

Did Your Mother Take Hormones During Her Pregnancy With You?

by Cheryl Thomas

Many of you may have noticed the article in the last issue of the HILLTOP entitled, "Are you a DES Daughter?" This article was dealing almost entirely with the morning-after pill which contains DES (*Diethylstilbestrol*) however, due to a certain misunderstanding, the article received an incorrect headline. The article contained one sentence on the issue of pregnancies involving DES. In the following essay I am going to examine this topic for you.

During the 1940's and 1950's, the American pharmaceutical industry introduced a new wonder drug to the public. This drug was to help thousands of women through their pregnancies and aid in the prevention of miscarriages. The drug is a synthetic form of the female hormone, estrogen. called *Diethylstilbestrol*. It had previously been used in the treatment of uterine bleeding and therapeutically used in the treatment of women experiencing menopause. At this time, there were no negative side-effects reported from the small group of women treated with the drug.

When the drug was offered to women experiencing problems during pregnancy, it

was cited as a new wonder-drug for the prevention of miscarriage. As a result, it is believed that several million women took the drug during their pregnancies. It is estimated that 1 million female children were born between 1946 and 1972 whose mothers used DES during pregnancy. As early as 1966, rare forms of vaginal cancer were discovered in adolescent girls; cancer that had previously attacked only middle-aged women.

The drug causes changes in the cervix and vagina of the daughters of women who took the drug during pregnancy. These changes are often apparent to gynecologists when giving pelvic examinations, but just as often they go unnoticed. Not all doctors are aware of the dangers of DES or are capable of giving the test vital to women with abnormal cell growth. The test is called a colposcopy and it is performed in most major American cities. I inquired about the test in Asheville and found that it is given by Doctors Kitner and Sandridge at the OB/GYN Clinic on Orange Street.

During this 20-min. test, the doctor uses a small lighted instrument which magnifies the cervix 14 times, enabling him/

her to check for cervical dysplasia (abnormal cell growth on the cervix). If doctors see anything unusual, they may take biopsies. This is the only experience of slight pain. During the procedure, the doctor also examines the vagina for vaginal adenosis, a displacement of cells from the cervix which begin to grow in the vagina. The whole procedure takes a little time and a fair amount of money, but if the cancer is diagnosed in its early stages, it is curable.

Just recently, I went to Wash. D.C. to undergo a colposcopy. My mother took DES during her second through sixth month of pregnancy with me. The doctor observed a number of changes which had taken place and he took biopsies of three areas on the cervix. The reports were negative, which was a huge relief to my family and I. However, I must have the test once or twice a year for the rest of my life so that if cancer does occur, I will have a good chance of recovery. I urge all women to inquire whether their mothers took DES or any other hormone during their pregnancy with them. I also urge every woman over 17 to have a pap

smear at least once a year and then to ask for the results; not just whether it was negative or positive, but exactly what it said. If the results read "abnormal growth, non-malignant" as mine did, you should ask your doctor or another doctor about the necessity of a colposcopy. It may save your sanity and possibly your life.

* * * *
\$1,500

A \$1500 grand prize will be awarded in the current Poetry Contest sponsored by World of Poetry, a monthly newsletter for poets.

Poems of all styles and on any subject are eligible to compete for the grand prize or for 49 other cash or merchandise awards. Second place is \$500.

According to contest director, Joseph Mellon, "We are encouraging poetic talent of every kind, and expect our contest to produce exciting discoveries."

Rules and official entry forms are available by writing to:

World of Poetry
801 Portola Dr.
Dept. 211
San Francisco
94127

continued from page 2

The team is presently working on a debate demonstration to be presented in the Coffeehouse. This demonstration will allow students to learn more about debate. It should be an extremely interesting and stimulating event for both the student body and the community. Watch for signs announcing this event.

SKI CLUB

Winter is here and that means skiing for many people. The Mars Hill College Ski Club meets every other Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. in the Coffeehouse. The next meeting is November 25. There are no requirements to join the club and no person needs to be an accomplished skier. Different club members will be teaching basic skiing to those who have had little experience. All this will be free, as well as special skiing package deals for members.

COFFEEHOUSE IS CLOSED

The Coffeehouse food service has served its purpose. This, according to Phil Weast, plus competition from other places was the reason for closing it down.



CARE

HOLIDAY GREETING CARDS
BRING JOY TO THE WORLD...
BRING JOY TO HER.

A holiday donation to CARE may be the most important gift you give all season — the Gift of Life. The \$2 minimum donation per card will serve 12 hungry children in a developing country a daily bowl of nourishing porridge for a month. See how far your dollars will go when you send these attractive greetings! They tell your loved ones that you have given in their honor.

You can order cards or send a personal contribution to

CARE, Inc.
2581 Piedmont Rd., N.E.
Rm. 23-A
Atlanta, Georgia 30324

