



## ❖ DISCUSSING DYSLEXIA 40 YEARS AGO, CHARLIE BROWN SAID, "CAN YOU RULE OUT STUPIDITY?"

It is a wide, easy and fertile field to plow. Naturally, parents want to provide the best opportunity for their children to learn, so whenever a piper comes along with a magic tool to aid "dyslexia," parents are ready to buy. SSS, or *Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome*, also called Irlen syndrome, is the latest diagnosis requiring a magic potion. Psychologist Helen Irlen claims that children with the syndrome are sensitive to light, which can interfere with their ability to read, write and concentrate. The Irlen method involves plastic colored filtering lenses inserted over reading materials. The method also may include colored contacts or eyeglasses, part of a package sold by Ms. Irlen. Testing is done at Irlen Centers with a bill of about \$500, not likely to be covered by insurance. The *American Academy of Pediatrics* and the *American Academy of Ophthalmology* have called the research methods unsound, lacking scientific basis, and call the findings open to question. Moreover, they stated that the process of selecting the right lens color is highly subjective and without scientific rigor. The media, ready conduits for flim-flam, and caring very little about scientific integrity, have devoted time on NBC news, 60 minutes and Peter Jennings and the News, to provide a podium for the latest snake oil.

## ❖ AND THAT'S WHAT I LIKE ABOUT THE SOUTH.

In Montgomery, Alabama, Cheryl Rogers filed a lawsuit claiming that her husband's use of Vioxx led to his death due to heart disease. It was found that the sample containers of Vioxx supposedly taken by the deceased were dated after his death, and a prescription for the drug had never been filled. Merck's attorneys filed a motion to dismiss the complaint, claiming there was no evidence that Rogers ever took the drug, but Judge John Rochester refused the motion. The Associated Press did a review of campaign finance reports and found that six PACs had contributed \$35,000 to the Judge's campaign fund. The entire \$35,000 was traced to the plaintiff's attorneys, the Beasley Allen law firm, and an additional \$25,000 from five other PACs was also funded entirely by Beasley Allen, for a total of \$60,000. Judge Rochester said donations don't influence him. "If it had any influence, I would violate my oath of office." Of course! How silly to even suggest that a judge could be corrupt.

## ❖ MED-QUEST PROBABLY KNOWS WHAT YOU ATE FOR LUNCH!

Holy HIPAA! Hawaii's doctors need to know that the Med-Quest Division (MQD) of the state Department of Human Services has contracted with *ACS Heritage, Inc.* in Richmond, Virginia, to get deep into your medical practice. ACS gathers information about the patient's prescriptions, and will tell the doctor about the potential for falls and other adverse reactions. In simple terms, the project manager (a Pharm.D) with a busy computer program at ACS Heritage six thousand miles away, is poking through medical and prescription information, to advise the physician. Supposedly, this will provide opportunities to improve outcomes and avoid unnecessary costs. It will also shock doctors to learn that they are being watched by a computer program far, far away, and many will wonder what other aspects of their practice are being spied upon.

## ❖ BE CAREFUL AT THE FAR END OF THE GENE POOL.

Looking ahead to the year 2023, the United Kingdom has ruled that children born in 2005 will have a right at age 18, to learn the biological father's name, occupation, religion, and other data. What this means is that sperm donors will lose their right to anonymity. Similar regulations already exist in Sweden, Switzerland, Norway and the Netherlands, where recruiting donors is becoming problematic. *Cryos International* in Denmark, the world's largest distributor of frozen sperm, has a stable of 210 carefully screened, mostly blond and blue-eyed Scandinavians. Some of these men have sired 20 or 30 children. Many of these studs have refused to donate sperm to countries that require disclosure. Whatever happened to that simple world I was born into?

## ❖ AMATEURS BUILT THE ARK, PROFESSIONALS BUILT THE TITANIC.

With great fanfare and at a cost of \$12 billion, the latest in airborne giants has test flown in France. This behemoth, the Airbus A380 is designed to

carry as many as 873 human beings, stacked in two decks with 538 below, 315 upper level and 20 crew. A full booking will require one hour to load before take-off, and probably hours to unload passengers and luggage. Catering and cleaning will be a major challenge to avoid turn-around delays. Special loading and docking ramps will be required, and runways and taxiways will have to be beefed up to handle the massive footprint of the landing gear. Other airport traffic will need to be delayed and cleared away for the A380 to land, taxi and take off. Many large airports-- Atlanta, Denver, Seattle, Las Vegas are refusing to accommodate the monster. A first major challenge will be testing of emergency unloading. According to regulations, the plane must be evacuated in 90 seconds (!) in case of a catastrophic event. The aircraft stands 80 feet high, and in an emergency the crew must get frightened passengers to jump out in an orderly manner - all 850 souls within 1 1/2 minutes. The Airbus A380 is one piece of the great new millennium that holds little appeal for me.

## ❖ GOOD HEALTH IS JUST THE SLOWEST POSSIBLE WAY TO DIE.

An article just published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* revealed that 97% of Americans fail when measured against four basic healthy life style factors. Non-smoking, maintaining healthy weight, regular exercise and five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day, were the behavior factors surveyed for 150,000 Americans. Lead researcher, epidemiologist Mathew Reeves at Michigan State University, gathered data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and was "shocked" that a mere 3% enjoyed this basic lifestyle pattern. According to age, people 35 to 44 fared the worst, while those over 65 did the best. The annual medical bill in the U.S. is \$1.5 trillion, the bulk spent on heart disease, diabetes and cancer. What an incredible cost saving would occur if that 3% could be changed to 20%.

## ❖ IT'S BREAK TIME. ANYBODY WANT A HOT DOG? HOW ABOUT A ROLL?

A police officer in Painesville, Ohio, was fired for having sex in his police cruiser. He appealed the decision to an arbitrator. It was found that the officer was on his "break" and that his radio had remained on in the event of any emergency call. The arbitrator ruled in his favor, noting that Clint Eastwood (Dirty Harry) took time to finish his hotdog while he was observing a bank robbery, and then went into action. The officer was reinstated.

## ❖ BE CAREFUL WHEN TURNING THE OTHER CHEEK!

In Gwinett County, Georgia, a 19 year old was arrested on a weapons charge, and brought in for booking. The jailer was suspicious, performed a pat down and found nothing, so he decided to do a strip search. To his surprise, he found a pistol tucked between the man's buttocks! Wow! Talk about a concealed weapon, and what about the risk of damage to body parts when lounging on the sofa?

## ADDENDA

- ❖ Political correctness run amok – Canadian prisons no longer allow guards at maximum-security prisons to wear protective vests because it sends a "confrontational signal" to prisoners.
- ❖ The American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery reported that 6,000 butt lifts were performed in the U.S. last year. Bottoms Up!
- ❖ An offer from "His Essence," is that for \$18.95 you can purchase a candle that smells like Jesus.
- ❖ Life after death – according to Forbes magazine, Elvis Presley estate earned \$40 million in 2003, while Charles Schulz earned \$32 million.
- ❖ It only takes one Dell PC person to change a light bulb, but first he must install the lightbulb adapter card, which is extra.
- ❖ Cross a pig with a centipede, and you get bacon and legs.

## ALOHA AND KEEP THE FAITH — RTS■

*Contents of this column do not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of the Hawaii Ophthalmological Society and the Hawaii Medical Association. Editorial comment is strictly that of the writer.*