

Gail Winds

The following are some actual requests sent to Santa which wound up at the dead-letter office:

- "Dear Santa: I only want one thing. Dynamite. Nothing exciting ever happens around here. Albert"
- "Dear Santa: My mother said if I don't brush my teeth three times a day, you won't come to see me. Are you a dentist? LLOYD"
- "Dear Santa: Please send me a dog. One that's full of dog. The one I got last Christmas was full of sawdust. Junior"
- "Dear Santa Claus: For Christmas I would like a real doctor's bag. I want to try some operations on my friends. Hilton"
- "Dear Santa: I haven't made up my mind. I haven't seen all the commercials yet. Linda"
- "Dear Santa: My best friend Susan and I would like a bicycle built for two. Please leave the front half at my house. Beatrice"
- "Dear Sandy Klaus: I want put in a new order quick. I just found all the things I asked for under the spare room bed. Sonny"
- "Dear Santa: Don't forget the batteries this time. Mickey"
- "Santa: My folks are getting the toys; you just bring the batteries. Matt"

Adults don't always have an easy holiday just because they don't have to write to Sandy Klaus. One man complained that his wife's parents didn't like him. He explained: "On Christmas Day my wife said, 'Who wants to carve the turkey?' and my father-in-law responded, 'You carve him, you married him.'"

Most adults complain more about the cost of Christmas than anything else. They're certain that all the stores in town have put up mistletoe so that they can kiss their money goodbye. Most people won't only be home for Christmas, but they'll be home all summer paying for Christmas. The older children have already learned that one of the customs of Christmas these days is running into debt. What the little children would really like for Christmas, however, is something that will separate the men from the toys.

The purpose of why we celebrate this holiday has been thrown out with the crumpled wrapping paper. Few people take time anymore from the jingling bells and from juggling bills during December to pause and reflect on the real reason for the season. It reminds me of the joke called "horning in." Two ladies stopped in front of a shop window on Fifth Avenue in New York City. The window dresser had fixed up a nice little nativity scene in the midst of the merchandise, and one of the women said to the other... "What do you know about that! Even the church is trying to horn in on Christmas!"

So, along with the decorations, gifts, and platters of food this Christmas, perhaps we should also make room for something Steve Goodier has said...

"We've arrived at Christmas, again. A strange time of the year. That's when we celebrate the Prince of Peace by buying toy battle ships, killer robots, fighter planes, infantrymen, and armored supercharacters for our children. I wonder if the toys we buy don't reflect our real feelings about the world in which we live."

Think about it. Then do something about it. And meanwhile, have a Merry Christmas.

Health-Wise

Stress can be the spice of life or turn into kiss of death if it's ignored

By Thomas Speros, M.D.

Talbert's medical dictionary defines stress as follows: "In medicine the result produced when a structure, system, or organism is acted upon by forces that disrupt equilibrium or produce strain. In Health care, the term denotes the physical (gravity, mechanical force, injury, pathogen (agent causing disease), and psychological (fear, anxiety, crisis, joy) forces that are experienced by individuals. It is generally believed that biological organisms require a certain amount of stress in order to maintain their well-being. However, when stress occurs in quantities that the system cannot handle, it produces pathologic changes..."

For this edition, we will present examples of how the mind and body interact to either cause disease or make an existing condition worse, and we will present some suggestions for dealing with stress effectively. It is important to understand that stress in and of itself is not bad. However, when the physical and/or psychological forces influencing a person exceed his or her ability to cope with them, they become distressful. Physical and emotional problems can result.

The mind and body are intimately related. Emotional problems can produce physical changes in the body just as some physical diseases can cause psychiatric illness. These effects are produced through nerves connecting the brain directly with the body's symptoms and through hormones that are released by an individual under stress. These in turn have an effect on other body systems like the immune system which helps us fight disease.

One example of how this phenomenon can occur is given by Thomas Holmes, M.D. He describes a patient who was experiencing considerable pain. The pain became worse when a relative he did not like paid him a visit. He could not tolerate her and he could not fight back. He was also unable to run away.

Dr. Holmes measured the muscle tension in the patient's back during discussions with the patient and found the tension and pain to be greatly increased when they talked about this particular relative and other stressful situations. When they discussed non-stressful topics, the muscles relaxed and the pain lessened. Under stress, our bodies prepare for flight or fight just as our

ancestors did, but usually in our day to day lives, neither is an appropriate response.

Significant social change and/or prolonged stress can make one more susceptible to many illnesses. Holmes and Rehe developed a scale assigning points to life changes and found that those scoring greater than 300 points had approximately an 80 percent chance of becoming ill, those scoring between 150 to 300 points had approximately a 60 percent chance, and those scoring less than 150 points only a 20 percent risk. Examples of the events and their values are: (1) death of a spouse - 100; (2) divorce - 73; (3) marital separation - 65; (4) death of a close family member - 63; (5) vacation - 13; (6) birth of a child - 39; (7) change in residence - 20; (8) Christmas - 12; and (9) minor violation of the law - 11 (the lowest ranking).

Studies have shown that people who are under a lot of stress can be more susceptible to heart disease, hypertension, cancer, and infections. Patients with rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, diabetes, systemic lupus, erythematosis, and colitis, among other diseases often respond to stress by having their illnesses become worse.

In summary, it is important to remember that one could not grow and change without some stress. Stress can be managed by increasing our ability to cope with it or by reducing our exposure. Our ability to cope can be improved by maintaining good physical health, getting adequate rest, eating properly, exercising and maintaining good social support systems. Major life changes should not come close together if it is possible to plan them.

Some symptoms that tend to develop when demand exceed one's ability to cope with them are loss of efficiency, interest, initiative, insomnia, fatigue, and physical symptoms like headache, backache, and stomach pain.

A Gift that remembers...

When you lose someone dear to you—or when a special person has a birthday, quits smoking, or has some other occasion to celebrate—memorial gifts or tribute gifts made for them to your Lung Association help prevent lung disease and improve the care of those suffering from it.

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By LARRY MCGEEHEE

A significant legacy of the 1960's is the emergence of research and books about neglected aspects of American culture, not the least of which are better and better histories of black leaders and black life. Slavery, in the Old South, for example, has long held the historians' attention, but slavery in Texas—a "right" for which the Mexican War was fought and over which the Union almost split sooner than it did—has been ignored. To fill the gap Randolph B. Campbell has written *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821-1865* (LSU Press, 1989). Although slavery was confined to only two-fifths of the state, the large number of slaves and slaveholders made Texas more southern than western in its attitudes and gave secession an inevitability Sam Houston didn't want and many even today fail to understand.

The role of the black clergy in American culture has always been important, but scarcely studied. Recent studies of the civil rights movement have raised consciousness of this theme to new appreciations. David E. Swift provides us with six biographies of black preachers from the pre-War period of *Black Prophets of Justice: Activist Clergy Before the Civil War* (LSU Press, 1989). All lived and preached in the

North, and their presence and activity there is important in correcting the impression that Frederick Douglass was about the only black spokesman in that spirited period. They operated newspapers and fugitive slave networks, thundered from their pulpits and introduced legislation, opposed segregation in white churches of the North and the colonization movement to ship freed blacks back to Africa, kept alive the African past and glorified the achievements of rising leaders, and were the ancestors for organized activity such as that of the NAACP and SCLC in the next century. Their sermons and organization reports are important additions to the scant black literature from that pre-War era.

As noted earlier, Frederick Douglass was for many years—prior to the coming of Booker T. Washington—the most prominent black spokesman, especially from the 1850's through 1870's. Most histories, however, seem to end his career with the Civil War. David W. Bright recovers missing chapters for us in *Frederick Douglass' Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee* (LSU Press, 1989). Even in his most visible years, Douglass struggled with balancing a politics of hope with a politics of principle. The struggle became harder, not easier, after the

war, when the Republican Party tried to use Douglass for political gain without appreciating the message of political principle for which he was an ardent advocate. More and more, he had to cast his deep faith in American nationalism in the religious languages of millennialism and deferred hopes. In the end, he kept abolitionist and Civil War hope alive, but was acutely aware that the harder struggles for blacks lay ahead.

Afro-American literature is very much a creation of the 20th century. Because of restricted literacy and to printing presses prior to that, only the first of four volumes of Blyden Jackson's *A History of Afro-American Literature* is needed to cover *The Long Beginning, 1746-1895* (LSU Press, 1989). The first known Afro-American writing was a little poem about a fight between Indians and whites in Massachusetts, written by a 16-year-old slave from the West Indies, Lucy Terry.

The slave narratives, sermons, reminiscences, spirituals, and novels that followed fall into two categories, according to Jackson. In the period from Lucy Terry to Nat Turner, from 1746 to 1830, the emphasis was upon learning the language in which to write and speak, a period somewhat like the ghetto experiences in New York for waves of immigrant Europeans. The second period, from 1830 to 1895, was one in which blacks began to turn their new language tools into weapons of protest. From Jupiter Hammon and Phillis Wheatley in the Revolutionary War period to the death of Frederick Douglass and the success of Booker T. Washington's Atlanta Exposition speech in 1895, Jackson finds the overture to the black literary renaissances of this century.

Few more striking examples of that modern renaissance can be found than in a writer whose work and influences are memorialized in a book edited by Quincy Troupe,

James Baldwin: The Legacy (Simon & Schuster, Touchstone Book paperback, 1989). Friends such as William Styron, Maya Angelou, and Toni Morrison assess his personal and his professional life, a number of interviews are collected from over the years, and a new interview, done by Troupe just before Baldwin died in 1987, is published.

Cast in a somewhat different mold from Douglass the preacher and Baldwin the poet is the new type of black politician, of which there are few finer examples than the Alabamian studied by Jimmie Lewis Franklin in *Back to Birmingham: Richard Arrington, Jr., and His Times* (University of Alabama Press, 1989). Franklin's thesis is that Arrington's story is set apart from traditional civil rights biographies because of the man's deep and special "sense of place," his attachment to his environment. This book is heavy on dates and details, but behind it all runs the theme of the difficult—not meteoric—rise and chronicle of a competent civic leader, a success story hardly known outside Birmingham precisely because it has been successful.

The context for the rise of Arrington and other black politicians of a new breed is the city. Robert D. Bullard is the editor of a book on this context: *In Search of the New South: The Black Urban Experience in the 1970s and 1980s* (University of Alabama Press, 1989). The case studies are of Houston, New Orleans, Atlanta, Memphis, Birmingham, and Tampa. The evidence is that, while legal obstacles have been removed, economic and political barriers, educational incentives and separatist cultural patterns still stifle progress towards a truly "New" South for blacks. The best results are being gained inch by inch at local grassroots levels in interracial committees and councils learning tenuously but tenaciously, and often invisibly, how to move ahead together.

Bassin' with the pros

Almost every lake has some, and they're nearly always home to bass. Boat houses. Piers. Fishing docks and marinas.

"It's amazing how many fishermen ignore boat houses when they're fishing," says Johnson Outboards Pro Staff member Ricky Green, "but I think they offer some of the best cover available for bass. I finished second in a national tournament several years ago, simply by fishing boat houses for three days, and I only lost by five-ounces."

Boat houses and similar structures like piers and even marinas provide cover and shade for bass, says Green. The water around them is often slightly deeper, and in many cases food is more abundant.

"For me, the most productive boat houses are those located on points or in the backs of pockets and coves," explains the Johnson pro. "I don't like to fish a long row of boat houses. I'd much rather find one by itself because it seems to act just like other types of isolated cover in attracting bass."

Green feels most bass using boat houses are suspended fish, so he often uses topwater or medium-running lures like buzz baits and spinnerbaits to bring them to the surface. If he uses jigs or plastic worms, he chooses lures that are light and fall very slowly.

"Normally, outside pilings or corners hold the most bass," says Green, "so I usually fish these first. Then, I'll make a long cast that brings my lure along the entire side of a boat house, in case the fish are further back or underneath the house."

"Sometimes, flipping is the only way you'll get fish to hit, and when that happens, you have to work very slowly and try to hit every corner. After you fish two or three boat houses, you should know how the

bass are acting and be able to fish accordingly."

Often Green will idle slowly in front of a boat house watching his depthfinder before he begins casting. Many dock owners sink trees or bushes in front of a boat house to help attract crappie. These same brush piles are excellent places to catch bass, and readily show up on a good depthfinder.

"Just work a buzz bait slowly over a brush pile and you'll find out pretty fast if a bass is present," laughs Green. "If a fish hits and misses, switch to a plastic worm."

"When you visit a different lake for the first time and don't know where to begin fishing, or if you can't determine a pattern on your favorite lake, try the boat houses."

"They're among the most reliable places I know to catch a bass."

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