

CELEBRATING POSITIVE CHOICES

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Listen



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FEATURED PERSONALITIES

- TAKE 6: A CAPELLA SENSATION
- NEWS ANCHOR BRETTE LEA

Listen

LISTEN is a monthly drug-prevention magazine for teens that teaches life skills, success tips, drug facts, and the advantages of a lifestyle free from alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

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Hey, Get Real!

We like to say that LISTEN magazine has no competitor. It's true. Look where you will, you won't find another positive-lifestyle, anti-drug teenage magazine anywhere. Oh, sure, you'll find some interesting brochures and one-offer promos—but no full-blown, national, quality magazine like LISTEN. That's probably the way it should be because LISTEN was the first and is still the first and the best.

Well, guess what should come across my desk the other day! A magazine that just looked like a clonal spinoff on good old LISTEN. My eyebrows shot up instantly. Could this be the moment we've thought about for so long? Was this *the* competitor?

Only one big, big, big problem. This LISTEN "competitor" is 100 percent sponsored, underwritten, and produced by—shall I say it—yes, why not—Phillip Morris—one of the biggies in the cigarette industry. Now what's their angle?

I looked over the feature article on page 27—great stuff. "The Crown's Jewel," it was called, and it was a feature on Miss America 1991. I don't know if this lovely lady is a smoker. My guess is no, because it's for sure if she smoked, those lovely white teeth wouldn't be Miss America quality for long. Major contradiction here, P.M.

And the factual. What sort of other-worldly facts are these guys pushing on young people? "This too shall pass" strikes me as historical wishful thinking. The whole premise on that article about anti-smoking efforts in this country is that anti-smoking movements go in cycles, and that this, the third great cycle in modern American history, will also pass. Don't count on it, P.M. The facts are that young people and the population in general are wising up to the real dangers of cigarette smoking. That's a cycle that just is not going to pass anytime soon. Factual—these guys choose their facts just a little too selectively.

One letter in their magazine attempts to muddy the issue by saying that it's impossible that extra spending on cigarette advertising increases usage, since usage has clearly dropped in the past few years. Get real, people! Anybody, from the kid selling lemonade on the street to the multinational pushing a product on TV, knows that advertising breeds results. The marvelous thing is that social reaction to cigarette smoking is so strong that usage is declining just the same. But don't think that the cigarette companies have given up. They are very selectively targeting subgroups of the population, and in those areas where they are spending the money, usage is on the increase.

Let's conclude with this last fictional piece of reality from this magazine. Under the title of "The Generosity of Smokers," the author claims that in Seattle smokers paid to clean up Puget Sound, and in Cleveland smokers paid for a new sports stadium and in California, smokers pick up the tab when homeless and poor people cannot pay their doctors' bills. Great generosity! The fact is that lawmakers recognize the great cost to society created by these habits. So there's a tax. That tax, rather than paying for stadiums and roads and other positive things, in reality only partially pays the incredible social and medical costs of cigarette use. You can't even put a cost on the individual smoker getting emphysema, lung cancer, and a whole host of other problems.

Time's up? It should be for the fictional journalism of magazines like this erstwhile LISTEN competitor. Get real, folks.

Lincoln Steed

Editor **Lincoln E. Steed**
Associate Editor **Glen Robinson**
Designer **Merwin Stewart**
Design Assistant **Robert Mason**
Editorial Secretary **Linda Andregg**

EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS

Winton Beaven, Ph.D.; Galen Bosley, Dr.H.Sc., R.D.; Carolyn Burns; Paul and Carol Cannon; Don Cooper, M.D.; Hans Diehl, M.P.H.; Robert DuPont, M.D.; Mary Eldershaw; Kevin Freeman; Dr. Winston Ferris; Zhennaa Gallagher; Patricia Mutch, Ph.D.; Thomas R. Neslund; G. L. Plubell, Ph.D.; Stoy Proctor, M.P.H.; Gunter Reiss, Dr.H.Sc., M.P.H.; Francis A. Soper, Litt.D.; Elizabeth Sterndale, R.N., M.S.; Becki Trueblood; DeWitt Williams, Ph.D.

ART CONSULTANTS

Ed Guthero, Lars Justinen

Editorial Office

P.O. Box 7000, Boise, ID 83707.

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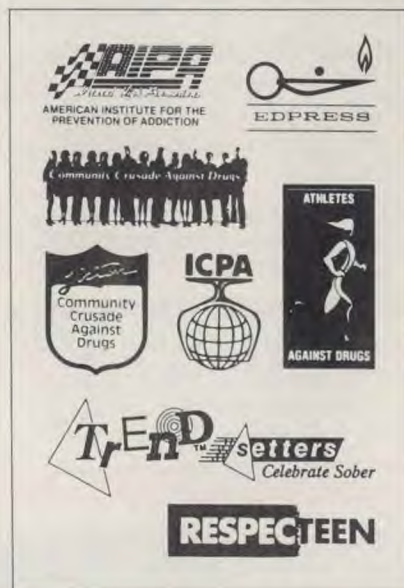
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THE DATING GAME

Dating: a planned social event where two people of the opposite sex get together for fun and pleasure.

So you thought dating happened everywhere to everyone? Not exactly. It is a fairly recent "invention," beginning in the 1900s and being firmly established in the 1920s. It started in the United States. In fact, it is still rare in parts of the world. It is actually prohibited in some countries but is popular in the more westernized areas of the world. Before dating started, your great- and great-great-grandparents "kept company" or "walked about" while being carefully chaperoned, until engagement and sometimes even until marriage.

You see, before people flocked to the cities to work in factories, they lived in small

communities where everyone knew everyone else. You didn't have to date to find out what a person was like.

Parents, feeling they knew best about these things, did the mate choosing. Oh, they would often consider the likes and dislikes of their children, but they usually had the last word. Prospects were divided into the good girls/guys and the bad girls/guys. They had figured out who were the ill-humored, the weird, the yellers—all who would be considered poor marriage material. Most important, they knew whether the prospective bride or groom was a good worker. It was very important to be able to "pull your own

weight" in rural living.

Did dating turn out to be a good thing? Absolutely! In fact, it is essential if young people are going to make good choices in their relationships. Sometimes teens get the idea that their parents are against dating. Actually, parents are more worried about the age of dating and the kinds of dating than they are about dating itself. So let's take a look at the different levels of dating, the benefits of dating, how to make the most of this social invention, and how to be a good date.

Dating Levels

Young people usually begin with group dating. This is

A L B E R T A M A Z A T



because they need transportation and financial help—predriver's license! Group-dating events are usually sponsored by schools, churches, communities, or good old Mom and Dad. This kind of dating can begin in the early teens since girls and fellows don't need to have a special invitation from a special person to attend. Sometimes during the activities they may pair off and spend more time with one person. They may even change partners during the course of events. This is a great way to start dating, and there should be more of it. It takes away the scariness of having to be in charge of everything—including what to talk about, which is often a big concern of new "daters."

Random dating is an unspecialized type of dating that combines the freedom to move around among different people from one date to the next without feeling "tied down" to any one person. Unfortunately, this is not usually the way things work out, for there seems to be a "pairing off" trend. Once you go out with someone a time or two you may feel you are locked into that pattern. Sometimes girls and guys like that because it gives them a



feeling of security in a pretty insecure world.

Steady dating is the next step. Teens tell us it is "comfortable" since they don't have to worry about someone asking them for routine or special events. Since it is more confining, some kids decide to wait till they are ready to get more serious before they restrict their options. The next level is serious dating, which leads to engagement and marriage. Since very few adults marry the first person they ever dated, you can see how going steady and serious dating at the beginning of a dating career cut you off from the ways that dating can be really helpful. Let's look at some of these ways.

Benefits of Dating

1. You can learn social skills—how to meet and get along with people outside your family circle, how to meet other people, how to plan together, what type of courtesies people like, how to behave in certain social situations and discover different viewpoints others have.

2. You can enlarge your interests and abilities by entering into the activities of the persons you are dating, such as hiking, skiing, exploring, etc.

3. You can learn to share your thoughts, ideas, and feelings in an appropriate way with someone your own age who is more likely to understand. Good relationships don't thrive on being withdrawn or noncommunicative.

4. You can learn to feel relaxed. Dating is for fun, and if you end up after a date feeling worse than you did when you went out, that can be one of those "red flags" that you may need to consider. This may mean that dating that person isn't for you.

5. You can learn to handle "giving in" and not always having your own way. Now, from the above, it is easy to figure out that the more people you date, the more of these advantages you will experience—at the same time that you are having a good time. It is sort of sad to see young people deliberately depriving themselves of all the good things that dating more than one person can provide.

Obviously, there will come a time in your life when one special someone will be the one you decide you want to spend your life with. But that time had better not be before you have had a chance to see what life is all about from the

Being a good date is not a matter of being attractive, rich, or smart.

freedom of dating various persons.

How to Be a Great Date

When dating is seen as an adventure, rather than an obligation or habit, teens will want to polish up their dating skills so that they can be the best possible dates! Being a good date is not a matter of being attractive, rich, or smart. Far from it! It is much more under your control than any of those qualities. Anyone can be a good date; no one need be left out if they are willing to make the effort to work on the qualities mentioned below:

1. Feeling at ease among people, which may have a lot to do with whether your home is a friendly place where people come and go a lot. But it has to do with how you feel about yourself too. If you feel OK about yourself, you don't have to worry so much about how you are coming across to others. Concentrating on how much to make *them* feel at ease is usually a good beginning.

2. Participating in lots of extracurricular activities usually demonstrates that the more interests you have, the more interesting you are. This list could include reading, sports, music, drama, church or volunteer groups—and lots more.

3. Having a sense of respon-

sibility is important. It's a sign of maturity when your parents can depend on you to do your share of work. Being as good as your word points you out as a winner.

4. Know enough about your world to be considered intelligent—current events and knowledge of where these places are on your globe can get to be absorbing and impressive.

5. Cultivate a pleasant, even disposition. Try it on your family for starters, for they can be counted on to be pretty upsetting at times. Here you can learn the first lessons about not whining, being less critical, being a good sport, sharing, etc.

6. Having a sense of humor is great. This doesn't mean knowing a lot of jokes or being a stand-up comic. It means seeing the funny side of even a flat tire or broken plans. It means laughing at yourself, not at someone else!

7. Knowing where you stand with regard to your principles and values is of prime importance. This would include having a stand on where you will and won't go, how you will respond to invitations to do drugs or drink, and what your expectations are of sexual behavior on dates. Wishy-washy, uncertain standards can be confusing to your dates. Going with the crowd may win short-term

The more people you date, the more advantages you will experience.

friends, but it is never attractive in the long haul.

To put it all together, then, dating can be seen as a really worthwhile, enhancing activity at the right age and the right level of dating. The longer you stay with group and random dating, the more benefits you will be able to rack up for the time when you are ready for steady and serious dating. These last two levels are usually best left to senior high school and entering-college years.

By then you will have demonstrated how many of the good-date qualities you have acquired and will rate the very best of the current prospects for steady and serious dating. Your parents also will note your march to maturity and will be cooperative with your dating, rather than being on your case. Getting out of a dating track you've been in is sometimes not easy to do. But it will pay off. Both you and your parents have seen cases where lives have been darkened by the results of unwise dating that led to unhappy marriages. Nobody wants this to happen to you.

So here's a toast to helpful, hopeful, and certainly happy dating. ☐



You're On, Brette!



"Then one day I got thrown on the set to anchor the news. I was shaking in my boots when the red light came on and the 3-2-1 countdown began."

Michael Zenda



No two days are ever quite alike for Brette Lea, a TV journalist and weekend news anchor for WTVE's Channel 5 in Nashville, Tennessee.

Her assignment for February 17, however, was quite ordinary in one sense: she was reporting on American Legion Post 103's support rally for American soldiers stationed in the Persian Gulf. But this is no ordinary post. While the members are former servicemen—some are highly decorated war heroes—they're all convicts, and their address is the Tennessee State Penitentiary.

Nearly a hundred curious convict-veterans watched silently as Brette and her cameramen set up their equipment. If she was nervous that Thursday night, she didn't show it.

One of the prisoners was John Brown, a



marine veteran from the Vietnam era. His son, a marine M.P., was stationed on the front near Iraqi lines.

"She wants to talk to you about your son," another convict told John, pointing toward Brette. He squirmed uneasily in his chair. Other reporters have asked him for interviews since the awful day in 1974, when, during an alcohol and drug-induced blackout, he killed Grand Ole Opry star David "Stringbean" Akerman and his wife. He has always declined.

Finally, he agreed to an interview if Brette promised not to get into the details of his crime or identify his son. John didn't want to embarrass his son or family.

"She's warm and easy to talk to," he admitted later. "Reporters usually make me nervous,

but there's something about her personality that knocked all those walls down. She talked to me as though I were a person, not just an infamous criminal."

Worry lines suddenly creased his face. "But you know how reporters are," he sighed. "She'll probably make a fool out of me anyway."

"The story on the legion was special to me," Brette told me during an interview. "I think it surprised a lot of people. They didn't realize that fellas behind bars still have hearts."

Persistence Is the Key to Success

On weekends Brette Lea anchors the six- and ten-o'clock news. She's poised and articulate. Her presence on camera makes the job look

easy. But anchoring the news wasn't the career she planned.

"I was about 22, fresh out of college and on my first job in Amarillo," she ex-

plains in a faint Texas drawl. "My ambition was to be a reporter on the streets, digging up the scoop. But then one day I got thrown on the set to anchor the news. I was shaking in my boots when the red light came on and the 3-2-1 countdown began. It was a horrifying experience, and, oh, did it show!"

PHOTO COURTESY OF BRETTE LEA



Whether she's serving as reporter or news anchor, Brette Lea's career is filled with human—and not so human—interest stories.



PHOTO BY DAVID E. ROGERS



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRETTE LEA

Some people might have thrown in the towel and quit. Not Brette.

"Even though I knew some people thought I couldn't do it, that's when I decided to be an anchor," she laughs. "But I really had to work at it. It never, ever came easy for me. I got discouraged and wanted to quit on a daily basis."

Persistence, Lea says, is the key to success in anything.

"The best anchors are those who are just themselves on camera," she admits. "But it takes a lot of practice before you can do that naturally. I got private coaches. I practiced all the time. Friends probably thought I was crazy, but I kept working at it, and it's slowly starting to pay off."

"I was determined to make it work. You can't help but improve if you keep working at something, and you're persistent. I still get discouraged some days," she admits. "But then I'll go out and do a story about something that really matters to people. Later I'll hear people talking about what I said on TV. Those are the times when a reporter says, 'Yeah, it's worth it, and I'm gonna keep working to do better.'"

Drugs—They're Such a Waste

Jessica Savitch, an NBC correspondent killed in a car crash several years ago, was an important role model for Brette as a young girl growing up in Houston, Texas.

"She's one of the reasons I got into this business," Lea says. "I remember watching her on TV in Houston when I was a kid. She was one of the first anchorwomen in the south and on network TV. I really admired her work."

Brette hesitated before continuing in a thoughtful voice. "Jessica might still be with us today if she had not had so many problems with drugs. It's such a waste."

She doesn't mince words when speaking about drugs.

"Personally, I don't like not being in control of myself," Brette says. "I've never taken illegal drugs, and I never plan to. I've never seen anybody's life end great when they've been on drugs, but I've seen a lot of great people end up with disastrous lives after taking drugs."

People who drink and drive get no sympathy from Brette Lea—no matter who they are.

"I think anyone who gets in a car and knows they're not in control is an idiot, and if they take somebody's life while doing so—they have to pay the price for that."

Journalism is a tough business, Brette says, but substance abuse is the kiss of death for a

PHOTO COURTESY OF BRETTE LEA



Persistence is the key to success, according to Brette Lea.

professional career. "You really have to be a strong person to stay away from it and to realize that's not the answer," she says.


Working the Streets

"I loved being an investigative reporter when I first started in this business six years ago," Brette says. "Now the highlight of my job is doing human-interest stories, meeting interesting people who have accomplished something unique or overcome great odds. It's fun to report on people who work hard to make their dreams come true."

But there is a darker side to TV journalism. As a reporter Brette is one of the first at the scene of horrific murders, deadly fires, traffic accidents, and everything else that impacts on the daily lives of people.

Then there are frustrations. "I guess the hardest part of my job is trying to get officials to tell you what's going on when a family on welfare, for example, isn't getting their check, but the official won't talk or solve the problem."

"I've met everybody from mass murderer Henry Lee Lucas to President George Bush. I can't think of another job in which you become a part of current events and history and get to meet so many interesting and different people at the same time." ■



JESSIE'S CHOICE

Sitting next to her friend, the words repeated in Jessie's mind. *Facial deformities. Webbing. Retardation.* Her mom was just getting home when Jessie got there. "Am I retarded, Mom?" she asked bluntly.

Susan Lute

Jessie gazed in disbelief at the face that looked at her in the girls' restroom mirror. The voice of her teacher echoed in her mind.

"If a girl drinks while she's pregnant, one thing that can happen to her baby is called Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. That means the baby can be born with facial deformities, webbing between fingers and toes, various degrees of retardation, developmental delays . . ."

Jessie shivered.

Her friend Mary squeezed in beside her and dug in her purse, finally pulling out a pink hairbrush.

"Jessie, can you believe that Mrs. Rose? She has the dumbest

classes. She's always going on and on about alcohol and drugs. Like you're a moron, even when you only do it once in a while."

"Mary, let's go to the library before we catch the bus," Jessie suggested, trying to hide the fear slowly growing in her stomach.

Mary stopped the brush midstroke in her short brown hair. "Why?"

Jessie bent to retie her shoelace. "I'm going to do my health report on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Will you help me?"

Mary shrugged. "Sure. I guess so."

Jessie knew she couldn't tell Mary the real reason why she wanted to find out about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

At the library, they got out every book they could find on the subject. Jessie read and made notes slowly, while Mary finished more quickly.

"Here, Jessie. We've got to catch the bus. I want to get ready for the party tonight," Mary said, handing Jessie her notes. Jessie closed her books slowly. What she'd read felt like an anchor weighing down her brain.

"Come on, Jessie. You're going to miss the bus," scolded Mary.

Jessie was thinking only about what she'd read. She made it to the bus just as the doors were closing.

"Sit here, Jessie," Mary directed from midway down the isle. Sitting next to her friend, the words repeated in Jessie's mind. Facial deformities. Webbing. Retardation.

Her mom was just getting home when Jessie got there. "Am I retarded, Mom?" she asked bluntly.

"No, Jessie," her mom reassured her. "Sometimes you have a hard time learning

things, but you're not retarded. Who said you were?"

"Do I have Fetal Alcohol Syndrome?" To Jessie's surprise, she watched tears well up and balance in her mother's eyes.

"Oh, Jessie. Who told you that? I've wanted to tell you myself, but I just couldn't. I didn't want you to hate me."

What she'd read felt like an anchor weighing down her brain.

Confused, Jessie watched the tears run down her mother's cheeks.

"I was just your age when I started to drink. I wanted to be part of the crowd. Before I knew it, I couldn't stop drinking." Jessie's mom paused for a moment. "I was dating one of the boys who hung out with us when I found out I was pregnant. Everyone said it wasn't right to drink then, but I thought I could quit anytime I wanted to. I did cut back for a while and even told everyone I was going to quit. I never did. When you were born, the doctor said you had Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. He said I'd done that to you by drinking alcohol while I was pregnant. I stopped drinking that moment. I had just turned 16 when you were born. Do you think I would have purposely done anything to hurt you?" Her mother's stricken gaze sought Jessie out. "I love you!"

Angrily cutting off her mother's attempt to reach her, Jessie ran out of the house. Her thoughts beat through her brain, matching the pounding of her feet. Why did she do that to me? Why couldn't she tell me? Was she ever going to

tell me the truth?

Jessie ran straight to Mary's house. "Aren't you ready for the party?" Mary asked as she quickly led the way to her bedroom. "That's what you wore to school! Do you know who's going to be there? Mike Rollins! He is such a hunk. What should I wear? Jessie Brand, you're not listening." Mary turned to look disgustedly at the jeans and bulky blue sweater that matched Jessie's eyes. "I can't believe you couldn't come up with something better to wear than that. You'll just have to borrow something of mine."

Jessie watched Mary rummage through her closet. By then, Jessie knew she couldn't tell even her best friend what she'd just found out.

Jessie could feel Mary looking at her. "Aren't you excited about the party?" Mary finally asked.

"I had just turned 16 when you were born. Do you think I would have purposely done anything to hurt you?"

Suddenly, studying the bright laces on her tennis shoes, Jessie told her, "Sure. I just got into a fight with my mom when I got home. That's all."

"You can still go to the party, can't you?" Mary asked.

"Yes. It was about something else. I don't want to talk about it right now. What do you want me to wear to the party?" Easily distracted, Mary stuck her head back in her closet and pulled out a

skirt that perfectly matched Jessie's sweater.

"Thanks," said Jessie, without much enthusiasm.

The party was just starting when Jessie and Mary got there. "Jessie . . . Mike's here," Mary squealed.

Looking in the direction Mary was pointing, Jessie was able to pick out the basketball star against the far wall. Jessie blindly followed Mary, who was leading the way across the room toward Mike. As hard as she tried, she couldn't erase from her mind what her mother had said.

Sipping the punch that Mary handed her, Jessie wrinkled her nose in distaste. "Can you believe it, Jessie? Someone's put wine in the punch. Wouldn't Mrs. Rose have a cow?"

Thinking instead of her mother, Jessie stared at the drink, defiance marking her features.

"Hey, Jessie. You're awfully quiet. What's up?" asked Andy Brooks, who sat next to her in math class.

"She had a fight with her mom today," Mary supplied

What would they think about her now? Fetal Alcohol Syndrome pressed into Jessie's thoughts like an unwanted intruder.

before Jessie could respond.

"Tough break, Jessie," Andy told her, placing a big hand on her shoulder. "This party is great. Let me get you some more punch. That'll make you feel better," he said, winking at her. "Besides, parents are supposed to yell at



teenagers. It's the law of nature." Everyone laughed.

Sipping at her punch, Jessie decided it really didn't taste too bad. The music boomed through the party around her, punctuated by bursts of laughter from the intimate groups scattered around the room. She watched Mike whisper in Mary's ear. Hugging her close, he drew her into the far corner.

Turning away from watching them, Jessie caught the reflection of a girl in the window across the room. Hurt was buried deep in small blue eyes. Long, blond hair curled gently around thin shoulders, hiding low-set ears. Jessie knew because the reflection she saw was her own. Looking down at the webbing between her fingers, she knew that her toes were webbed too. It was so hard for her to learn things. If it wasn't for Mary's help, she would easily fall behind her classmates. What would they think about her now? Fetal Alcohol Syndrome pressed into Jessie's thoughts like an unwanted intruder.

Frightened, Jessie put down the unfinished drink. She was just putting on her coat when Mary caught up with her.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm leaving." Jessie could finally tell her friend all about herself. She was angry by the time she finished. "I don't want to find out that I can't stop drinking. I don't want a

baby I might someday have to turn out like me."

"That won't happen, Jessie," Mary tried to tell her.

"You don't know that. You can't promise me, Mary. Look what happened to my mom, to me. Please leave with me," Jessie pleaded with her friend.

Jessie followed Mary's glance back to the party, to Mike. "But all our friends are here."

Afraid that Mary hated her now, Jessie asked her, "Can't we make new friends? We're still best friends, aren't we?"

"I'm not going to leave right now. They'll think we're weird or something. Look, Mike wants me to stay with him. Andy wants you to stay too."

"I can't," Jessie whispered sadly.

"I'll see you later, then." Mary turned her back on Jessie and went back to the party.

Was Mary right? Jessie rubbed the small webbing between her fingers. No, she wasn't. After putting on her coat, Jessie went to get her bike. She was just getting on when Mary rushed up, grabbing her own bike.

Smiling at Jessie, she said, "We'll always be best friends."

Later, when Jessie got home, she found her mom waiting for her. Rushing into her outstretched arms, Jessie confessed, "I love you, too, Mom." ■

Paul and Carol Cannon are the founders of "The Bridge," an addictions recovery program in Bowling Green, Kentucky. If you have heavy-duty questions about drugs, alcohol, or everyday social problems, they are professional full-time listeners ready to help. Write them at "Ask the Cannons," LISTEN magazine, P.O. Box 7000, Boise, ID 83707.



I've got a problem with my mom. She's extremely busy and doesn't have time for my dad and brother and me. She has a full-time job, plus she does a bunch of church and charity work. The more she does, the less attention she pays to us. We hardly ever see her, and when she is home, she's got a lot on her mind. Dad tries to pretend it doesn't bother him, but I think it does. What should we do?

Some people find it easier to give to others than to their own families. They have trouble facing reality and try to outrun their pain and problems by overworking. Some are compulsive do-gooders; others are full-fledged workaholics. The difference between them is that one group gets paid and the other doesn't.

A compulsive do-gooder's noble deeds are motivated by the sincere belief that it's her Christian (or patriotic) duty to do what she's doing. She is torn between her family and her sense of obligation. She may not realize that her zeal is misplaced and that she is overdoing it.

It might be helpful for you to keep a record of your mother's activities for a week so you can show her what's happening. Let her know that you and the rest of the family miss her and would like to spend more time with her.

If she recognizes that she is overworking and is able to slow down, good. If she realizes she has a problem but finds it *impossible* to back off, she may be a full-blown workaholic. For her to continue overworking to the detriment of herself and her family even though she knows it's hurting all of you would be an indication of late-stage workaholicism. Your mother needs to assess her behavior, address it as a possible addiction, and make changes, with professional help if necessary.

I'm a sophomore, and things are going pretty well for me except at home. My dad and I just

aren't making it. He's a very successful man and is respected by everyone who knows him. People look up to him because he's a real leader. Whenever my dad does something, he does it right! He always says that any job worth doing is worth doing well.

He expects me to be perfect too, but I'm not. A lot of the time I feel like he's mad at me because I don't do stuff as well as he does. How can I get him to accept me the way I am?

It sounds like you're proud of your dad's good qualities and at the same time upset by his impatience. You can love a person and be angry at him too. That's normal.

People with rigid personal standards like your dad's can be very hard to live with. His need to be perfect puts him under incredible stress and puts pressure on the people close to him as well. Perfectionists can't tolerate their own flaws and mistakes. They won't allow themselves to be human.

Because of this, they are the loneliest people in the world. Other people avoid them because they feel so defective in their presence. That may be the way you're feeling. It's hard to have healthy self-esteem when someone is constantly criticizing you. You feel like a jerk all the time.

We don't think your father would deliberately undermine your self-esteem. He probably doesn't realize what he's doing. He needs to be reminded that all children are, by nature, imperfect. Unrealistic demands for perfection are harmful to children and are a form of child abuse.

In raising our sons (who are now in their twenties), we were overly demanding. A couple of times they wrote us notes to tell us how they felt because they knew we might not listen otherwise. We look at them from time to time to remind ourselves to lighten up.

Whether you communicate with your dad face to face or in a letter, let him know how hurt and angry you feel when he puts you down. We earnestly hope he will listen and learn from what you say. ■



Their first album has sold over a million copies.

Their fans include Janet Jackson, Arsenio Hall, and Meryl Streep. *Listen* in as we get to know the six young men of Take 6.

TAKE 6 GREAT GUYS

It was the night before the 31st Grammy Awards. More than 700 invited guests—music's top entertainers and industry leaders—crowded into the Spice Club on Hollywood Boulevard. They came for one purpose: to hear Take 6, a dynamic new singing group described by jazz critic Leonard Feather as "the best vocal group in the century."

Quincy Jones, a jazz legend himself and producer of several smash hit albums for Michael Jackson, introduced the new group as his friends.

"Get ready to be amazed," Jones told the audience. "I haven't heard singing like this since the days of the Hi-Lo's. This group is about jazz, very hip jazz, with amazing six-part harmony."

"Their music is going to have an impact!" Jones prom-

ised as Alvin Chea, Cedric Dent, Mark Kibble, Claude V. McKnight III, David Thomas, and Mervyn Warren walked on stage.

Jones's promise of "impact" wasn't exaggerated. They had the crowd singing and clapping their hands before the six young performers ended their a cappella (without instruments) performance.

The following night, Take 6 was presented with two Grammys for Best Jazz Vocal Performance and Best Soul Gospel Vocal Performance. Although up for Best New Artist award—the first gospel group ever to be nominated for this category—they took some pride in being edged out by pop singer Tracy Chapman.

Their pal, Stevie Wonder, led the audience in a standing ovation when Take 6 sang "If We Ever" and other hits in a soul gospel medley of songs with The Winans.

Take 6 had finally burst out of obscurity. But the way they

were discovered is almost as extraordinary as their music!

An Uninvited Guest

The first edition of what would eventually become Take 6 took form in 1980 at Oakwood, a small black college near Huntsville, Alabama, when McKnight and three other freshmen organized a quartet. "We often rehearsed in the men's room because the tile made great acoustics," McKnight laughs.

Mark Kibble, McKnight's boyhood friend from New York, walked into the restroom and stopped to listen to the group. Moments later he joined in, adding a fifth harmony and a distinctly new sound.

In 1987, after changes in the cast, expanding the group to six members, and changing their name to Alliance, the entertainers arranged a showcase to present their dynamic sound at Koinonia, a Christian bookstore in Nashville. They invited executives from 30 gospel labels. Only 10 showed up! And most of them left after listening for a few minutes.

"I have to admit it was a

Jeris and Edie Bragan

little discouraging," McKnight says. "But we kept at it and finished."

It's a good thing they didn't quit because Jim Ed Norman, a senior executive with Warner Bros., showed up uninvited to hear them. Several months earlier, singer-songwriter Mac McAnally had given Norman a cassette of Alliance's "David and Goliath." Even though the first part of the song had been accidentally erased, enough remained to spark Norman's curiosity.

Two days after the bookstore showcase, Norman shocked Alliance and raised corporate eyebrows when he signed the group to a contract.

"For months people told me, 'You're crazy!' but signing Take 6 was one of the

easiest decisions I ever made," Norman says. "On a sheer musical and artistic level, they were astounding."

The group changed their name to Take 6 when they discovered Alliance was already trademarked. "We liked the jazzy overtones of the name," McKnight explains.

The Wonder of It All!

Six months later singer Andy Williams saw Take 6 on "The Today Show" and invited them to join him on an eight-city tour that summer.

Then Stevie Wonder heard their album. He had his manager call Take 6's manager Gail Hamilton at 3:00 a.m. to invite them to join

Stevie for two concerts at New York's Radio City Music Hall.

"I'm not sure that I understand. Could you call me in the morning?" Gail replied. "I wanted to make sure I wasn't dreaming," she said later.

She wasn't dreaming, but Stevie Wonder wasn't finished promoting Take 6. At each stop on his tour, he purchased every available copy of their debut album, *Take 6*, from local record stores. "I understand he's bought close to 600 copies of the album, and he's just been passing them out to all his friends," McKnight says.

"Stevie has become a terrific friend to all of us," McKnight continued. "Any time we're in a city with him now, whether in America or abroad, he comes out on stage to perform with us."

The megastar even showed up to sing "Overjoyed" at Mark Kibble's wedding recently. "I'll have to send you a bill for professional services," Stevie jokingly told the newlyweds at their reception.

A Duke Ellington Heaven

Since that day four years ago in the bookstore, millions of fans from the United States to Japan and Europe have come to love Take 6's new jazz sound. A few of their best-known fans include Janet Jackson, Oprah Winfrey, Arsenio Hall, Magic Johnson, and Meryl Streep.

Their first album, which featured Take 6's creative arrangement of well-known Negro spirituals, has already sold more than a million copies. "That's not too bad when you consider we would have been happy if it had sold a total of 25,000 copies," McKnight admits with a smile.

Their second album, *So*



Much 2 Say, features original music that was written and arranged by different members of the group. It sold 500,000 copies in the first six months.

After the 1989 Grammy's, Take 6 walked away with four Dove Awards and won an-

"More entertainers today are having a real awakening about the deadly danger involved with drug use."

—Claude McKnight

other Grammy in 1990 without releasing a record, plus four Stellar Awards, Black Radio Exclusive Award for "Best New Artist," and Soul Train Award for "Gospel Artist of the Year."

You're probably mistaken if you think you haven't seen Take 6 or heard their music. In addition to performing on the soundtrack of Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* and Warren Beatty's blockbuster movie *Dick Tracy*, they also did the theme song for TV's "Murphy Brown." Mervyn Warren composed the theme for CBS's "Brewster Place," and the group appeared every week in the opening montage.

If all this isn't phenomenal enough, consider one more thing: Recently their music was featured on five music charts simultaneously—Jazz, Pop, Rhythm and Blues, Contemporary Christian, and Black Gospel.

What makes this sextet so unique? McKnight calls the Take 6 sound "contemporary Christian a cappella pop jazz."

But Stephen Holden, music critic for the *New York Times*, explains their phenomenal music differently. "Take 6 has

Club Take 6 Is Here

Take 6 is pleased to announce the new Club Take 6. It's free and easy to join. Just send your name, address, city, state, and zip code as well as your phone number to: Club Take 6, c/o Holly Ink, P.O. Box 78009, Nashville, TN 37207. Take 6 merchandise is available at area Christian bookstores or by calling Club Take 6 at 615-226-1502 or FAX 615-226-1509.

developed a sound that combines the playfulness of street-corner doo-wop with the harmonic refinement of groups like the Hi-Lo's and takes it into previously uncharted territory," he says.

Whatever the technical explanation, fans say their sound is like something dropped down from a Duke Ellington heaven. ■

Take 6 Founder Speaks Out on Drugs and Education

In an industry plagued with drugs, alcoholism, and promiscuity, the young men in Take 6—all in their early to mid-twenties—stand out in sharp contrast because of their uncompromising opposition to drugs and alcohol. They don't apologize for that stand, either!

"We don't drink, smoke, or use any kind of drugs," McKnight says. "It's interesting to note that more and more entertainers today are having a real awakening about the deadly danger involved with drug use."

"I don't care what anybody says about being more creative on drugs," McKnight continues. "That's crazy! Drugs take you

away from yourself, and you lose control of your mental faculties. If you can't use your mind properly, then you just can't rise to your real potential in life."

They practice what they preach about drugs and alcohol. When offered a hefty contract to do a name beer commercial, they didn't even have to think about it. "No way!"

All six are college-educated. Two members—Mervyn Warren and Cedric Dent—hold master's degrees. Dent has finished all required class work for his doctorate in music at the University of Maryland. And Mark Kibble, one of the group's

talented arrangers, holds a degree in business administration.

"Education gives a young person a lot more power and control of his or her life," McKnight said. "This is 1991, and there's just no way a young person is going to make it today without an education."

Who said nice guys finished last? Take 6 is made up of some very nice guys who are finishing first without compromising their principles.

"I think we've proved you can be young, have a great time, follow the straight and narrow path, and not be a geek," McKnight says.

And Earth



Mutley, the Wonder Dog

When Gene Alba rescued Mutley—a part-terrier, part-cocker spaniel pup—from the pound, he got more than he bargained for. Mutley turned out to be an exceedingly gifted pooch whose intelligence has made her world famous. In April 1990, one of *National Geographic's* publications featured Mutley, who scuba dives, snow and water-skis, plays tennis, and rides on a motorcycle. The mutt is seen on the Emmy award-winning program "Mac and Mutley" on KPIX in San Francisco. Earlier in the year, Alba signed a contract with the Discovery channel so that Mutley can be seen nationwide. Among the beast's more fascinating talents is scuba diving, which began when Gene Alba, a certified scuba diver, noticed that Mutley loved the water. So, he said, "I decided to build her pint-sized scuba gear. Teaching her to dive was easy. I lifted her into the water, she looked around for a minute, and then took off after a catfish." They have enjoyed about 200 dives together. Mutley accompanied Alba on a motorcycle tour of the United States and Canada in a specially made box that Alba mounted on the rear of his motorcycle. Alba and Mutley have made appearances at various charity functions, too, including special visits to Children's Hospital in Oakland to cheer the patients with Mutley's antics. Mutley also helped 1,500 young cancer patients and their families in San Francisco celebrate the advances in the fight against the disease. Apparently, Mutley the Wonder Dog not only has a great brain but a big heart as well.

Forty percent of teen boys name beer ads as their favorite ads.

—Red Ribbon Review

Seventy-four percent of persons arrested and booked in Manhattan Central Booking Station tested positive for cocaine in 1989.

—National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors

Humans Are Animals Too

Though most young people love animals and are concerned about the terrible treatment these helpless beasts face, especially in research labs, some animal rights activists can go too far. In cities around the country, women who wear fur coats have had paint, even blood, thrown on them. Fur store windows are shot out. A university professor involved in research on animals had his house burned down by animal rights activists, and the head of a company that did tests on surgical staples in dogs was actually the victim of an unsuccessful assassination attempt! In Great Britain animal rights people are so radical that Scotland Yard formed a special team specifically to investigate violence associated with this cause. Animal rights advocates in England have bombed everything from fur stores to cars. In one instance, activists broke into a farm and liberated 82 hens, while others firebombed a greyhound race in Ireland. Monitors of animal rights violence expect it to increase. No doubt the cause is worthy, but activists must remember that in their zeal to protect the rights of animals, they must respect the rights of humans as well. After all, humans are animals too.

Persons under influence of alcohol were responsible for:

49 percent of murders, attempted murders

52 percent of rapes

48 percent of robberies

49 percent of all other violent crimes.

—National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors

Coral Implants

Having discovered that coral makes an excellent replacement for bone, doctors are experimenting with the use of certain types of coral to mend fractures. Coral has numerous interconnected channels that make it easy for human bone to successfully graft

into it. In many operations, doctors need to take segments of bone from other parts of the body, which means more cutting, slicing, and stitching for the patient. Other operations even require more bone than the patient can give. With coral, that problem is solved. Also, when desperate, doctors have taken bone from cadavers, which carries a risk of infection from hepatitis or even AIDS. Bone grafts from other people can cause the patient's immune system to react against it, whereas coral doesn't seem to rouse the immune system at all. At a meeting of the American Fracture Society, one doctor reported a three-year follow up of 19 patients who had fractures repaired with coral. All healed solidly, including those in major weight-bearing bones in the leg. "Full fathoms five," Shakespeare once wrote, "thy father lies; of his bones are coral made." It's no longer just poetry. It's science.

Nine out of 10 teen auto accidents involve alcohol.

—National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors

Pruneface

A massive amount has been written over the past 20 years about the dangers of cigarette smoking. Tobacco use has been linked to lung cancer, heart disease, emphysema, and a host of other nasty ailments. Now, however, researchers at the University of Utah Health Sciences Center have found a new problem associated with cigarette smoke: wrinkles. Yuck! Those ugly lines that look like crows sat on grandma's face long enough to make dents that don't go away. According to the study, you don't have to get grandma's age before getting her wrinkles, either. Instead, just smoke a pack or two a day and your chances of looking like her increase with each puff. Though scientists are not sure exactly how smoking causes wrinkles, it's possible that cigarette smoke activates en-

zymes that damage elastin and collagen, fibrous proteins that are the supporting strength of the skin. Cigarette smoke is also known to reduce the flow of blood to the skin, which can leave it with less of the nutrients needed to keep your epidermis moist and healthy. Some think that eye irritation from smoking makes you squint, causing wrinkles too. Whatever the reason, keep smoking and instead of looking cool, like Tom Cruise or Kevin Costner, you might start resembling Pruneface instead.

"Researchers generally believe the earlier you start using drugs, the more likely you will use more and other drugs."

—Patrick O'Malley,
University of Michigan

Sobering Facts

Despite the reported sharp drop in use of marijuana, cocaine, and other illegal drugs among American youth, a recent government survey shows that eight million teenagers are weekly users of alcohol, including 454,000 "binge" drinkers, who consume an average of 15 drinks a week. Surgeon General Antonia C. Novello called the high numbers "shocking." Though all 50 states prohibit the sale of alcohol to anyone under 21, most of these eight million drinkers, including some as young as 13, can buy liquor either by using false identification or getting it from stores that don't check their age. The study showed too that teenagers account for 35 percent of all wine cooler sales, even though brewers insist that they are not targeting teenagers. What most teenagers, even parents, don't understand, is that drinking alcohol can be as devastating as illegal drug use, though it's harder to get that point across. After all, what message is sent to these weekly teenager drinkers when people who use illegal drugs are thrown in jail, but those who drink alcohol are glamorized in billboard and magazine advertisements? ☐

Listen UP!

Larry Bird, born December 7, 1956



PHOTO BY TOM MILLER

PHOTO BY ALBERTO TOLOI, COURTESY OF VIRGIN RECORDS



Paula Abdul, chosen as the person teens most admire.

December Birthdays

Bette Midler, singer, actress, born at Honolulu, Hawaii, December 1, 1945; **Woody Allen**, actor, writer, producer, born at Brooklyn, New York, December 1, 1935; **Carol Alt**, model, born at Queens, New York, December 1, 1960; **Jeff Bridges**, actor, born at Los Angeles, California, December 4, 1949; **Larry Bird**, basketball player, born at West Baden Springs, Indiana, December 7, 1956; **Kim Basinger**, actress, born at Athens, Georgia, December 8, 1953; **Tracy Austin**, tennis player, born at Rolling Hills, California, December 12, 1962; **Alyssa Milano**, actress, born at Brooklyn, New York, December 19, 1972; **Barbara Mandrell**, singer, born at Houston, Texas, December 25, 1948.

Thumbs Up



Thumbs up for the 5,000 high-school teens who spoke their mind in a 1990 Heroes of Young America poll. **Paula Abdul** was chosen as the person teens most admire, followed by Mom, Michael Jordan, and Dad in that order. Teens chose **drug abuse** as the most important public issue—more than double the votes for AIDS and the environment. **Nelson Mandela** edged out Mikhail Gorbachev as the most admired foreign political leader, and **best friends and teachers** were chosen as the persons most directly influential in their lives.

Thumbs Up



Let's hear it for honesty in scientific research. Despite receiving \$18 million in subsidies from the industry-sponsored Council for Tobacco Research, 93 percent of the tobacco-sponsored scientists stated in a survey that they "strongly believe" that most lung-cancer deaths are caused by smoking.

A Christmas Present

Do something special for your community this Christmas. By getting involved in the improvement of your town, your actions will speak louder than words ever could.



The PRIME TIMES

IDEAS FOR YOUR DRUG-FREE GROUP

Human Rights Month



During Universal Human Rights Month, let your community know that we all have the right to live without the threat of drugs and drug abuse within our society.

A LISTEN SPECIAL

DECEMBER 1991

Rodney Draggon: Rap From the Message Man

"I didn't come all this way just to talk jive," the words tumble out in machine-gun fashion, "... if you're thinking about nothing, you might end up being nothing ... don't be a fool, stay in school."

At a towering six feet six, clutching a microphone and pacing back and forth to a brisk rap beat, rapper Rodney Draggon cuts an imposing figure. His phrases are direct and peppered with colorful street language. The distinct rap beat is ever present, and his sheer size commands respect, but the Washington State-based Draggon is more than a rapper—he's a man with a message.

Draggon is out to do battle against the giants facing today's teens. Giants like alcohol, drugs, nicotine, drunk driving, and promiscuity. In his unique way Draggon stresses education, positive choices, and peace of mind; encouraging teens to recognize the tremendous potential they possess.

"Stop and think" is a phrase that frequently pops up during Draggon's concerts.

Tonight the audience is a group of northwestern young people—a far cry from the large urban inner-city areas where rap was born. Yet Draggon knows drug and alcohol abuse crosses over into all areas of



Rodney Draggon is more than a rapper—he's a man with a message.

society. One thing is certain—the audience is paying attention to the tall, animated rapper.

The message man spices his concerns with humor and audience participation, but he doesn't side-step the issues.

On the dangers of smoking:

"Your breath's so foul, you smell like a sow, ... it may be soon, it may be later—it's like playing in the swamp ... there's gotta be a gator!"

On alcohol:

"Think—be smart ... don't even start."

On drugs:

"Money, fame, and glory will fade away. But what's in your head and heart is there to stay. Drugs, drugs ... leave the stuff alone and go on home."

In his cleverly written song "Roamy," Draggon advises teenage girls ...

"Picture yourself, honey, 15, working in the kitchen. ... Alcohol and dating, they don't mix. ... Don't do something you'll later regret ... nine months later you'll be fat as a cow; think about it,

homegirl—don't let no homeboy rule your world."

Later, after the concert, Draggon reflects on his purpose. Though his rapid-fire sense of humor and ability to weave words into clever patterns that keep his listeners involved and amused, Draggon wants them very much to heed his message.

"I don't want to do it just for entertainment," the gentle giant points out. "There should be a message in it."

"I want people to think," Rodney continues. "If they listen long enough, it will sink in."

Rodney remembers a particularly gratifying letter from a young black girl who came to his program feeling discouraged and negative—obviously lacking self-esteem. She left with a whole new outlook. "You're better than M.C. Hammer," she wrote, paying Rodney the ultimate rapper compliment—"you have a message."

I ask Rodney about rap music's staying power. "Because it rhymes," he says, warming to the subject. "If Shakespeare were



around today, he'd be a rapper."

"The message of rap is where young people are," Draggon explains. "It's street—it's hard—it's gut. Rap was always accepted in the inner city. Rap deals with real



situations and comes from the heart. The brothers have put poetry in motion."

A young girl interrupts our conversation. She walks up to Draggon, who towers above her.

"I just want to say one thing," she blurts out. "You're rad!"

A smile comes across the face of the big man. Rodney Draggon looks pleased—it seems the message man is getting through. —Ed Guthero

NOTE: Now the message man's catchy rap tunes are available on a "radical" cassette from LISTEN magazine. Just send \$4.99 for the tape and \$1 postage and handling to "Listen Tape Offer," P.O. Box 7000, Boise, ID 83707. Allow 3-4 weeks for delivery.

Party Line

Christmas-Cookie Party

Did Christmas catch you by surprise this year?

Are you still trying to recover from school starting? Getting into the "Joy to the World" mood instead of wearing a perpetual "Bah, Humbug" scowl isn't as hard as you think. Why not invite a few friends over to help you make and decorate sugar cookies?

Charge admission: have them bring an unusual or unique cookie cutter to start or improve your collection. (If you can't bring yourself to be totally jolly, rebel a little and use St. Patrick's, Easter, or even Halloween cutters!) Suggest your guests come in grubbies, 'cause the flour will get all over everything.

To get yourself in the true spirit, put on your favorite Christmas music, whether it be rap, jazz, country, or traditional. Mannheim Steamroller and Take 6 have Christmas albums with a twist on the ordinary.

One of the best sugar-cookie recipes I've found is one passed down from my great-grandmother. It's guaranteed to be a favorite of your guests too.

Combine 3-1/2 cups flour, 1 teaspoon baking soda, 1/2 teaspoon salt; set aside.

Combine 1/2 cup soft butter or margarine, 1 cup sugar, 2 eggs, 1 teaspoon nutmeg, 1 teaspoon lemon juice; set aside.

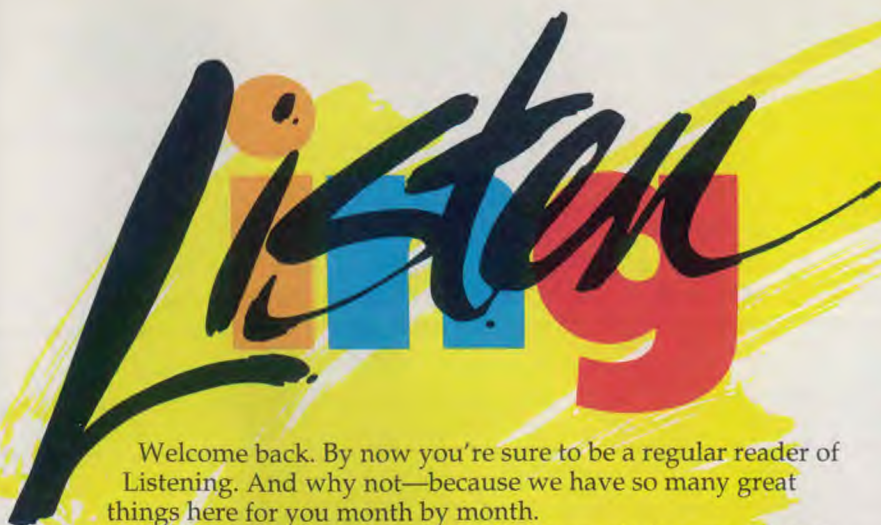
Mix well and add 1/4 cup vinegar, 1/4 cup condensed milk, and 1/8 cup water.

Combine all mixtures. Chill for at least two hours. (It might be best to make this ahead of time!)

Spread plenty of flour on the counter, and roll out the dough to 1/4 inch. Be sure to flour the cutters before using. Bake at 350 degrees for about 8-10 minutes.

After cooling, decorate cookies with frosting, colored sugar, and sprinkles.

—Cindy Lauterbach



Welcome back. By now you're sure to be a regular reader of *Listening*. And why not—because we have so many great things here for you month by month.

Take this month. We've got some great sounds for you. Like rap music. Like great songs. Like songs with a message! Like a great personality—Rodney Dragoon. That's not *dragon*, but *Dray-gon*. This dude can put up some sort of howl. You'll want to hear him.

We've put together a radical-sounding tape with a selection of Rodney's rap songs on such subjects as drug abuse, education, smoking, and dating. These are heavy-duty, nitty-gritty, funky messages. Rodney knows the real street action, and you'll hear the goods on this tape from *LISTEN* magazine.

Want to get one? Why, all you have to do is send \$4.99 plus \$1 postage and handling to us at *LISTEN* magazine, P.O. Box 7000, Boise, Idaho 83707. And before you can say, "Rapping with Rodney," we'll have it off to you.

P.S. Want to drive your parents crazy? Don't tell them that this is a special LISTEN tape. Just tell them you bought another rap tape and play it really loud for effect. Then when they're stomping on you really heavy, let them in on the secret that this is the LISTEN tape with a difference—with a message. If they still don't see eye to eye with you, then point them my direction, and I'll be happy to talk to them.

While you're ordering those tapes, don't forget to ask for your *LISTEN* Action Team Member Card. We still have lots and lots of them sitting here ready to laminate and send off to you as your ticket to some great club activity.

Another update note. Our T-shirt offer of a couple of months ago is still running red-hot. There are plenty of those shirts out there now, and we're gearing up to keep them coming so that you too can be decked out in a shirt that just absolutely screams in bright color, "*LISTEN* magazine—Celebrating Positive Choices." It's a great conversation starter. Reason: it's up to you to explain to your buddies and anyone who asks just what a positive choice really is. (Only \$9.95 and \$2 postage and handling—specify size.)

Well, let's move on to the other great things in this month's *Listening*. Thanks for those letters, articles, and poems. Keep them coming. We get a kick out of hearing from you.

Yours till next time,

Lincoln

Jackie

Her detailed hands
do the finest work
with evenness and precision
with her heart she proposes
to be all she can.
In her world full of weightless

matters, she wants something
to count.
In her mind are pondered
thoughts of a philosopher
Thoughts of which some
may never have penetrated.

In her sleep she has a
face full of innocence
Not a trace of hidden deceit
Nor of hardened emotions.
Her face reflects now the
gentle rays of a dying sun.
Serenity and peace now reveal
the thoughts that have begun.
To be her friend, what a
mystery to yet unfold! . . .
One of the miracles of life,
the unsounded mind.

—Sara Bird,
Harrah, Oklahoma

The Moon

pale yellow against midnight
canvas
lonely giant among pygmy stars
distant
no light to call its own
a mere reflection of the daylight
fireball
Yet
a sphere of perfection drawn by
the Creator's compass
striking beauty and awe dazzle
the eye
breaths are unknowingly
withheld under its spell
ruler of night
—Ann Charles
South Bend, Indiana

Feelings

Sometimes at night I lay down
and cry.
I think about tomorrow and wish
I could
change today,
not everything just something
I say,
without knowing what it would
turn out to be.
I think about how it would be
if I was
a lot more pretty
what it would be like if I could
fly,
how it would feel to be so high.
I guess I have to face reality and
look at the way it has to be,
But as it turns out it's not so bad
and to tell the truth
I'm really glad to be myself and
not like anyone else in the
whole world.
—Amy Sledge
Alvarado, Texas



Randall Mead

CRACKED BABIES

Every day, thousands of babies are born permanently scarred by drugs. And crack is often the culprit. Learn how this hideous drug is warping the minds and bodies of babies in the U.S.

A common excuse for doing drugs is that "I'm not hurting anyone but myself." Not true. Drug use affects the family, friends, and society of the user. Whether it's a parent weeping over the grave of a child, or a taxpayer footing the bill for rehabilitation, drugs hurt everyone.

In recent years, this ripple effect has been manifest in a shocking and tragic way: crack babies. Across America, thousands of unborn infants have been connected to umbilical cords pumping illegal drugs, mostly cocaine, into their tiny bodies.

Though fetuses exposed to drugs are not new, their sudden proliferation is. Hospitals report three times as many newborns exposed to drugs now as in 1985. Statistics show that each year, 375,000 newborns—over a thousand daily—have been affected by drugs before birth, one out of every ten. In New

York, Los Angeles, Detroit, and Washington, D.C., the rates are one out of five.

Effects on the infant vary. Some newborns are deformed: a twisted limb, malformed genitals, a missing section of intestine or kidney, irreversible brain damage. Because cocaine can cause the uterus to contract, many are born premature, some weighing only two pounds. Crack babies' heads are often smaller than the normal range.

These infants score low on tests designed to assess the newborn's physical condition and overall responsiveness. At one month, some don't perform at the level of two-day-olds. Exposure to cocaine affects their ability to suck, hindering their food intake. Crack babies suffer withdrawal, making them jittery, hypertensive, extremely irritable. Crack babies tend to cry at the gentlest touch and the softest sounds. Merely

picking up one can unleash a torrent of wails and cries. Many crack babies can't distinguish between their mother and strangers.

The first large group of crack babies, born in the mid-1980s, are now school age, and their mental and emotional problems are straining the school system. Preliminary studies reveal that these damaged children have trouble playing or even talking with other children. Some go into tremors. They are passive, don't seem to have a conscience, and show little incentive to cooperate.

Though experts are not sure how to deal with the problem, all agree that these kids will need massive, special help in order to give them hope. So far, few are getting any help at all, much less hope. Time alone will reveal what type of teenagers and adults they will become. The prospect is frightening. ►



The problem, of course, comes from the sudden explosion of crack cocaine, cheap, widely available, and highly addictive. Crack has become popular among women because there are no needles, they don't slur when they speak, and it helps them lose weight (high on coke, people eat less). By the latest estimate, more than one million American women use cocaine regularly. Often, they will use other drugs as well, such as heroin, to prolong the high, and tranquilizers and alcohol to come down. Whatever they take while pregnant affects the fetus.

Many women mistakenly believe that the placenta will protect the infant from the effects of cocaine. Unfortunately, the placenta acts as a sponge, sucking in the drug, which then circulates longer in the fetus than in an adult because the infant's liver is not developed enough to detoxify quickly.

What cocaine does is quite simple. A fetus needs a constant supply of blood, which

One woman said she sold her baby's milk and diapers to get money for crack.

carries the oxygen and nutrients it needs to develop. Cocaine causes blood vessels to constrict, thus reducing the vital flow of blood. Without enough blood, especially in the first months, when the cells multiply quickly, the baby is damaged, often irre-

versibly. These kids are "dealt a small deck" even before birth.

In many cases, too, their home lives are terrible. Surrounded by drug use, they rarely get the basic care that a normal baby needs, much less one with special problems. Crack can be so addicting that women often neglect their infants in favor of the drug. One woman said that she sold her baby's milk and disposable diapers in order to get money for crack. In an environment like that, what kind of care will an infant have?

Shirley Coletti, president of a program called Operation Parental Awareness and Responsibility, said: "We've worked with women with alcohol and heroin problems. Often the maternal instinct of these women have overpowered the drug. They've stayed clean through pregnancy. But with crack they're unable to do that. It's the nature of the drug: it's so potent and powerfully addictive. Crack always wins." Indeed, hospitals have reported the same women repeatedly giving birth to crack babies.

Illegal drug use, at any time, is irresponsible. But to use drugs while pregnant is irresponsible to the point of criminality. Some states have already criminalized it. Nineteen have laws that will press child abuse charges against any woman who gives birth to a child with illegal drugs in its bloodstream. In some cities local prosecutors have charged such mothers with felonies: the delivery of illegal drugs to a minor through the umbilical cord. Some officials are against threatening the



mothers with jail. Their question: If a pregnant woman will use a drug even though she may be harming her baby, why would the remote threat of jail make her quit?

In some places, the babies are taken away from their mothers, but in cities with the largest crack explosions, there are just too many for the system to handle. In other cities, the mothers are given a choice: enter a treatment center for cocaine or give up the child. Some have been known to take the treatment, get their child back, and then resume smoking crack.

Of course, no easy answers exist for these children or the women who have them. Everyone loses, the mother, society, and especially the infant, an unlucky heir of its mother's misery. If we ever needed dramatic evidence of how drug use is not limited to the user alone, we have a thousand tragic examples a day, damaged babies who come out of the womb with wails and sobs indicative of the painful inheritance that will haunt them all their lives. ■

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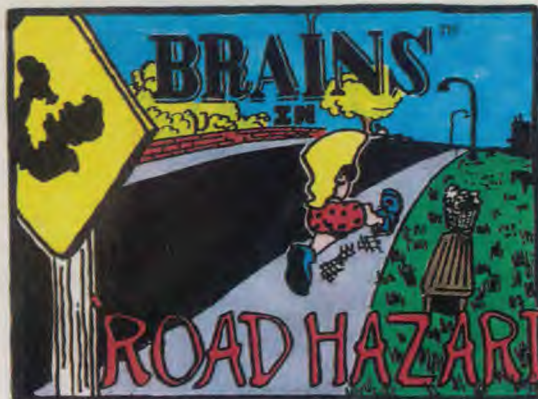
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While I was jamming to Captain Jack and the Meat Cleaver, a car swerved off the road.



Next thing I know—
WHAM!
I was HIT!



Fortunately—I'm a cartoon character, so I survived. However, the driver ran right over me.



THINK POSITIVE!
You may start a new hair-style!



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CARE ENOUGH to be involved

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