



**The Eyes Have It!**

The world's busiest airport, Heathrow in London, has begun to study a new security program of passenger recognition by using the iris. *Eyeticket*, the technology device, can measure up to 240 unique points on an individual iris (fingerprints have 20 to 40), then convert the points to code, and compares that with information stored on a data base to find a precise match. To get into the program passengers can enrol at airport-based clubs. The system uses no laser or harmful light, and is hygienic since no part of the body is touched. The system will speed up check in, visa processing, and hotel registration. Virgin Atlantic and British Airways are already operating iris recognition stations in lounges at New York's JFK, and Washington D.C.'s Dulles Airport. Once the program gets into wide use, the frequent flyer and the business flyer will be able to avoid the lengthy security delays. As the Israeli security consultant said, "America doesn't have an airline security system, it has a program to annoy people." *Eyeticket* should help.

**Arresting Development: Joint Venture In Britain!**

Following in the footsteps of most European countries (Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium) Great Britain has decriminalized marijuana for the casual user. The change is based upon a successful experiment begun last year in Brixton, a South London neighborhood. The police chief declared that arrests for smoking cannabis were a waste of time and money. Technically, the drug remains illegal, but attention will be directed at those selling, and possession of small amounts of cannabis will be ignored. Prime Minister Tony Blair supported the change, and said it will give police more time and resources to attack violent crime and the use of hard drugs such as heroin. The premise is that it does no good to incarcerate these people where they get no treatment, but do get easy access to all sorts of drugs. The trend in Italy, Portugal, Spain and Luxembourg is to decriminalize all drugs, including cocaine and heroin, and to treat drug use as a health problem. Drugs are still considered dangerous, but the intent is to educate young people and direct them away from the nightmare of addiction.

**The Road To Surgery Is Paved With Good Inventions.**

Sixty years ago at a small town in Nazi-occupied Holland, Dr. Willem Kolff was aware that with kidney failure, the body has no way to remove waste. He constructed a device made of sausage casings and a Ford water pump, and ultimately fashioned an artificial kidney. After moving to the United States he devised an intra-aortic balloon to help pump blood in patients with cardiac failure. It was the basis for a pump used in hundreds of thousands of patients every year. He designed the first artificial heart implanted in Barney Clark in 1962. Now age 91, his latest device is a prototype artificial lung taped together with some plastic tubes that he hopes to test on sheep next year. He doesn't bother with patents since he says you don't get rich from artificial organs. He is being awarded the Lasker Award for medical innovation given by the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation for prolonging the life of millions. It's about time.

**Why Is A Question We Stopped Asking A Long Time Ago.**

Responding to the "snack police," Frito-Lay is trying again with broccoli laced potato chips, and using healthier fats in cooking. Hey, we already struggle to endure anti groups stretching from anti-tobacco and anti-God, to anti-peanuts on the airplane. But, give me a break, "snack police?" Face it, people don't really want "healthy" snacks. Frito-Lay previously failed with their fat-free chip made with olestra which is remembered best for causing belly aches, and McDonald's McLean low-fat burger was a flop. It is not the fault of Frito-Lay, Pizza Hut, Coke and Pepsi, and the fast food industry that people overeat, that kids pork out in front of the TV, and that serum fat fractions go off the board. What ever happened to regular exercise, intelligent eating, common sense, and wise choices? Eventually on the agenda for these insufferable anti-whatever people will be the Orwellian anti-thought police, and I am likely to be an early victim.

**Television Adage "If It Bleeds, It Leads."**

A recent article offered in the Journal of the American Medical Association delved into the practice of commercial film presentations in hospitals wards, emergency rooms and even operating rooms. Commercial interests claim

potential benefits are providing education for the public and demystifying many conditions. On the negative side are the issues of privacy and editing, and appropriate use of the film. The issue of privacy is most important, and appropriate informed consent must be obtained before any filming. However, hospitalized patients may not be able to understand informed consent, and in the event of an untoward event, what about medico-legal problems? The AMA Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs has outlined parameters for filming patients in health care settings, but hey, why encourage any such filming? The education and history television channels together with PBS programs like NOVA already provide volumes of medical information and detailed photography. These nosy, titillating TV people should seek their macabre stories at the wrestling arena.

**Is This News? Ignorance And Politics Triumph Over Science.**

Sometimes the environmental protectors of this world, don't even realize when they are desperately wrong. On the Senate agenda is endorsement of the Stockholm Treaty which would virtually eliminate the use of DDT in the world. Here are some facts, and you can look them up:

1. DDT is absolutely harmless to human beings.
2. Between 1946 when DDT was introduced in Sri Lanka and 1964, the number of cases of malaria dropped from 3 million to 29, with zero deaths.
3. In India in the 1940s, 75 million people contracted malaria with 800,000 deaths each year, and by 1961 the number of those infected had dropped to 50,000 thanks to DDT.
4. Repeated studies have tried to prove that DDT causes fragile bird egg shells, but at best those efforts are inconclusive. Nonetheless, this tale is accepted almost universally, thanks to Rachel Carson and other non-scientists (In 1971 I had the opportunity to inspect and evaluate pelican nests and egg shells on the Channel Islands with a team from San Jose State University). Many pollutants, such as lead and petroleum products alter calcium contents, and do cause fragile egg shells.
5. After the EPA hearings in 1972, the chief examiner stated, "DDT is not carcinogenic to humans. The uses of DDT under the registrations involved here do not have a deleterious effect on fresh-water fish, estuarine organisms, wild birds or other wildlife."
6. In 1972, EPA administrator lawyer William Ruckelshaus, attended none of the hearings, admitted he did not read the report, and arbitrarily banned the use of DDT, possibly at the direction of the President, Richard Nixon.
7. According to the World Health Organization, "Sub-Saharan Africa is the worst affected area for malaria with about 90% of all malaria cases and 80% of deaths. This means about 1.5 to 2.7 million people, mainly children, die each year from malaria." The Stockholm Treaty on Persistent Organic Pollutants would permit some use of DDT, but the practical effect will be to discourage its use. Some nations that previously used it have already stopped. But, in Stockholm malaria isn't much of a problem, and who cares about a few million Africans and Asians.

**ADDENDA**

- ❖ Starfish have eight eyes; one at the end of each leg.
  - ❖ The first known contraceptive was crocodile dung used by Egyptians in 2,000 B.C.
  - ❖ In Sheridan, Wyoming, a man has been struck by lightning three times in eight years. He claimed, "This is harassment, pure and simple," and filed a lawsuit against God!
  - ❖ Why is there a planet named Pluto, but none named Goofy?
  - ❖ In Mendota Heights, Minnesota, a high school cheer leader filed a \$50,000 lawsuit against her school for being demoted after she was caught smoking and drinking alcohol.
- 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.*