ear infections, nasal polyps and a worsening of asthma. There are simple tests to determine the type and severity of a person's allergies.

"You can have a physical exam," says Dr. Frier, "a look at the nose, eyes, ears and lungs, as well as a history of your symptoms. Then either a scratch test on the arm will tell you within 20 minutes what the cause is, or a blood test."

"Just remember," reassures Dr. Dattwyler, "even if you're having a rough time, we can deal with it. There are very good treatments for all of these things."

Long Island

Section 14



Softball is booming on Long Island, even among older players. The Majors, who were batting, played the Old Goats in a North Hempstead league for players age 35 and older. Other bays leagues have a minimum age of 60.

By MARCIA RYALICK

When It Comes to Softball, Age (Almost) Doesn't Matter

JACK and Mary Sift were out at the ball diamond the other evening, watching their son Sandy's game. Sandy has been playing since he was 5 years old. But this has been a rough season for his team, and the two parents were the only spectators.

It was a tableau that is repeated all across America. But this setting — Denton Avenue Park in New Hyde Park — had something of a twist: Jack Sift is 83, Mary is 81 and their son is 36.

Sandy and most of his teammates on the Old Goats used to play baseball. In the 1950's, now their game is softball.

"It's all about getting out there and being alive," said the younger Mr. Sift, a financial planner from Roslyn Harbor. "This game brings me back to my roots in the schoolyard. Years ago my family would come to cheer us on. Today my parents come from Brooklyn to watch us play. I send them a schedule at the beginning of each season and they put it right next to their calendar."

"They are the Old Goats' official scorekeepers," he testified. "It's a win-win for all of us. You don't find that kind of thing happening in other sports."

Without the civility of golf or the cachet of tennis, overshadowed by sponsors, unions and agents, and ignored by journalists, softball is the team sport of choice for millions of Americans. More than 200,000 teams are registered with the Amateur Softball Association, the game's national governing body. Harvey Lauer of American Softball Data, a market analysis company, said that more than 22 million Americans played softball at least once in 1997, putting it in the top five sports after bowling, basketball, golf and volleyball.

Softball has a reputation as a blue-collar sport, but from Hollywood to the Hamptons, celebrity softball games have become popular fund-raising events. And if you try to tell softball players that it's better suited to beer drinkers than trained athletes, they are likely to point out that women's fast-pitch

became an Olympic event in the 1996 Atlanta Games, with the American team winning the sport's first gold medal.

The publicity helped girls' fast-pitch softball to become the fastest-growing high-school sport in the country. Long Island rules the interscholastic competition, at least at the state level: Bay Shore High School has just won the state championship for the second year in a row.

Everyone knows baseball and softball are close cousins, differing mainly in the size of the ball (smaller for softball) and the length of the game (seven innings for softball, nine for baseball). And of course in softball the pitch must be delivered underhand. But softball is subject to more permutations than its older cousin, with the game broken up into slow, fast and modified pitch

to accommodate a wider range of athletic ability. Each variation has further divisions for youth, male, female and coed teams, further separated by age and skill.

Long Island loves the game. The Amateur Softball Association lists almost 100 spring and summer leagues on the island, and the Long Island Senior Softball Association, a separate group, has more than 60 players over 60 on 25 teams.

"We can't build the fields fast enough," said Peter Eaton, director of the Town of Brookhaven's softball program. "With 180 adult teams and 21 girls' teams, there is still a list of 45 to 50 teams waiting to get in."

"The Nassau Recreation and Parks Department has 538 teams with over 5,000 players," said Ed Dressler of Bethpage, umpire chief of the Amateur Softball Association. "But that's only a tiny segment of

all those who are playing. Each town has its own leagues, including players up to 90 years old."

A factor in softball's popularity is how its rules can be adapted to preserve the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat while taking into account the needs of older players.

"At a time in your life when you can't play baseball any more, softball is the next step," said Artie Catania, former commissioner of the Town of North Hempstead Over-the-Hill Softball League. "Our guidelines take into account the age of our players. If you make it to first base, you can have a courtesy runner run the bases for you. And we have a continuous lineup. If 14 guys show up, 14 guys play, not just the 9 best players. Everyone will have at least three innings of playing time. The weaker players can onto the stronger ones sometimes. You'd be surprised."

A closer look at The Old Goats, one of 16 teams in North Hempstead's Over-the-Hill League (minimum age 35), reveals the sport's appeal. The Old Goats have been a team for 21 years, and some of its charter members are still on the squad. Vacancies are normally filled by newcomers, though by now there is a waiting list. They come from Roslyn and Levittown, Garden

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City Park and Mineola; they are doctors, insurance salesmen, business owners and telephone repairmen.

In other words, team members have little in common besides a reluctance to leave their boyhood behind and the ability, be they sore, exhausted, hungry or hot, to still have a marvelous time.

The Old Goats are still feeling the thrill of their pennant in 1996. They also know how to poke fun at themselves. "None of us remember how that happened," Jack Ungar, their manager and self-ordained "Goatmeister," said of that championship season.

Steve Dichter remembers. "Two years ago we finished fifth in a 16-team league," the Old Goat said. "Then to everyone's surprise, we came back to win the playoffs. Not many things can beat that feeling."

"Playing baseball was the most fun thing I ever did," said Mr. Dichter, a 55-year-old businessman from Roslyn who once played in the Yankee farm system for three years.

"I've always preferred team sports to individual sports, and even though I battle a bad back and everybody has their aches and pains, we keep coming back. After so long, there's a great camaraderie we share, not only within our own team, but with the other teams in the league."

Mr. Ungar writes the weekly Goatgram, a newsletter mailed to each of the 14 players from the season's start in late April through the playoffs ends in August. It chronicles the exploits of players who "went to grade school when asbestos was good." There's a medical update listing the team's pulled hamstrings, stress fractures, strained shoulders and bad backs. Also in keeping with the spirit of the Over-the-Hill League, Mr. Ungar designates individual schedule dates as Advil night, Preparation H night or Prozac night. Recently he added Viagra night.

Win or lose, the Old Goats insist that the score takes second place to the spirit of camaraderie and team effort. This ordering of priorities is not universally embraced.

"After playing in more competitive leagues, I appreciate that the Old Goats love me regardless of how I play," said Doug DeleCave, a slicer with Bell Atlantic who lives in Levittown and is, at 49, one of the



Kevin Coughlin for The New York Times

Jack Ungar of the Old Goats, a team whose players thrill to the game and the camaraderie.

younger Old Goats.

"Softball is an addiction for me," he said. "It's part of summer. I used to play four nights a week, on different teams, till I had my shoulder surgery. Now I cut down to about 100 games a year, two to three doubleheaders a week. For me it's about a bunch of frustrated old ballplayers who still love to compete. If you're not a team player though, you don't belong in softball."

John Miodownik, 63, is a businessman from Roslyn and has pitched for the Old Goats for two decades.

"I play for those moments of glory that appear from time to time," he said. "It's fun to get to bat, to run the bases, to catch the ball. Golf might be a more acceptable, mature game, with its clubs and socialization, but nothing beats the excitement of coming back after having a poor record all season to beat the best teams in the playoffs and win it all. I'm the first to admit I never grew up. I still want to be Joe DiMaggio."

THE FRESH AIR FUND: 1877-1998

More Pupils Taking Prescribed Drugs To Relieve Distress

By MARCIA BYALICK

IT'S noon, and the bell signaling lunchtime at a North Shore elementary school has sounded. As the halls fill with children making their way to the cafeteria, a line forms in front of the nurse's office. Joining those temporarily taking allergy medication and finishing up their prescriptions for antibiotics are a number of children who visit the nurse each school day, throughout the year.

The red-haired fifth grader with the butterfly barrettes is taking Ritalin to help ease her difficulty in keeping her desk neat, packing her bookbag and remembering to bring home her homework assignments. The tall third grader in the Keith Van Horne jersey standing behind her is waiting for his spoonful of Prozac to relieve the burden of having everything he hands in be exactly 100 percent perfect. And the quiet sixth grader leaning glumly against the wall, checking out a magazine to see how much his baseball card collection is worth this month, is hoping his dose of Paxil will alleviate the heaviness that makes his world seem like a much harder place to live in than that of his peers.

Whatever the reason, genetic predisposition, environmental stress or chemical imbalance, overworked parents, overprotective parents or more aware parents, there is no doubt that more and more children are taking drugs to relieve the burden of the symptoms of mental distress. And they're keeping it a secret.

School psychologists, psychiatrists, teachers, pediatricians, principals and researchers all agree that there is a marked increase in the number of children in school on medication, yet because of age-old stigmas, among other reasons, the numbers are difficult to document. Unless the child is on a short-lasting dosage of medicine that has to be administered within the school day (as Pitalin is most popularly), there is no way for the school to know how many of their students are on medication.

A recent New York magazine article reported a Federal Government estimate that at some point, one in five children would suffer a mental health disorder. Although attention deficit disorder, the most common and best researched diagnosis affecting school performance, has monopolized most of the headlines, panic attacks, depression, obsessive-compulsive behavior and separation anxiety are being medically addressed in growing numbers.

"Statistics show that one out of 200 children display some sort of social phobia, pervasive developmental disorder or odd behavior that makes them different," said Dr. Victor Fornari, a child psychiatrist and assistant chairman for Training and Clinical Services in the division of child and adolescent psychiatry at North Shore University Hospital.

"Of the almost one in five children under 18 who meet the criteria for a psychiatric disorder, disruptive behaviors — attention deficit, opposition deficit and conduct disorders — account for between 5 and 7 percent, anxiety disorders — obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, generalized anxiety disorder and separation anxiety — account for about 7 percent and depression about 3 to 5

Taking of medication is usually a secret.

percent," Dr. Fornari said.

"We know that part of the reason there's been some anxiety about using psychotropic drugs with kids is that regardless of the very significant percentage of schoolchildren taking some form of this medication, society continues to have a stigma toward mental illness," he continued. "But failure to recognize the presence of a disruptive behavior disorder poses tremendous risks to the child — academic failure, low self esteem, as well as the development of more serious psychiatric disorders."

He added: "It may not be that the rates are truly higher, but just that there's a greater awareness than ever before."

Linda McElroy, a resource-room teacher for 17 years at Searingtown School in the Herricks School District, said: "I know there are people who see psychopharmacology in the schools as some kind of classroom management tool, but we've seen startlingly positive results both in an academic sense and in terms of socialization. This is how I would like to see the child so he can learn, but, of course, controlling symptoms is just part of dealing with the problem."

"Our kids are under enormous pressure today," said Sue Rubenstein, a school psychologist in the Hewlett School District. "It's the

kind of world we live in — lack of parenting, television, the fast-paced environment. The information that kids are supposed to understand, process, know, handle and learn has increased dramatically. That expectations are higher puts more stress on the system.

"Fifteen years ago, no one in elementary school was taking anti-depressants. Today that's far from the case. Maybe it has something to do with a capacity to soothe, to care, to organize yourself, which seems to be less available to kids than it used to be."

"I don't always know who's taking psychotropic drugs in school," she continued. "Parents are still more comfortable talking about medication for asthma and diabetes than they are about what might benefit their child in the mental health area."

Dr. Robert Dicker, the psychiatrist in charge of the Adolescent Pavilion and the Child and Adolescent Day Services at Long Island Jewish Hospital, said: "Different studies show that the symptoms of depression — sadness, tearfulness, sleep disturbances, a decrease in both energy and concentration — appear to be presenting earlier than in previous generations. We don't know why that's occurring. There are many different theories — two working parents, the divorce rate, family disruptions. We

One estimate says that one in five children will suffer a mental disorder.

are seeing that schools and parents are more sensitive to the diagnosis now and are picking it up sooner. The biases and prejudices are still there, but there's a greater receptivity toward identifying the problem and seeking help."

He added: "I think that one needs to look at psychiatric disorders much like one looks at medical disorders. If a child has seizures, they take the appropriate medication. If a child has attention deficit disorder, they need to be in treatment as well. It's not that psychopharmacologic agents are the only solution, or should be the first line of treatment, but these medications are safer than they were a decade ago and from my experience, with the correct diagnosis and comprehensive treatment plan, they are appropriately prescribed."

"It's no longer a red flag for us to note on a camper's application that he is taking medication," said Bob Musiker, one of the owners and directors of the Roslyn-based Summer Discovery and Musiker Tours, a popular pre-college institute and travel program. "It's become so common that the kids are not reticent about sharing that once or twice a day they take their medication. I don't know what they'd be like without it, but all these kids are bright, well-functioning human beings who enjoy their summer vacation."

Dr. Gil Dick, a pediatrician in Great Neck, said he did not prescribe psychotropic drugs. "I don't believe pediatricians are adequately trained, so I turn that over to people who do that for a living. I have, however, been prescribing Ritalin for attention deficit disorder for almost 20 years. Each child's dosage is custom made. I've observed more cases lately because I think parents are hearing good things about the drug's results, and the schools are more vocal in asking that they try it."

"Most parents, rightfully so, are resistant at first," he continued. "Their misgivings dissipate when their children respond. I try to liken attention deficit disorder to color blindness. It's something you don't outgrow, but you can learn to deal with as you get older and learn the tricks of the trade."

For those children having difficulty keeping up with the pack, there is an ever expanding choice of drugs, honing in on ever more exact diagnoses. The downside, if there is one, experts say, is that medication alone should not be considered the most effective treatment.

"If parents think that means you don't have to deal with the issues underlying the behavior, then that's short-sighted," cautioned Dr. Fornari.

"I think it's a serious issue to start putting kids on medication," added Nancy Lindenaur, principal of Searingtown School, "for what it implies in terms of taking a pill to change a child's internal state. Although I have seen many troubled children do much better than they would have 15 years ago, there's a danger that parents and kids feel absolved from the responsibility of the behavior once the medication is started. Responsibility does not lie in the pill. Medication should make it possible for the child to achieve his goals, not excuse him from not achieving them." ■