

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

You damage people with what you say

August 13, 2009

A while ago, a guy I know was drinking at a pub after a football game and he sat down at a card machine, started tapping away his life, and an angry woman appeared at his side telling him he'd taken "her" machine.

She hadn't pressed the reserve button, so he told her to beat it, things got heated, she called him a few bad words, then he let fly and told her to "f--- off, you fat, ugly, four-eyed, lesbian moll".

She cracked him in the head with her handbag, amusing several booze-hounds and as I watched the woman leave, I could see the insult had struck deeply; it seemed it wasn't the first time she'd heard similar words ...

We're told as children that sticks and stones may break our bones, but names can never hurt us.

While it's true in theory, I've dealt with more than enough men and women who've been victims of bullying and name-calling to see the effects accumulate.

If you get called a "fat loser" or "faggot", "retard", "ugly", "slut" or "greasy wog" enough times, it starts to infect your psyche.

The very negativity attached to these utterances transfers and it's only a kid - or adult - with a massively imporous self-esteem who can withstand continuous insults and not be bend a little to their fury.

In the early drafts of my first novel, *The Lost Boys*, there was an underwhelming chapter where the schoolboy protagonist, Ned, learns to defend himself with his tongue rather than his fists.

One day, we're sitting in the middle-school quadrangle watching an orange fight and Grumble walks past and shoves me aside.

- Fucking moooooove, you wog c---.

- F--- off Grumble, I say, but he shapes to hit me and I cower.

Larry motions for me to sit down next to him.

- You take too much shit, he says.

- I hate that c---.

- Then you shouldn't let the c--- talk down to you.

- He'll bash me.

- It doesn't matter, you've got something more powerful.

- What?

- Your tongue.

I sit with him as he eyes the different freaks roaming the quadrangle.

- Watch any of these c---s and they've all got their weaknesses. You just got to be smart enough to pinpoint them and then jam your finger in there. Look at him?

- Malone?

- Yeah, whattaya reckon his weakness is?

- He's got pretty bad ackers.

- Which are so f---en big they look like humps on his neck. He's a human camel, ain't that right HUMP!!!!?

He screams the name at Malone.

- Yes, thank you Larry. Why don't you go tackle someone? says Hump and moves off rubbing his neck, looking a little wounded.

- Al right Hump, says Larry. - Hump! Hump! Hump!

As he says it, he bends over like he's got a weight attached to his neck.

- Pay c---s out, they leave you alone.

- Yeah, but you're a good fighter.

- It doesn't matter.

The chapter goes on and in the end it felt too on-the-nose, a little too Getting of Wisdom, so I left it out.

I reckon, however, that it accurately reflects what happens to a lot of boys (and girls) in high school: it's the kill or be killed mentality and a sharp tongue, a penetrating insult or nasty nickname can often be your deadliest weapon in this battle.

It doesn't end when you graduate either and you just have to look at the jibes and personal attacks thrown in our parliaments and on our sporting fields to know that a carefully constructed insult is widely considered a reasonable tactic to undermine an opponent's confidence.

The links between verbal abuse and anxiety, depression, disorders such as OCD as well as suicide have been studied and proven for years; there's no newsflash there.

But do many or any of us pause to think about the damage done by a choice insult delivered out of our car in traffic or at the pub to a passing stranger?

I'm not suggesting we outlaw plain talking or even ridicule, but it's worth remembering that the cutting things we say to other people are like drops in a jar and, when a person overflows, you better hope they don't own a handbag ... or a handgun.

STOP PRESS

Here's part three of Fairfax Digital Productions' latest effort, Wine Wisdom, where we visited Grand Merlot wizard Jim Irvine's South Australian HQ. The stuff tastes like a glass of creamy bacon and caramel - which to my uneducated palate is a very good thing. Yum.

NEWS EXTRA

The first Building a Better Bloke seminar held last weekend was a resounding success and, with some minor tweaks and suggestions courtesy of the debut group of attendees, we'll be backing up next month.

If you're interested in attending go here or here and I'll add you to my email list.

The seminar is a zero-to-one-hundred capsule of advice, tips and exercises you can use to pull yourself out of a dating rut, break the ice with girls and build confidence and self-esteem.

This is not a Pick Up Artist boot camp, just a concept I've been developing for several years that I firmly believe can lead you towards a better social and romantic life. Hope to see you at one.

If you'd like to email me with a topic suggestion or just vent, try here. I now have too many unanswered emails to catch up on, so I'm instituting a no-reply policy. In advance, I thank you for your email.

Leave your comment

Recent comments

** rusty* August 12, 2009 * 07:16 PM*

insults are used to test your self esteem or to use pua talk test the strength of your frame.

it's a way of establishing social dominance over somebody if you are unable to deal with the insult in a humorous and turn the tables sort of way or clever self deprecation you will be the loser in the social dominance encounter.

the other option is to give a short response eg hey dude you're really cool.

then completely ignore the person turn your back on them and start talking to somebody else

we are social creatures and unfortunately this is one of the easiest ways to attempt to establish social dominance .

there are much better ways to do it but they take class and skill so most people go the easy route.

** Bender * August 12, 2009 * 07:19 PM*

Glad you took the chapter out. Too many uses of the c-word. Not very realistic. A few is ok and normal, especially among teenage boys at school, but not every sentence.

Please. - Sam

** Bhuvi* August 12, 2009* 07:47 PM*

I would like to take this opportunity to apologise for my sharp tongue towards some previous posters.

I have thought about this since the blog combined all of the papers. I am sorry for having let my tongue get away with me. I plan to not allow this to happen again, very shameful.

** Bhuvi * August 12, 2009 * 07:54 PM*

I grew up knowing the value of a sharp tongue in a disagreement. My sister has always been more than twice my size, and when you are small, your tongue becomes your best weapon.

Then I had a difficult marriage. Even now, after a few years of seperation, he still calls me terrible names on almost every occasion he sees me.

I try to be conscious to not use my tongue to issue insults, except on rare occasions to those I don't have to see again (hence my periodic rudeness on this blog - cowardice, really.)

But as an (I hope) intelligent adult, I do know that this does not make me a better person. I hate being insulted, and I do try to not inflict that feeling on others.

Another good blog, Sam. Self reflection.

** The Scholar * August 12, 2009* 08:00 PM*

I agree with Bender, the last thing we need are more dialogues perpetuating the stereotype that all Aussies are dumbarse bogans. I went to high school in the Shire, and even though there were a lot of bogans there, they didn't talk like that. Save that for the outback mate.

The book was set in the eastern suburbs. Sounds like a little bit of cultural cringe on both your parts. - Sam

** daddy* August 12, 2009* 08:20 PM*

10 yo son had a bit of a crisis in confidence a few weeks ago. Really clever, great at maths, excellent hand/eye co-ordination but he just can't spell. Some others kids worked this out and a few rumbles from across the room just got to him.

After a few tears he was actually able to explain this and how it made him feel. I told him that if something like this happened again simply to reply "to me, what you think doesn't matter".

A bully has no response to this. His confidence back and armed with a valid response all is now good. He actually also believes that their opinion doesn't matter as his real friends don't mind if he can spell or not.

The best one I ever dished out was telling another bloke "I though someone your age would be able to hold his drink" ... needless to say he wanted to box on ... luckily he actually couldn't hold his drink.

** Tinman* August 12, 2009* 08:32 PM*

Words can inflict far deeper wounds than sticks and stones. I'm living proof of the deleterious effects of verbal (and physical) abuse in the schoolyard. I've spent most of my adult life (I'm 32) trying to deal with the damage done to my sense of self, but I suspect that it is something I will never fully come to terms with. The effects on me include underemployment (due to lack of confidence in my abilities), and social phobia (due to a fear of being the subject of ridicule). The moral of the story is; be careful what you say, because you have no idea what effect it may have on a person's life.

** Ant * August 12, 2009* 08:53 PM*

Usually when I have been hurt by something that has been said, I have been the one that has said it. It is a very unpleasant feeling to know that you've said something that has hurt another person - even more so when that was the intent.

I find it much easier to move on when it is someone else that has said something unkind to me than the other way round. It is easier to forgive than live with guilt.

** corgette*

** August 12, 2009*

** 08:55 PM*

well then again there's option C

learn to swear/insult in another language- when provoked, i do this to my ex and it's extremely satisfying...

*hey Bhuvi - not sure if you're taking the p*** (is that one allowed in a nice enough context sam?) but i have never found you overly offensive at all- there's a huge difference between being passionate/opinionated and being offensive/insulting.*

** indoboy* August 12, 2009* 09:11 PM*

No one wins with bullying. It's sad. But you know, you gotta believe that you have the power to pull yourself out of the damage done. You just gotta confront your fears and grow. Learn to love and forgive all. Love and grow. Love and grow.

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THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

Match the treatment to the malady by Miranda Devine

August 13, 2009 - 12:49AM

When the psychiatrist Gordon Parker talks to parents at boys' schools in Sydney, he describes the brave new world of gender relations in a terrifying way.

In the "pre-dating" phase of early adolescence, he finds over the past decade boys have become anxious about how to relate to girls their age, who have become more assertive, confident and "ruthlessly objective".

"When they're rumbling with their mates and playing sport boys understand [what's happening] but when it comes to girls they feel lost," Parker says. "They don't know how to behave with girls and how to be appropriately assertive" without being predatory.

Previously, he says "boys cloaked their insecurities by swaggering and acting in hairy-chested ways [when] girls were modest and non judgmental ... Girls are not the sexually demure creatures they used to be. [They] are inclined to criticise and there is a lot of anxiety for boys."

This new view of boys as the psychologically weaker sex has been long reflected in suicide statistics, in which males outnumber females four to one. For years, our boys and young men have been the canaries in the coalmine of a toxic culture, quietly doing away with themselves when they can no longer face their lack of self-worth.

The good news is the incidence of male youth suicide has more than halved between 1997 and 2006. The bad news is the figures may be rubbery. According to an Australian Institute of Health and Welfare review of suicide statistics released last month, suicides may have been under-reported in part because of a large backlog of suspicious death cases under investigation by overworked coroners over the past decade. At the same time there has been an increase in reporting by the Australian Bureau of Statistics of "accidents" and verdicts of "undetermined" deaths.

The Mental Health Council of Australia describes this as "disturbing ... If these deaths were suicide, the rate of Australians committing suicide would have increased from seven a day in 1997 to eight a day in 2006."

Professor Parker, executive director of the Black Dog Institute, believes the real suicide rate has declined and that under-reporting only accounts for part of the statistical drop in recent years. He attributes this good news to the

destigmatisation of depression, effective anti-suicide strategies and better and earlier treatment, especially with antidepressants.

But he maintains the whole system of diagnosing and classifying depression and mood disorders needs to change. "Depression is not an 'it' or a one size fits all disorder." But for almost 30 years, psychiatry has defined depression vaguely as a single condition which varies only in severity - it is major or minor depression.

Parker says this has led to over-diagnosis to such a ridiculous extent that, by some counts, 80 per cent of the population has depression. "Psychiatry runs the risk of pathologising human misery and sadness."

There are "great risks of inappropriate treatment because of this simplistic classification system". He draws the analogy of a patient going to a doctor for difficulty breathing and being diagnosed with major or minor breathlessness. The patient actually wants to know if it is asthma or blood clots in the lungs or heart failure, as each problem has a different treatment.

Parker says his is a "minority view" but he is hopeful of change.

The system is based on the American Psychological Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders, known as DSM by mental health professionals, and now in its fourth iteration - DSM-IV. Parker has been complaining so vigorously about the DSM classification of depression, he has been appointed to the panel controversially revising the criteria for DSM-V, by 2012. Parker and Black Dog have devised an alternative classification system, with three types of depression - the essentially biological conditions of the brain, which he describes as melancholic and psychotic depressions, and a third type he calls "non-melancholic" which relates to personality type and external stresses.

He believes that certain personality styles - from "perfectionistic" and "irritable" to "anxious worriers" - predispose some people to develop mood disorders under stress, each with its own ideal treatment.

Too often in the past, he says, treatment for depression has been dependent on the background training of the health professional - a GP gives drugs, a psychologist gives cognitive behaviour therapy, a kaftan-clad mystic uses crystal therapy.

Too often the treatment is wrong.

For example, he recalls a teacher he once saw with a perfectionist personality who had been publicly shamed by his headmaster. In distress, the man went to his GP and was prescribed an antidepressant, which didn't work. By the time he saw Parker, he had been on 23 different drugs, with two rounds of electroconvulsive therapy. Parker said the prescription he really needed was an apology from the headmaster.

"I see people over-treated, but conversely I see people who would do brilliantly with medication but instead got talking or relaxation therapy."

Parker's school talks have been a prelude to a new book Navigating Teenage Depression that Black Dog will publish in October to help parents judge whether they need professional help or are dealing with adolescent moodiness.

New pressures on teenagers today exacerbate the difficulties of adolescence - from the internet and mobile phones to premature sexualisation, higher rates of divorce, designer drugs and the "downsides of affluence". A "Boys at Risk" conference at the north shore private boys' school Shore in October will address the particular vulnerabilities of boys.

Parker says one in seven Australian children has "significant mental health concerns", and suicide remains the third most common cause of death in young adults aged from 18 to 24. It is no time to be complacent.

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For help, visit blackdoginstitute.org.au or call Lifeline on 131 114.

This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/match-the-treatment-to-the-malady-20090812-eiae.html>

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THE NEWSWEEK

How Old Is Too Old? Why the death of a 68-year-old new mom made me rethink the limits of parenthood.

By Raina Kelley | Newsweek Web Exclusive

Jul 22, 2009

As you may have already heard, María del Carmen Bousada de Lara—famous for being the world's oldest living new mom—died after a battle with cancer. She was 66 when she gave birth and just 68 at her death—leaving behind twin toddlers, who will reportedly be raised by her nephew. In order to conceive, Bousada de Lara lied to the Pacific Fertility Clinic and told them she was 55—their cutoff age for IVF. Unsurprisingly, both then and now there were torrents of criticism about her being too old to be a mother. I remember thinking at the time, "You go, girl!" I felt compassion for this woman who, like me, had been trying to get pregnant and had succeeded despite the barriers age had put in our way. I imagine that the rush of joy, excitement, and satisfaction

I experienced when I was pregnant was very similar to what Bousada de Lara felt when her boys, Christian and Pau, were born.

Then Gabriel was born and in the blur of late-night feedings and new-mom anxiety, I changed my mind about Bousada de Lara's decision to have children at 66. I began to agree with those who felt her decision was monstrously selfish. I worried that her babies would be orphaned at an early age and, sadly, I was right. Before Gabe, my feelings were self-centered—my excitement about becoming a mommy, my joy at having a baby to take care of, my anxiety that something would go wrong. But once he was born, I became thoroughly Gabe-centered. I worried over this new life—anything I had previously wanted for myself, I wanted for Gabe. And as I watch my little duckling obsess over my every move (when he slept in our bed, he'd rub my arms and neck and kick his feet up onto my stomach), I'm trying to take my health and welfare more seriously—for his sake. We play elaborate peekaboo games, talk nonsense to each other, and dance crazy all over the house. We're buddies and I will do anything to make sure that I'm around long enough to honor that relationship—even exercise and eat salad. If I were 66 instead of 39, I can't imagine the panic that I might not see him grow up and I would worry compulsively about the effect that my death would have on him.

Now, don't get me wrong—I know it's not my place to tell women when they can and can't have children and how many they can have. I can testify that it's hard to be childless at 36. People ask you all the time if you're going to start a family—as if you didn't already know that your biological clock was winding down. What's worse, they begin lecturing you on fertility options as if to say, "Since it's clear that you can't catch a partner, you'd better do this on your own." I can't imagine what that feels like when you're 66. It must be very painful. And trust me, I'm equally aghast when men have children in their 70s and 80s (Saul Bellow was 84 when his fifth child was born). I'm just saying that sometimes for the sake of the children-to-be, we may have to put away our longings and grieve for the children we might have had rather than go to the ends of the earth to get them. The death of a parent can cause young children to suffer disproportionately from depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and drug abuse in their later years, according to studies published in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine and The American Journal of Psychiatry. I think parents should take that into account when they're planning a family. And yes, I know I could drop dead tomorrow; life gives no one guarantees. After Bousada de Lara died, Sarah Vine wrote a commentary for The Times of London, which concluded, "No one thinks more carefully about having a child than the person who, through misfortune, or trauma or simply because they happen to appreciate the work of Judy Garland, cannot do so by natural means." That may be true, it certainly feels true, but we have to think about the children, not just the having them.

As it is, I worry that I'm too old to raise a kid. I squandered too much of my energy partying in my 20s. I should have had children when I didn't need sleep and had a much more cavalier attitude about my career. Of course, when I was in my 20s, I had very little patience and even less self-control, so maybe that time wouldn't have been any better. There's never a perfect time for a kid, and I respect that. But just as we worry about teenagers having children, I also worry about kids born to elderly parents. Are they being shortchanged? Won't they miss having grandparents to spoil them? Maybe not—there are millions of ways for children to be happy. They don't have to be part of a traditional nuclear family. Nor does there need to be a mommy and a daddy; they can have a couple of mommies or just a daddy. Just somebody or somebodies to give them a sense of permanent attachment and security—someone to count on when you skin your knee or experience your first heartbreak or do badly on an exam, someone to throw your graduation cap to. Even on the cusp of 40, I speak to my parents almost every day, and I'm as dependent on their help as I ever was. There are probably some of you reading this now who think I'm too old to raise a baby into adulthood. But, I do have actuarial tables on my side.

I have a hunch that cases like that of Bousada de Lara and, of course, Octomom, are going to force fertility clinics to establish more rules about who can use their services and under what circumstances. Just as public outrage brought a uniform set of requirements for people to adopt or contract a surrogate mother, there is already a push to further regulate fertility clinics. Like it or not, once we turn to others to facilitate the conception of our families, we become subject to their morals and ethics as well . . . and maybe that's not always a bad thing.

Find this article at <http://www.newsweek.com/id/208022>

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THE SCOTSMAN

Older generation blamed as drug deaths soar by Tanya Thompson

Published Date: 13 August 2009

THE human cost of long-term drug use was laid bare yesterday, as figures show Scotland's drug death toll has risen to record levels, with a sharp increase in deaths among older users.

And last night government ministers warned that drug deaths could continue to rise in the future, as the next generation of addicts faced the consequences of experimenting with drugs in their youth.

Health experts are blaming the "Trainspotting generation" – those who began injecting heroin in the 1980s and 1990s – for the increased deaths.

A new report shows drug deaths have increased by more than a quarter in the past year, with the number of fatalities rising significantly among older people.

Drug-related deaths in Scotland have rocketed by more than 131 per cent over the past ten years, leading to calls for urgent action.

Figures show the 35-44 age bracket made up 30 per cent of drug-related fatalities and 37 per cent were aged between 25 and 34 years old.

Last night, community safety minister Fergus Ewing said: "As a legacy of long-term drug misuse over recent decades, drug-related deaths may continue to rise over the next few years, especially among older men.

"It's a long-term problem with no single solution. That is why we must continue to take action to tackle this issue now and for the long term."

It is the rise in the number of deaths in the older age categories that is causing the greatest alarm for doctors of the National Drug Related Deaths Forum. Deaths rose faster for 35-44-year-olds and for people aged 45 and over. Last year, deaths of those aged 35-44 increased 17 per cent to 174 on the previous year. Even more worrying, the number for those 45 and over rose 54 per cent last year to 97.

Experts said Scotland was dealing with a legacy reaching as far back as the late 1970s and 1980s, when many people began experimenting with drugs for the first time. Those injecting drugs such as heroin 20 years ago are now inheriting a range of serious health problems, including heart and respiratory illnesses, which, in some cases, are leading to premature death.

Drug charities said "social isolation" could be behind the deaths of older addicts.

Biba Brand, of Scottish Drugs Forum, said: "It is difficult to tell exactly why older drug-users are increasingly featuring among the drug death statistics.

"However, many will have been using drugs – primarily heroin – for a long time.

"As a result, their physical health will have deteriorated and many will have become increasingly socially isolated over the years. This could make them more vulnerable to accidental or deliberate overdose."

The report, from the General Register Office for Scotland, revealed drugs killed 574 people in 2008, up from 455 the year before, and the number of deaths has more than doubled in a decade.

Heroin and morphine were responsible for the bulk of the deaths, with 80 per cent of the deaths among men.

Heroin remains a threat to public health, with figures showing heroin and morphine present in the body in 336 cases – 59 per cent of deaths. Methadone was present in 181 cases – 32 per cent, while cocaine, amphetamines and ecstasy were present in the body in 79, 12 and seven cases respectively.

The General Register Office for Scotland report said the long-term trend of drug deaths "appears to be steadily upwards". Throughout Scotland, there were wide variations, with the Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board area accounting for 34 per cent of the deaths, Lothian 16 per cent and Tayside 9 per cent.

Mr Ewing insisted yesterday that the Scottish Government was trying to tackle the problem, citing a database launched this year to look at the circumstances behind each death. He said: "These figures demonstrate the real impact of drug misuse, which extends far beyond the individual drug user – it destroys lives.

Marnie Hodge, development manager for social care agency Turning Point Scotland (TPS), said the increase in deaths might be the result of long-term drug misuse and it was crucial that addicts got the help they needed.

"TPS is working to ensure we provide a programme of interventions particularly designed for people who do not engage with support services and are therefore more exposed to the serious health risks, including the risk of overdose by the prolonged and persistent drug use."

Last year's figures mark the third successive rise in drug-related deaths. Heroin or morphine was found in 336 bodies, with alcohol detected in 273 cases. Controversially, heroin substitute methadone was found in one-third of cases – calling into question the efficacy of the government's drug treatment policy.

Dr Roy Robertson, chairman of the National Drug Related Death Forum, described the methadone figure as "alarming", but defended the use of the drug for those addicted to heroin.

He said: "Every country that has drug-use problems debates this constantly and incessantly, about the relative value of methadone against the risks. We know that methadone, by and large, is a successful treatment."

Labour claimed the SNP were losing the battle against drugs, accusing them of failing to deliver. Justice spokeswoman Cathy Jamieson said: "The rise in the number of drug-related deaths is extremely worrying, and we need action from ministers to reverse the trend."

She said: "The SNP promised a 20 per cent increase in funding for drugs treatment in their manifesto, but, like so many other promises, they have failed to deliver it. Ministers have also cut budgets to local agencies supporting drug addicts."

Conservative leader Annabel Goldie said the figures reflected "a wasted decade".

Addicts will die on waiting list

HEROIN addicts and other drug users are waiting up to two years for treatment due to the lack of services in Scotland, it emerged yesterday.

Doctors warned it was almost inevitable some addicts would die before they had an opportunity to access services.

Dr Roy Robertson, chairman of the National Drug Related Deaths Forum, said there were about 200 drug treatment centres in Scotland, including residential facilities, but many addicts remained on lengthy waiting lists.

"There are waiting lists for almost every part of Scotland," he said. "That is one of the big issues... that is being taken seriously. Every centre has got waiting lists. It will require resources and extra help. I don't think there is an excuse for long waiting lists."

The Scottish Government announced a new drugs strategy last year, which promised a change in treatment methods, but it failed to set targets for cutting methadone use.

The debate on drug treatment has raged in recent years, with experts deeply divided over the use of methadone, the heroin substitute.

The cost of prescribing methadone has almost doubled in the past five years to nearly £17 million, according to recent figures published by the NHS in Scotland.

Last month it was reported that the total bill for dispensing the heroin substitute rose by 84 per cent from £9,049,792 in 2003-4 to £16,637,636 this year, with many drugs experts claiming methadone does not work.

Critics say Scotland's heroin dependency has simply been replaced by a methadone dependency.

Some drug misuse experts believe addicts should have a maximum of two years on methadone, which is prescribed to an estimated 22,000 people.

Wide variety of potentially fatal health consequences lie in wait for recreational users

YOUNG people who dabble in recreational drugs such as cocaine are storing up long-term health problems which can lead to premature death, medical experts warned yesterday.

The risk of a heart attack is increased 24-fold for the first hour after using cocaine, scientists believe, but there are also long-term effects which could take years to manifest.

Carol Hunter, the lead pharmacist with Glasgow Addiction Services, said users were not only at risk from a deadly overdose of cocaine or heroin, but there were serious risks to the body from needle-sharing and blood-borne infections.

"There are a lot of blood-borne viruses, like Hepatitis C and HIV, from needle-sharing. Needle reuse, in particular, causes wounds and abscesses to build up, because the needle is not sterile. Blunt needles can also damage the veins."

Pulmonary complications, such as blood clots, are also a killer. She added: "Blood clots are quite common because the circulation is affected... the veins are closed off."

Heroin use can lead to a range of chronic problems, which can kill an addict over time. Heroin use affects the brain chemistry significantly, creating the risk of seizures, strokes and even death.

Doctors say that repetitive use of the drug leads not only to physiological addiction, but physical addiction as well.

The user's body begins to need heroin in order to feel "normal" following the effects of withdrawal, with the addict searching for a greater 'hit'.

Ms Hunter said the fact that heroin was often adulterated with other substances could lead to serious problems.

"It's not so much the drug itself, but the contaminants – if they are mixing impure heroin. Heroin is diamorphine, which is used for pain relief. But the impurities can cause damage to the heart with cardiomyopathy – an infection in the heart muscle."

5

THE JAPAN TIMES

Crowe gunslings his way into Japan By GEORGE HADLEY-GARCIA

Russell Crowe talks to us about '3:10 to Yuma,' which finally pulls into Japan, and letting his acting work speak for itself

"People think of Westerns as being quintessentially American," says New Zealand-born actor Russell Crowe.

"But they're quintessentially frontier stories. They're integral to anywhere with a frontier. Like Australia. I think the Westerns I've done could just as easily have happened in Australia."

Crowe is referring to "3:10 to Yuma," a remake of a 1957 classic starring Glenn Ford. But he also costarred, before rising to Hollywood superstardom, in "The Quick and the Dead" with Sharon Stone and Leonardo Di Caprio (also not yet an A-list star).

Crowe, now 45, is said to have mellowed, even chastened, in recent years, following widely publicized confrontations — some violent — that many say cost him a second Oscar, when he followed up his winning role in "Gladiator" with "A Beautiful Mind."

So recently, Crowe has taken second billing to actors like Leonardo Di Caprio and Denzel Washington, and he is said to be in need of a box-office hit. In "3:10" he costars with Christian Bale and Peter Fonda in a tense story about an outlaw (Ben Wada, Crowe's character) and a rancher/Civil War veteran (Bale) and a group of men caught between lawlessness and justice, which takes time to arrive — and sometimes arrives after locals take matters into their own hands.

"It's a solid story. It's got conflict from the get-go," explains Crowe. "The suspense is real because what the frontier means is not a lot of people, not a lot of administration, you know, cope, judges, authorities in town. Few towns. It's very solid, and I, um, sometimes get the chance to play a character who goes to extremes, and I enjoy that."

One has been forewarned not to ask Crowe about his roles as a supporting actor (thus, no jokes about "eating crow"). Nor is an interviewer supposed to refer to, let alone ask for details of, his physical altercations.

Insiders have said, for a few years now, that Russell — born in 1964 — has definitely matured. When he wed longtime girlfriend Danielle Spencer on his 39th birthday, he swore to give up drinking, and has apparently kept his word.

Prior to the wedding, he had a much-gossipped-about affair with costar Meg Ryan that reportedly ended her marriage to actor Dennis Quaid and almost ended Crowe's relationship with Spencer, a some-time singer. However, the birth of their first child, Charles, cemented their bond, followed in 2006 by son Tennyson.

Crowe jealously guards his private life, but when asked about his ranch near Sydney he allows, "Yeah, home is the place you can go to totally relax. You hang your hat up, put your worries in a drawer."

Crowe has also apparently learned to keep controversial comments to himself. He gained several enemies in the business when, a few years ago, he again told the media that he looks down on actors who do commercials in addition to their acting jobs. The implication, said showbiz newspaper *Variety*, was that Crowe considered such stars "cheap or prostituting themselves," something, it added, "he clearly believes is way beneath him."

When it's mentioned in passing that some actors who wouldn't do TV ads in the United States do them, for considerable profit, in Japan, Crowe grumbles, clears his throat, then briefly snickers. "Yeah, well . . . it's not just the size of an audience, it's the fact of having an audience when you pretend to be an expert on a particular product, which as far as I'm concerned is a whole 'nother field . . . that has nothing to do with acting. But obviously, it's none of my business."

Crowe asks what one would like to know about "3:10 to Yuma"?

How does it compare to the 1957 original.

He clears his throat — perhaps a sign of impatience — and states: "I'm not going to be the one to call it a remake. It is based on the same story, same plot, yeah. But it's not some slavish remake or copy. When it got made that long ago, naturally if you go back to that source, you have to alter it, for the sake of relevance. It's a whole different audience now." He pauses, adding, "And Christian Bale is not Glenn Ford."

Meaning what?

"Well, how could he be?" says Crowe after a lengthy pause pregnant with impatience or irritation.

So one asks whether he enjoys acting, since one can't ask if he enjoys working with his costars. "Of course," he says. "I am an actor. That's what I do. Which is not to say that it's fun-time. Acting is discipline, it is work, it is conditions that are often beyond an actor's control. And it is giving maximum believability to your character and the sequence of events in which he engages.

"To me, acting is a craft — or whatever word you want to apply — that requires dedication and discipline. It's more than enough of a career and an art that an actor should stick to acting."

An article in British "Photoplay" once said that Crowe shouldn't be asked whether he wants to direct or go into politics, because he might launch into a lengthy speech about why thespians should stick to emoting. In the golden years when Crowe was a box-office champ and Oscar winner and/or nominee, he was noted for giving as few interviews as he could get away with. He explained once that an actor, not being a writer or publicist, is much better at acting on the screen than talking about the finished movie.

He says now: "Somebody once said: 'If your work speaks for you, don't interrupt.' I think that's a sound philosophy. '3:10 to Yuma' is a very good effort in a genre (Westerns) that's being revived around the world. It's also pretty relevant, what with the theme of outlaws and how people trying to be civilized react to an outlaw."

Russell, who doesn't hide the fact that he's a high-school dropout, plans to donate his brain to medical science (which has led to some unkind jokes in the media). He notes, "Life itself is the big learning process. You learn through the work you do, and you get better and better at it. I love the moments when my work is a joy to me. If, beyond that, a given film is a popular hit, I'm glad, because: one, it pleases other people, and two, it means I get good offers for desirable future films with desirable salaries.

"It's not that I'm greedy . . . don't do commercials, or so forth," he snickers. "It's just that as you get more famous, you get more of a probing crowd and a very probing media gathering around you, and it takes a lot of money to

be able to buy the kind of privacy you need to guard yourself and your family against that." Like his ranch, he means.

"Besides, I want to stay focused on acting. This is what I do. I'm proud of it. Proud of my work. Proud of how far I've come in it."

Crowe grew up the son of caterers who provided meals to crews and casts making motion pictures.

"I saw acting and filmmaking since I was a wee nipper. But I wasn't bitten by the acting bug at a tender age, and my parents didn't push me into any given field. It's something I got into later.

"But I can appreciate the labors of hardworking, serious people — blue-collar, white-collar, anyone that scrambles to make a living and feed themselves and their family. I think being serious about your work, doing your very best at it, that is something admirable, and a noble goal."

How does he like being a father? A long pause, but no throat-clearing. "I learn as I go along. Very, very gratifying. And very, very private. Thanks for asking, though."

Any message for his fans? "Stick with me, folks. I'm getting better and better. And I'm not just doing it for meself."

Perhaps for a second Oscar? "No, no, no. Don't ask that. I act for acting, and for the audience. They're the final judges, mate. OK? Bye."

Critic Giovanni Fazio reviews "3:10 to Yuma" on today's Film page.

6

THE BOSTON GLOBE

From Ireland... to the United States (again) By James F. Smith, Globe Staff | August 13, 2009

Isle's sour economy, cultural shifts drive new diaspora

The Irish are coming, again.

Call it the third green wave. It is a much smaller migration than its predecessors - the historic westward flow that gave Boston its Irish identity, and then, in recent years, the return home of thousands of Irish emigrants seeking to ride the Celtic Tiger, the roaring Irish economy.

But now, with Ireland deep in recession, far deeper even than ours, thousands of its residents are again heading abroad; nearly twice as many people left Ireland in 2008 as four years earlier. And some of them are heading to the United States for the second time.

"People are leaving Ireland every week. They've nothing in Ireland to hold them there. They're in the same boat as myself," said Brendan McDonagh, a 26-year-old construction worker who was born in the United States to immigrant parents, grew up in Ireland, and came back last summer when he got an offer of steady work with a Boston construction firm.

It's relatively easy for McDonagh, a US citizen, to come and go, as it is for those who left yet maintained their permanent resident status in the States. But for others who let their "green cards" lapse, and for the many young Irish people who would like to come here, there's a formidable new obstacle. They are running headlong into far tougher American visa restrictions, prompting many emigrants to look to Europe or Australia instead.

Many looking to leave are fleeing the devastating downturn in Ireland. But there are other factors behind the returning wave. Some families who went home so their children could go to Irish schools and learn the Gaelic language found they prefer American schools after all. Some who felt that Ireland, at some level, would always be home are returning now because they didn't quite fit in back in the old country. Ireland had changed, or they had.

"I didn't want my kids to be the American cousins that no one knew very well. That was our reason for going back to Ireland," said Mary Casey of Cohasset, an Irish-born woman who returned to Boston in April after five years back in Ireland. She said her husband had a good job there, and they loved being near their extended family, "but we found we had just gotten too used to life over here. We really missed Boston."

Like many traditional young Irish emigrants, Casey had first come to the United States after high school, and stayed for 16 years, becoming a US citizen. But the family felt driven to try Ireland again.

"The one thing, having gone back, is that I've gotten the yearning to go home out of my system," she said. "I might never have settled properly here. . . . Now this is home."

Brian Foley, an actuary who lives in the South End, was among the many who left Ireland during the deep downturn in the 1980s. He recalled unemployment near 20 percent. He got a job offer in London in the mid-1980s, and joined the Irish exodus there. "Of my group of friends, 75 percent emigrated, and most of them later went home again," he said.

Foley came to the United States on vacation, visiting cousins in Hartford, and liked it. He got his firm to transfer him to Hartford in 1989 on a work visa, and stayed at first with his grandfather, who had emigrated long before him.

Foley moved to New York in 1993, got his MBA at New York University, and got one of the 40,000 visas created specifically for Irish immigrants under a 1990 program fostered by Bruce Morrison, a congressman from Connecticut.

But in 1999, Foley was laid off and “started to get a bit homesick. I needed to go back to the mother ship for some TLC,” he said. He stayed in Ireland for six years, setting up his own consulting firm. Then, as the Irish boom went bust, he found a job in Boston, as an actuary with a major insurance company.

“The island I went back to then was not the country I had left in 1986. I suddenly had millionaire friends, in construction and IT,” Foley said. “But by 2006, I felt that it was a small place. I was not impressed by the way Ireland had gotten complacent.”

Sheila Gleeson, director of the Brighton-based Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers, says her member organizations around the country have seen a steady flow of new and returning immigrants.

Gleeson said that while the US economy is in very bad shape, in Ireland “the doom and gloom is palpable. Things haven’t picked up at all.”

In Ireland, the Economic and Social Research Institute projects that unemployment will average over 12 percent this year and that the gross national product will shrink a disastrous 9 percent in 2009. A recent report estimates that net Irish emigration from 2010 to 2015 will total between 126,000 and 150,000, a complete turnabout from the unprecedented net immigration to Ireland of the 1990s and 2000s.

But it’s much harder to get into the United States than it once was. The tougher immigration rules are keeping the revived flow to the Boston area relatively modest, probably in the hundreds rather than the thousands, specialists say.

Kieran Conway, a banker in Dublin, returned to Ireland in March 2007 after 15 years in America. He’s still employed, but is weighing his options for the longer term and was fortunate to have kept his green card valid, but he said he knew others who had not bothered and now were feeling trapped.

Unlike the 1980s, he said by phone from Ireland, “this time, there’s a global downturn, and post-9/11, the same tolerance is not afforded to you turning up in the States. So a major problem we’re going to have is that people who want to go have nowhere to go. The safety valve that that afforded us in the past is closed.”

One popular option for Irish emigrants in recent years has been Australia. Young Irish have gone Down Under in droves in the last few years, on short-term work visas that are far harder to get for the United States.

In the absence of such visa options, many think the number of those here illegally is already rising.

Chris Lavery, an Irish immigration lawyer who works with the Irish Pastoral Center in Quincy, said, “We’re seeing a lot more young people coming over, and a lot more people who were here before coming back, with lawful or unlawful status.”

Those who have traveled back and forth say, without exception, that they love both countries and feel part of both. For those who have emigrated, the doubts and the questions of loss and sacrifice loom as large as the potential benefits.

Jim and Kay McLoughney are second-generation examples of the two-way flow of Irish immigrants. Kay’s parents came to the United States in 1950, stayed 15 years, and went home in 1965 to care for aging parents. So although she was born in the United States, she grew up on their simple farm in County Cork. She came back to the United States in 1984, at the age of 20, with her brother.

Her husband, Jim, born in Tipperary, came to Boston in 1986 to work construction. He sold three cows to raise the money to come, and arrived with \$300 in his pocket. He got a Morrison visa and exactly five years later, the legal minimum, he applied for US citizenship.

They went home in 2000, to give their three children a chance to be Irish. They stayed two years. “It wasn’t the same Ireland we had left,” Jim said. He is now a successful construction supervisor, and he built by hand, nights and weekends, the family’s lovely home a block from the ocean in Quincy.

Still, he said, “when you emigrate, you never emigrate forever.” The family spent several weeks in Ireland this summer, visiting family on the farm.

“We still call that home,” Kay said. “We call this home, too.”

James F. Smith writes about Boston’s global links. His blog is at www.boston.com/worldlyboston. He can be reached at jsmith@globe.com.

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THE BOSTON GLOBE

With mixed emotions, Rowling looks ahead By Jill Lawless, Associated Press | July 20, 2007

EDINBURGH -- Harry Potter's life hangs in the balance. Millions of fans are holding their breath. Meanwhile, his creator is baking a cake -- and keeping her secret.

Tomorrow, readers around the globe will learn the schoolboy wizard's fate with the publication of "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," the seventh and final book in J.K. Rowling's fantasy series. Will Harry defeat his evil nemesis, Lord Voldemort, and restore order to the wizarding world? Will he die in the attempt, as many fans fear. "Harry's story comes to a definite end in book seven," is all she will say a few days before publication, serving up tea and home-baked sponge cake in her comfortable Edinburgh house.

That sounds ominously final. So have we really seen the last of the staff and students of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry?

"Because the world is so big, there would be room to do other stuff," Rowling says carefully. "I am not planning to do that, but I'm not going to say I'm never going to do it."

Rowling (her name rhymes with bowling, rather than howling), looking relaxed in jeans and a sweater, shoulder-length blonde hair stylishly cut, has wildly mixed emotions at leaving behind the character she conjured up during a train journey across England in 1990: a neglected, bespectacled orphan who learns on his 11th birthday that he is a wizard. She's enjoying the absence of pressure from publishers and fans clamoring for the next installment in Harry's adventures. And she's reveling in the chance to focus on normal life with her husband and three children. But after finishing the last book, "I felt terrible for a week."

"The first two days in particular, it was like a bereavement, even though I was pleased with the book. And then after a week that cloud lifted and I felt quite lighthearted, quite liberated," she says. "Finishing is emotional, because the books have been so wrapped up with my life. It's almost impossible not to finish and look back to where I was when I started."

It has been an extraordinary journey. When Rowling created Harry Potter, she was a single mother, writing in cafes to save on the heating bill at home. Now, at 41, she is the richest woman in Britain -- worth \$1 billion, according to Forbes magazine -- with houses in Edinburgh, London, and the Scottish countryside.

Her first book, "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone," was published in 1997, with a print run of fewer than 1,000. Rowling's publisher suggested she use gender-neutral initials rather than her first name, Joanne, to give the book a better chance with boys. By the time the book appeared in the United States in 1998 -- as "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" -- Harry was on his way to becoming a publishing phenomenon.

Rowling was profoundly affected by the death of her own mother from multiple sclerosis in 1990 at the age of 45. "My mum died six months into writing [the books], and I think that set the central theme -- this boy dealing with loss," Rowling says.

And she makes no apologies for exposing children to death. "I think children are very scared of this stuff even if they haven't experienced it, and I think the way to meet that is head-on," she says. "I absolutely believe, as a writer and as a parent, that the solution is not to pretend things don't happen but to examine them in a loving, safe way."

As for the future, she says she has no plans.

"I can never write anything as popular again," she said. "Lightning does not strike in the same place twice. I'll do exactly what I did with Harry -- I'll write what I really want to write. . . . I just really want to fall in love with an idea again, and go with that."

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THE BOSTON GLOBE

'Micro tumors' rise on the risk scale By Marilyn Marchione, Associated Press | August 13, 2009

Study may alter treatment for breast cancer

Breast cancer patients with even the tiniest spread of the disease to a lymph node have a much higher risk of it recurring years later and may need more treatment than just surgery, new research suggests.

For years, doctors and patients have struggled with what to do about a microscopic tumor or stray cancer cells in a lymph node.

Women with "micro tumors" usually are given estrogen-blocking drugs, chemotherapy, or both; those with isolated cancer cells usually are not, because those were thought to be of low concern.

The new study challenges that view. It suggests that either type of metastasis, or spread, raises a woman's risk of having cancer show up in the breast or anywhere else in the next five years by about 50 percent.

"This took an area that was very gray and I think made it black and white," said Dr. Linda Vahdat, director of breast cancer research at Weill Cornell Medical College and an adviser for the breast cancer patient website of ASCO, the American Society of Clinical Oncology.

"I think it will influence treatment," she said of the study. "If we're considering treating the patient, we probably should."

Dr. Daniel Hayes, director of breast cancer treatment at the University of Michigan, agreed.

“It really does look like our biases are wrong,” he said. “For the first time, it suggests that isolated tumor cells or micrometastases do have biological significance.”

Vahdat and Hayes had no role in the study, which was done by researchers throughout the Netherlands. The results are in today’s New England Journal of Medicine.

Meanwhile, another study out today suggests doctors have been giving bad advice regarding lifting weights. For decades, many doctors warned that lifting weights or even heavy groceries could cause painful arm swelling. New research shows that weight training actually helps prevent this problem.

“How many generations of women have been told to avoid lifting heavy objects?” Dr. Eric Winer, breast cancer chief at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, lamented after seeing the surprising results of the new study. “Women who were doing the lifting actually had fewer arm problems because they had better muscle tone.”

The study was led by Kathryn Schmitz, an exercise scientist at the University of Pennsylvania, and funded by the federal government. Results are in today’s New England Journal of Medicine.

More than 2.4 million Americans are breast cancer survivors, and the study could mean a big difference in their quality of life. Cancer treatment-related arm swelling now appears to be one of many ailments made better by exercise - not worse, Schmitz said.

The Netherlands study is not ideal: It simply observed a large number of women, rather than assigning some to get treatment and comparing how they fared compared with others who were not treated.

The study also was done at a time when treatment was less aggressive and in a country where doctors had been treating breast cancer more conservatively than in the United States.

In the United States, many women with early stage breast cancer are given hormone blockers.

“The big issue is, should these patients also get chemotherapy?” Hayes said.

Not all women benefit from chemotherapy, however, even when their risk of a recurrence is high, Winer said.

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THE INDEPENDENT

Women's boxing set for Olympics By Jonathan Brown

Thursday, 13 August 2009

Women's boxing is coming home. Nearly 300 years after Elizabeth Wilkinson, known to her many fans as the Cockney Championess ventured up West to Oxford Circus to punch, maul and even kick her rival Martha Jones into submission in the first recorded fight of its kind, female pugilists are to be welcomed into the permanent Olympic fold – beginning right back where it all started.

At a landmark meeting today in Berlin, the International Olympic Committee agreed that women's boxing should be included at the 2012 Games in London ending its anomaly as the only one of the Olympic disciplines without female competitors. The decision, which came as golf and rugby sevens were given the nod - as expected - for the 2016 Olympics, was welcomed throughout the world of sport though it was condemned by doctors' leaders and head injuries charities who feared it would encourage more people to try it.

The IOC president Jacques Rogge, himself a former boxing doctor, said it was time to acknowledge the tremendous strides made over the last five years. "It is a great addition to the Games," he said. Women boxing hopefuls, who have long battled an entrenched chauvinism in their chosen pursuit, reacted with unabashed delight at the prospect of competing at the highest level. Campaigners for women's sport and fitness celebrated the "long hard fight" for equality while pointing out that there was still some way to go with men still able to compete for dozens more Golds than women. Even British boxer Amir Khan, a former Olympic silver medallist, who re-iterated his long-held views that the canvas was no place for women saying patriotism would outweigh his concerns. "Deep down I think women shouldn't fight. That's my opinion. When you get hit it's very painful. Women can get knocked out." He added: "I am going to be supportive. I'll be cheering on British fighters and hoping they win the medals.

While women's boxing was a display event at St Louis in 1904 it fell to the determination of proponents such as Jane "The Fleetwood Assassin" Couch to gain recognition for her gender. Ms Couch had to resort to the courts in 1998 to be allowed access to the canvas on the same terms as men. Hilary Swank and Clint Eastwood also played their role too helping raise the profile of the sport in the blockbuster film Million Dollar Baby (despite a tragic ending) while the arrival of the greatest of them all – Muhammad Ali's daughter Laila "She-Bee Stinging" Ali in the ring has helped recruit a generation of new fans across the world – not least when she took on Joe Frazier's daughter Jacqui "Sister Smoke" for a fourth and hard fought encounter between the two most famous boxing families ever. Mass popularity has helped counter IOC objections that women's boxing was of only limited appeal and would add little of value to the programme.

Such is the growth in support and participation that today there are some 650 women boxers in the UK alone compared to just 50 in 2005 many of whom have come to the sport through "boxercise" classes or other contact events. The inclusion looks likely to add to Team GB's potential medal haul in 2012 with at least half a dozen home grown podium hopefuls. Among them is Nicola Adams, 26, who has been fighting since the age of 12 and is currently ranked second in the world in the bantamweight division. Meanwhile, five British boxers returned from the recent European Union Championships in Bulgaria bearing laurels. Savannah Marshall, Natasha Jonas and Sharon Holford all took gold in their respective classes while Hannah Behanny and Lucy O'Connor won bronze. Thirty-six female fighters are expected to compete in London. To make room for the women, one of the existing 11 men's weight divisions — light flyweight — will be dropped though men will still outnumber women.

Meanwhile, the decision to recommend golf for a return to the Olympics for the first time in 115 years evokes the delicious prospect of the world's most popular sportsman Tiger Woods competing for Olympic gold in 2016. The US superstar golfer lobbied hard on behalf of the game and the world's top 15 players will automatically qualify while the schedule of Opens and Majors will be redrawn to ensure participation by the sport's multi-millionaire elite. The decision is now expected to be ratified for inclusion by the full IOC assembly in Copenhagen in October where the location of the 2016 Games will be decided. But there was disappointment. Squash, roller sports, karate, baseball and softball all failed in their respective bids for membership of the Olympic club.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES

Trying Anything and Everything for Autism By JANE E. BRODY

January 21, 2009

Rochelle and Ian Yankwitt were thrilled when their son, Casey, was born seven years ago, 19 months after the birth of their daughter. But their delight was short-lived. At 7 months, this otherwise happy infant failed to respond to his name or any attempt to engage him with words, his mother recalled in an interview.

"I thought he was deaf," Ms. Yankwitt said, but tests showed nothing wrong with his hearing. Instead, at 14 months, Casey received a diagnosis of autism. His parents, both lawyers, wasted no time in setting up early intervention treatments — speech and occupational therapy and special education — as provided by New York State for developmentally disabled children. Ms. Yankwitt, who described Casey as "pretty seriously affected," left her job to coordinate his endless rounds of treatment.

If not for speech therapy five or more days a week for six years, Ms. Yankwitt is convinced Casey would not have the limited language skills he now has, which enable him to speak in short sentences, make his needs known and share things that excite him.

But, she added, "there is no mistaking Casey for a normal child. He is in constant motion, flaps his arms, is easily frustrated and makes strange noises."

Ms. Yankwitt read many books and articles by parents claiming that this, that or the other treatment had cured their child's autism, all anecdotal and based on theories and therapies unproved by scientific study.

"I spent six years hoping that the next thing around the corner would be the one for Casey," she said.

So far, nothing has made a substantial difference in Casey's behavior. Still, Ms. Yankwitt said, guided by a pediatrician who specializes in holistic care of children with neurodevelopmental disorders, through trial and error some of the suggested remedies have produced apparent improvements.

The Yankwitts' many attempts to help their son and, in turn, help themselves are typical of the endless ups and downs faced by families of children with autism, for which there is no documented cure.

A Variable Disorder

According to Laura Schreibman, a psychologist who is the director of the Autism Research Program at the University of California, San Diego, and the author of "The Science and Fiction of Autism" (Harvard University Press, 2005), if anything definitive can be said of the popular therapies for autism, it is that treatments have to be individualized. What works to reduce symptoms in one child may or may not help another.

It is also true that autism is highly variable, with periodic improvements and regressions, and most children receive several therapies at once. So it is difficult to say what makes things better or worse at a given time, Dr. Schreibman said in an interview.

This means that parents like the Yankwitts try one thing after another, often keeping careful records of the latest regimen and its seeming effects on their child's behavior.

"Parents are afraid of missing what might be effective, so they try everything," Dr. Schreibman said.

Alternative Therapy

Initially the Yankwitts sought only mainstream therapy for Casey — “we were very afraid of all the alternative treatments,” Ms. Yankwitt said — but a regression he suffered between ages 2 and 3 prompted them to branch out.

Their tests of alternative methods began with a dairy-free diet. “Thirty-six hours later he was like a different kid,” Ms. Yankwitt said. “He made eye contact for the first time. It was as if a layer of smog had peeled off him.”

That was followed by another dietary change: a gluten-free diet, with less obvious results, then “a specific carbohydrate diet to eliminate yeast in his digestive tract,” Ms. Yankwitt said. “These diets are very challenging,” she said. “We carried food for him everywhere he went.”

Next came supplements, introduced one at a time, with daily notes of how Casey reacted to each. In addition to theanine to aid sleep, Casey now takes garlic capsules, calcium, coenzyme Q-10, L-carnitine, taurine, zinc, magnesium, molybdenum, selenium and Nystatin (for yeast), as well as two psychotropic drugs: a mood stabilizer and an antidepressant. He also uses a glutathione cream that is supposed to detoxify his body, a B-12 cream, an intestinal complex to help with digestion, fish oils, curcumin and milk thistle.

At the doctor’s suggestion, Casey underwent a full round of chelation therapy to remove heavy metals from his body that might be damaging his brain, “but it didn’t seem to make a difference in what he was, and so we stopped,” Ms. Yankwitt said.

What she thinks has helped is hyperbaric oxygen therapy purported to reduce inflammation in the brain, which coincided with a significant improvement in Casey’s language skills. But, Ms. Yankwitt conceded, “We don’t know what would have happened if we had done nothing.

“The most difficult thing for me is constantly hoping something will fix this and being given reason to hope by people you trust,” she added.

In “Defeating Autism: A Damaging Delusion” (Routledge, 2009), Dr. Michael Fitzpatrick, a general practitioner in London whose son is autistic, likened the alternative medicine approach to a return to “medicine’s dark ages.” Every biomedical intervention, he wrote, “is supported by anecdotes and personal testimonies: it is understandable that parents want to share their experience that their child has made progress, and it is equally understandable that other parents are impressed by success stories.”

Dr. Fitzpatrick continued, “When parents have invested money, time, energy and, above all, hope into a particular treatment, it is natural to seek to attribute any improvement to that treatment.” But, he added, anecdotal examples and wishful thinking are not science.

A Behavioral Approach

The one approach that has been scientifically validated to help, though by no means cure, autistic children is behavioral intervention that mimics the way normal children learn, Dr. Schreibman said. For example, if the child wants to play with a toy car, the therapist holds it and prompts the child to say “car.” If the child makes the “c” sound, he is given the car to play with. The next session may require him to say “car.”

In this way, a behavioral repertoire can be built gradually and systematically to develop behaviors like communication, engagement, social interactions and play skills, Dr. Schreibman said.

“Parents need to learn how to do it,” she said. “It’s a lot of work and it takes a lot of time — maybe 30 to 40 hours a week for a 7-year-old — and the results are not instant, but it does work. But the earlier in a child’s life it is started, the more effective it is likely to be.”

With the increase in awareness of autism and improvements in diagnosis, more children today can get an early start on effective therapy rather than wasting valuable time, effort and money on remedies that lack a scientific basis and proof of effectiveness.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES

Hints of Agenda and Tone for New First Lady

By RACHEL L. SWARNS

January 22, 2009

WASHINGTON — She celebrated her 45th birthday in a vintage train car, amid balloons and crepe-paper streamers, and cheering crowds serenaded her by name.

She danced in front of the Lincoln Memorial to Stevie Wonder’s “Higher Ground” with her husband and daughters clapping by her side. She assembled care packages for soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, and, in this long, whirlwind weekend, marveled that she would soon be the public face of America’s first family.

On Inauguration Day, Michelle Obama will become the first African-American to assume the role of first lady, a woman with the power to influence the nation’s sense of identity, its fashion trends, its charitable causes and its

perceptions of black women and their families. Already, the outlines of her style and public agenda have begun to emerge.

She has hired a politically seasoned team of advisers and an interior decorator committed to creating a family-friendly feel in her elegant new home. She has sketched out a vision of a White House brimming with children and ordinary Americans while suggesting she may delegate some traditional first lady duties to her staff: food tastings, china selection and the like.

She has decided to shape her public program with the help of a policy director who has raised concerns about instances of systemic employment bias against minorities and called for tougher enforcement of antidiscrimination laws, contentious issues in the workplace.

And she has highlighted the warm, informal tone that she hopes will characterize her time in the executive mansion by signing e-mail messages to supporters simply as “Michelle.”

Mrs. Obama, a Harvard-educated lawyer and a former hospital executive, has made it clear that her two young daughters will be her biggest priority. The causes she has promised to promote — expanding volunteerism and supporting military families and working parents — fall squarely into the realm of platforms traditionally championed by first ladies. But the staff she has assembled is also clearly prepared to tackle a tougher issues-oriented program.

“Her experience will guide the kinds of things she does, and her personal experience is unique for a first lady,” said Paul Schmitz, a longtime friend. “She understands the needs of low-income communities. She understands the needs of women. She has balanced raising a family with a career.”

“She’ll think deeply about how to use her own bully pulpit,” said Mr. Schmitz, who heads Public Allies, a nonprofit leadership-training network for young adults. “And I think that’s the challenge. You are now the most prominent woman in America. What does that mean? What do you do?”

It is a difficult question, particularly since Mrs. Obama is still grappling with how life in the grand house at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue will transform her family’s existence.

She has grown accustomed to being in the spotlight — with Secret Service agents accompanying her to private lunches with her girlfriends — and has consulted with Laura Bush and former first ladies Hillary Rodham Clinton, Nancy Reagan and Rosalynn Carter. But she has no experience with the day-to-day details of life in the White House.

President Bush and his wife were old hands at White House living because they had visited often when Mr. Bush’s father, George Bush, was running the country.

Mrs. Obama visited the private residence in the White House for the first time in November after the election. She grew up in a tiny apartment and marveled recently when she and her close friend Valerie Jarrett pored over photographs of the 15 bedrooms in the presidential mansion.

“You have to pinch yourself to think that that’s home,” said Ms. Jarrett, who is also one of President-elect Barack Obama’s closest advisers.

Craig Robinson, Mrs. Obama’s brother, described the Obamas’ new reality as “mind-boggling.”

“Every time I talk to her, I’m like, ‘What are you doing now?’ ” said Mr. Robinson, who has delighted in his sister’s accounts of her days in Washington before the move to the White House. “We are such novices at this. I’m just trying to find out, How many bathrooms are in there?”

(The answer is 34, according to William Seale, a historian who has written about the White House.)

Mrs. Obama has the highest favorability ratings of any incoming first lady since 1980, according to a New York Times/CBS News poll completed Thursday. Forty-six percent of those surveyed had a favorable opinion of her. Seven percent had an unfavorable view.

Gossip magazines, cable networks and major newspapers vie for tiny details about her and her daughters, Malia, 10, and Sasha, 7. The designer of Mrs. Obama’s inaugural gown? (Sorry, no word yet.) Her favorite musician of all time? (Yes, Stevie Wonder.) Where in the White House is Malia likely to gather her thoughts when she has a tough school assignment? (At Lincoln’s desk where he penned the Gettysburg Address.)

Mrs. Obama, who declined to be interviewed for this article, has reached out directly to supporters via e-mail and YouTube. And she has taken care in recent months to strike the right notes, emphasizing a preference for American fashion designers and announcing plans to use “affordable brands and products” as she redecorates the White House during this recession.

She knows that life under the microscope carries its perils.

After some rhetorical stumbles during the presidential campaign, Mrs. Obama was criticized by conservative columnists who accused her of being unpatriotic and bitter toward whites. Her approval ratings have soared since she refocused her image on her role as a wife and mother, but she still comes under periodic attack from conservative bloggers and others.

“There will be some people trying to pick holes,” Mr. Robinson said. “We’re used to that.”

Mrs. Obama's diverse team, which includes former Congressional staff members and strategists from Democratic presidential campaigns, seems equally prepared to hone her message or deflect attack.

Jackie Norris, her chief of staff, served as a senior adviser in Iowa for the presidential campaigns of Mr. Obama and former Vice President Al Gore. Melissa Winter, her deputy chief of staff, spent 18 years on Capitol Hill.

Jocelyn Frye, her policy director, is general counsel for at the National Partnership for Women and Families in Washington, a nonprofit that advocates for workplace equity. Camille Johnston, her communications director, worked on Bill Clinton's presidential campaigns and served as press secretary for two cabinet officials. And her press secretary, Katie McCormick Lelyveld, worked for Mrs. Clinton when she was first lady and was deputy communications director for Senator John Kerry's presidential campaign.

By contrast, Laura Bush's first chief of staff came straight from the Governor's Mansion in Texas and knew little about national or Washington politics, and her press aides have typically lacked national media experience, according to a former Bush administration official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

While many of Mrs. Obama's advisers do not have White House experience and may have initial difficulties navigating its bureaucracy, the official said the staff was far more politically seasoned than Mrs. Bush's team. "She's trying to get the best people, pulling in the cream of the crop," the official said of Mrs. Obama.

The new first lady will also have clear channels to the West Wing, counting close friends among the president-elect's advisers, including Ms. Jarrett and Susan Sher, who is associate counsel. They could be key allies should she choose to weigh in on policy issues she cares about. (She has said that she plans to leave the business of governing to her husband.)

Mrs. Obama has focused publicly in recent months on her self-described role of "mom in chief," settling her daughters at Sidwell Friends School and persuading her mother to move into the White House. She has made a point of hiring a chief of staff and a chef who regularly wrestle with the challenges faced by working mothers.

But the disciplined, no-nonsense executive also comes through.

While Mrs. Bush often hand-picked the silver, china and tablecloths for White House dinners, Mrs. Obama is more likely to focus on the broad themes of such events, delegating the details, Ms. Jarrett said. (Mr. Robinson said that while his sister typically cooked for her girls, she might be happy to delegate that for a while, too.)

She wants a home that is gracious, with 20th-century art amid the antiques, but comfortable for children. As a former community organizer, she also wants the White House to be more accessible to ordinary Americans, envisioning picnics that might include local children as well as state dinners.

"She wants it to be fun and to bring a sense of youth and style," said Ms. Sher, Mrs. Obama's friend.

Mrs. Obama also wants the White House to feel like home. She has spent her entire life in Chicago, aside from her years in college and law school. And when her closest friends prepared to hold a goodbye lunch in her honor, she asked only for keepsakes and personal mementos.

So her friends brought snapshots in small frames, photographs of Mrs. Obama with her family, colleagues and friends in Chicago.

Ms. Sher, who attended the lunch, said she did not know if Mrs. Obama had settled on a place for the photos in her new house. But she is not worried.

"She said there's a lot of room," Ms. Sher said.

Published in the National section on January 20, 2009.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES

Students Still Getting Mono After All These Years By CAROLYN SAYRE

January 27, 2009

This article comes from the Times Essentials: Reporter's Files, a series of articles by reporters for The New York Times that provides the latest news on the most common diseases and conditions. Part of a Health Guide series in which over 3,000 topics are described, illustrated and investigated, the mononucleosis guide can be found with at <http://health.nytimes.com/ref/health/healthguide/esn-mono-ess.html>.

In Brief:

Almost all Americans have been infected with Epstein-Barr, the herpes virus that causes infectious mononucleosis, by their late 30s.

Teenagers and young adults are the most susceptible; some 35 to 50 percent develop severe fatigue and other symptoms after being infected.

Some physicians argue that mono, "the kissing disease," has become trivialized and that trials for new drugs and vaccines are lacking.

It was only one week into the new school year and Chelsea Day, 13, was already feeling run down. Her head was pounding, her throat was sore and the typically avid soccer player was sleeping every chance she could.

"I was exhausted," said Chelsea, an eighth grader from Cleveland, who thought she was simply getting used to school again. "As soon as I woke up, I wanted to go back to sleep."

But a few days later her symptoms got even worse. The glands in her neck became swollen and the left side of her abdomen grew so enlarged that her mother rushed her to the emergency room.

It turned out she had infectious mononucleosis, or mono. Also known as "the kissing disease" because it is spread by close contact, the infection has become something of a rite of passage for many adolescents and young adults. Symptoms, which can last for months, include severe fatigue, fever, sore throats, swollen glands and an enlarged spleen.

Some 95 percent of adults in the United States have been infected with Epstein-Barr, the herpes virus that causes mono, by age 35 to 40. But unlike other herpes viruses, like chickenpox, most people who become infected with Epstein-Barr virus never develop symptoms. And because mono is so common, some experts fear the disease has become trivialized among physicians and the research community.

"Mono probably doesn't have the respect it deserves," said Dr. Robert Frenck, a professor of pediatrics in the department of infectious diseases at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. "Sure, it makes people feel lousy, but they recover from it. That is why resources are directed elsewhere."

There is still no vaccine or antiviral drug that can ward off Epstein-Barr virus or treat the resulting infection, despite stepped-up research efforts in the 1970s and '80s.

"People would like to have a vaccine and develop therapies for it," said Dr. Gary Simon, director of the division of infectious diseases at The George Washington University Medical Center. "But there are more serious things. In general, this is a self-limited illness; 99.9 percent of people will get better."

Chelsea said she "couldn't believe it" when her doctor told her the only thing he could do was give her a dose of steroids. That option, which specialists typically consider a last resort, alleviated the inflammation in her throat but did nothing to treat the underlying problem.

"The pain in my stomach and neck was unbearable," she said. "I could barely swallow or talk."

Fortunately, a couple of weeks later she recovered. But it was a tough month for her, as it is for the 35 to 50 percent of adolescents and young adults who do develop symptoms after being infected with the virus. Mono can cause college students to lose an entire semester of school or trigger serious complications in transplant patients or those with weakened immune systems,

That is why scientists like Dr. Joseph Pagano, a professor of microbiology and immunology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, urge researchers not to forget about this virus.

"It is a significant disease in the U.S., and people trivialize it," he said. "Mono got dubbed as the kissing disease, people laughed about it and now they don't even think about it. But it is anything but trivial for the young people who get it."

Physicians agree that the virus is a problem, particularly in transplant patients or those with compromised immune systems, but many maintain that there simply isn't enough demand for a vaccine to warrant expensive research.

"It's sad, but in the mind of big pharma, it is an orphan situation," said Dr. Hank Balfour, a professor of pediatrics and laboratory medicine and pathology at the University of Minnesota who agrees on the need for more research. "If they don't see it as a blockbuster, then they don't want anything to do with it."

Adding to the problem is that the mono virus is difficult to treat. Like other herpes viruses, the body never actually gets rid of Epstein-Barr, which resides in cells for life. So far, the only effective herpes vaccine has been against varicella, the cause of chickenpox.

"These viruses are very hard to work with in the lab," Dr. Simon explained. "It is much harder than taking a bacterial culture and seeing what antibiotics work for it. You need a drug that gets into the cells."

Still, some scientists think it is worth trying. Dr. Balfour, for one, is working on the treatment part, investigating an antiviral drug called valomaciclovir that he thinks may help patients recover faster. Last year, Belgian researchers reported the results of a midstage trial that found that a new compound limited the number of mono infections from the Epstein-Barr virus to 2 percent in the population that received the vaccine, versus 10 percent of infections in the control group.

"I am hoping this study will stimulate more research," said Dr. Balfour, who says there has never been a good clinical trial of mono in the United States. "I was almost booted off the stage when I worked on a chickenpox vaccine 40 or so years ago. And today, chickenpox is totally controllable. I hope that is the case someday with mono too."

Published in the Health section in January, 2009.

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THE TELEGRAPH

Canadian newspapers: Everyone gets an 'obituary' By Jack Meadows

In Canadian newspapers there no longer seems to be such a thing as a simple death announcement.

Published: 6:48PM GMT 27 Jan 2009

When I arrived in Canada 27 years ago, death announcements (as in the UK) consisted of three, four, or perhaps five lines. Photo: Getty Images

Leafing through the paper it used to be easy to slip right by the half page or so of "Births, Marriages and Deaths" announcements appearing somewhere at the start of the "classified ads" section. Now the "Deaths" section alone fills page after page and is impossible to ignore. This is not because more people are dying, or are reported as dying. The change is in the method of announcing their death.

When I arrived in Canada 27 years ago, death announcements (as in the UK) consisted of three, four, or perhaps five lines. These gave the bare details necessary to identify the person who had died and inform those interested of funeral arrangements.

But over the years what some papers now call "obituaries" started to creep in to replace those simple announcements.

In this context "obituary" is really a misnomer. They are still only notices, if considerably enlarged ones. The term obituary should be restricted to a piece written by the newspaper's editorial staff, or someone engaged by the paper to write them, of people important enough through fame (or infamy) to merit special recognition. These modern death notices, although called obituaries, are really only extended paid announcements.

It may have been disgruntled relatives fearing their deceased would not otherwise merit such attention or it may have been smart sales talk by a newspaper person which started the trend. For instead of those three or four informative lines there began to appear occasional longer notices. At first they were only a few inches long but as they became more common the length increased. Some now run to sixty or more lines and, more often than not, are accompanied by a photograph.

During the last ten years it has become obvious that this phenomenon has developed from being occasional into the norm. No longer, it seems, do simple announcements ever appear. No longer do next of kin dare to have anything so simple printed.

There is a suspicion that funeral directors played a large part in this development. Almost all such notices are entered in the papers by them as part of their comprehensive service to the next of kin who are deemed so upset that even if capable of taking charge they are delighted to have all such responsibilities taken over by someone else.

What once consisted perhaps of half a column of death notices now, even on a Monday, fills a whole page. In fact on Fridays and Saturdays both my local paper (guilty of the "obituary" description) and the Globe And Mail, our main national newspaper, (which still thankfully calls them death notices) have three or four pages full of such announcements.

Of course the wording is usually bland and dull. It is just a list of dates and happenings in the deceased's life. The tone is sometimes downright unctuous.

There is nothing about the character of the deceased, nothing the remotest bit critical, such as might appear in a real obituary. They resemble the kind of laudatory addresses given at a funeral by a pastor who never met the deceased.

It is also easy to visualise the discussions which went on about which photo to use. Should it be one from the individual's prime? Or should it be a recent one where he or she is at least recognisable?

To solve that argument sometimes one of each is printed. And those who served in the armed forces, even if only briefly and without any distinction, are often shown in uniform.

It is not cheap. At a cost of up to \$12 per line, plus up to \$200 for the photo, the average insertion must cost about \$600, with some running to over \$1,000.

Of course many grieving relatives must at the time think that it is worth it, to preserve the memory – however bland – of their dear departed. And I am sure the funeral directors encourage them, just as they are also trying to sell them a more expensive coffin and procedures and reception.

However financially strapped the relatives may be, in their distressed state they are bound to be vulnerable to such blandishments, to feel they have to "keep up with the Joneses", lest they be thought to have let down the deceased.

What makes it all particularly sad is that in a few weeks it will all have been forgotten, none if it will have mattered to the slightest degree. Perhaps a warm feeling by the next of kin that they have done "Joe" or "Mary" proud makes it worthwhile for them.

My wife's and my instructions are for an old fashioned simple three-line announcement, the simplest cremation with no ceremony or guests, and acceptance that the world will go on as if nothing has happened.

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THE TELEGRAPH

Tasmania was great, but we are happiest in rainy Britain By Peter Southgate

One former expat explains why he left behind Tasmania's open space, clean air, cheap motoring and housing, to return to Britain.

Published: 5:23PM GMT 10 Feb 2009

Australia, Tasmania, Ross, eucalyptus tree by road

Mile after dry, brown mile: Tasmania does not have a traffic problem but there is nowhere much to go Photo: Getty Images

'Let's rip those Brits to bits' was the slogan of a recent Australian government video, which featured a British "hoodie" abusing Australians, behaving unpleasantly and presenting a bad image of Britain.

The story goes that the video aims not to insult Britain but to galvanise young Australians into action for the 2012 Olympics, using expressions such as "light-hearted" and "friendly rivalry". Well, perhaps – or perhaps not. As a migrant my own experience of this rivalry was that it is not always that light-hearted or friendly.

Migrants go to Australia for various reasons, some because they see Britain as dark, cold, rainy and crowded, and want to live a sybaritic life in the sun.

If they go to warm states such as Queensland and Western Australia they tend to find what they want. Others have the decision to stay or go made for them, perhaps by their employer. Then there are those who go for family reasons.

We went there partly to care for an elderly parent and partly as a new challenge in retirement. Once our caring role was over we had to decide whether to stay on, and it was a hard decision.

Obviously there was the sunny weather, open space, clean air, cheap motoring and housing and a lack of pressure and congestion. But this is only one side of life in the "natural state" of Tasmania where we lived.

There are certainly more sunny days there than in Britain, but the summer sun is strong and burns if you stay out long.

When it's not sunny it can be cold and dark, and we found the long winter evenings hard to cope with, made worse by the low levels of street lighting, creating a very gloomy atmosphere. Without the umpteen repeats of Time Team and Midsomer Murders I don't know how we'd have got through some of those long nights!

Looking at the densely built areas of Hobart we had to remind ourselves that the state's population is under half a million.

Once out of town, things look very different. You can drive for hours on open roads with little traffic, and the novelty of this after south-east England, combined with cheaper cars and petrol, makes for an enjoyable motoring experience.

But as you cover mile after dry, brown mile of openness you start to realise that there is so little traffic because there is nowhere much to go to.

There are so few interesting towns, villages or historic houses, even though Tasmania claims more historic buildings than any other Australian state.

There are, however, some impressive coastlines and unspoilt beaches.

Living in Tasmania on British occupational pensions with the exchange rate in our favour made us feel rich, but when it started going the other way, we realised how vulnerable we were.

Also, we were rich because we'd spent so much less on a house than it cost in England and had change left over to invest.

But moving back from a cheap place to a more expensive one is another matter, and we met more than one expat who'd fallen into that particular trap and could not afford to return to Britain. They were also up against the well-known problem that British pensioners living in Australia do not get inflation-linked increases.

If your aim is to buy some land in the country and go fishing, then Tasmania is ideal. But remember that the term "country" means something more rugged than in most parts of Britain.

There are no pretty, manicured woods, hedges, fields or cottages. The only water supply you have is what little falls from the sky, and you may have to drive to the nearest village to collect your mail.

Your neighbour down the dirt road may well be rich and own a Mercedes and a BMW, but he could equally own a Ute (pick-up truck), two fierce dogs and a shotgun, and have six dead cars in his back yard.

Any move overseas requires you to adapt but we were, in truth, too old to change. We still related to British culture – with both a big and a small "c".

We were not alone in this, for anyone else we met with the money to do it made annual trips to Britain or other parts of Europe, and we knew that if we stayed we'd be doing the same.

But flying gets more of a problem with age, and even though the comfort on planes is increasing, the hassle on the ground gets worse.

Another reason for coming back was that as family ties in Tasmania had ended, those in England continued; if we wanted to be proper grandparents we would have to do it back there.

And then there was the constant "Pom-bashing". At first we tried to take it as a joke, but then we realised they were serious, not only in relation to sport, but in other areas of life as well.

Australians are a decent lot, but until some get rid of the chip on their shoulders about Britain, their country will remain "that place on the other side of the world".

We had an interesting four years in Hobart. We loved the State Library of Tasmania and the theatre, music, talks and exhibitions. We did lots of walking and we met some very nice people.

We'll always have a soft spot for the place and many fond memories, but we're back where we belong.

It's dark, cold and rainy now, but the grass is green, the TV programmes are good, and tomorrow we're off to the theatre in London. If it all costs more, then it's worth it!

• Send your submissions about life as an expat (up to 1,000 words) to the Weekly Telegraph newspaper at weeklyt@telegraph.co.uk.

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THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

What's Supposed to Happen in 2012? by Vanessa Tencati

Depending on who's doing the prophesying, the winter solstice in the year 2012 could usher in a day of celebration — or a day of chaos. December 21, 2012 has been marked as a special day since the time of the Maya, whose calendar first touted it as the end of a great 5,126 year cycle. Now, just a few years before the day of reckoning is upon us, the human race is forced to consider the possibility of an approaching apocalyptic nightmare. Only time will tell whether 2012 will be the end, a new beginning, or just a year like any other.

Image: Temple of the Warriors; Chichen Itza, Mexico **THEORY: The End of the Maya Calendar Cycle**

This is where it all begins. The Maya Long Count calendar comes to the end of a 5,126 year cycle soon—possibly on December 21, 2012. The exact date is debated, as is what will happen when we hit that date. There is no record telling us exactly what the ancient Maya expected to happen when this cycle ended and the next began. But some think they would have been worried about the end of mankind as we know it.

Image: Open Bible **THEORY: Bible Code Prophecy**

At least one interpretation of the Bible tells us that in the year 2012, God will destroy Earth. With the help of computers, Israeli mathematicians have discovered a supposed secret code in the Bible's text. Michael Drosnin, author of *The Bible Code*, also decoded the text based on the mathematicians' work. According to Drosnin's interpretations, comets are due to rain down upon Earth in both 2010 and 2012.

Image: Mathematical formula **THEORY: Terrence McKenna's Timewave Zero**

In the early 1970s, Terrence McKenna took a trip to the Amazon rainforest, where he experienced mind-bending drugs. Upon his return, he utilized the I Ching, the ancient Chinese book of divination, to determine a mathematical formula he called "timewave zero." According to his research, this formula predicts that time will form into tighter and tighter spirals until a "final time" is reached. When this happens, the laws of physics as we currently experience them will no longer apply, and the world will suddenly enter a new era with new, unknown laws. Originally set to occur on November 17, 2012, McKenna later moved the date when he determined the occurrence of the next galactic alignment: December 21, 2012.

Image: Drawing of Nostradamus **THEORY: Nostradamus' Prophecies**

The infamous seer's writings have been cited as predicting such historical events as the reign of Napoleon, the tyranny of Hitler, both World Wars, and September 11th. His writings also contain a number of end of the world prophecies which have yet to occur. His written quatrains prophesize everything from earthquakes and rampant disease to the coming of an antichrist and the onset of World War III. While not specifically pinpointed to the year 2012, many believe that Nostradamus' prophecies will coincide with the end of the Maya calendar.

Image: Planet in sky **THEORY: Rogue Planet Collision**

Author Zecharia Sitchin wrote of a 5,000-year-old tale of planet Nibiru, home to a race of beings called the Annunaki, orbiting the sun beyond Pluto. Although dismissed by many as a myth, some believe that because of an unusual orbit, Nibiru is set to disrupt Earth in 2012. Recent science has indeed discovered a planetary body that is slightly larger than Pluto and three times farther from the sun, named Eris. Despite assurances from NASA that Eris is not headed anywhere near Earth, followers of Sitchin's ideas fear that Eris is indeed Nibiru and will

follow a rogue orbit, coming close enough to the solar system that its gravitational pull could dramatically alter the face of the Earth, wreaking unprecedented havoc on our gravity and electromagnetic fields.

Image: Blue galaxy THEORY: Galactic Alignment

In the galactic alignment, the winter solstice sun will line up perfectly with the galactic equator, an invisible line that denotes the center of the Milky Way galaxy. According to researcher John Major Jenkins, this precise alignment only occurs once every 26,000 years—and the next one is scheduled to take place by 2016. Jenkins asserts that rather than doomsday, the galactic alignment will bring about a shift in the human psyche toward a more conscious state.

Image: Solar flare THEORY: Solar Storms on Earth

Approximately every 11 years, the number of sunspots on our sun peaks at what we call a solar maximum. These sunspots, giant magnetic storms which appear as dark splotches on the sun's surface, release solar flares that vary in intensity. The next solar maximum is due to occur in 2012, and if powerful solar flares manage to penetrate Earth's weakening magnetic shield, damaging radiation could wreak havoc on the health on humankind.

Image: Glass globe upside-down THEORY: Pole Shift Hypotheses

Due to a variety of environmental or man-made factors, the north and south poles of Earth are not entirely static. There are many theories as to why this is, and what this means. The occurrence of a pole shift, where the poles would move dramatically, could cause the Earth's crust to move over the mantle and core—like an orange skin floating around above the pulpy fruit. This could result in major tsunamis, dramatic earthquakes and volcanoes, and intense climate change as the continents are pushed halfway across the globe from their current locations. A pole shift of this magnitude was predicted by psychic Edgar Cayce in 1934, who said it would start happening in the early 21st century.

Read more: <http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/channel/ends-of-the-earth-2012#ixzz0W0w1FHGH>

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THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

How Earth Could End by Vanessa Tencati

If the apocalypse doesn't occur in 2012, that leaves plenty of time for another catastrophe to strike. Imagine these scenarios... the way some believe the world could end.

Image: Toy robots In the GRAY GOO scenario...

Out-of-control mini self-replicating robots would consume all of the matter on Earth in their endless quest to clone themselves. Not an actual "goo," the tiny nano-robots would move across the planet, replicating infinitely until they run out of raw matter to use. The Earth would be completely overtaken by these machines, and organic life would be no more.

Image: Black hole In the MAN-MADE BLACK HOLE scenario...

The CERN Large Hadron Collider in France, the largest and most advanced machine on the planet, would accidentally create a black hole on Earth. A giant particle accelerator used by physicists to study the universe's smallest known particles, it works by crashing beams of them together at high speeds, recreating Big Bang conditions. While the chances of this happening are slim, if the LHC were to accidentally create a black hole and it grew out of control, first the CERN facility, then the countries of France and Switzerland, and eventually the Earth itself would be sucked into its vacant depths.

Image: Dinosaurs In the ASTEROID IMPACT scenario...

An asteroid as large as the one that killed the dinosaurs would obliterate the human race. We are, in fact, overdue for another large asteroid collision here on Earth. If it hit, humans, as the dominant life form, would be in danger of immediate extinction—the asteroid would immediately vaporize all living things for miles around and send waves of destruction around the world.

Image: Hurricane above Earth In the GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE scenario...

Minor oddities like snow in June and shorts in January would give way to floods overtaking coastal cities, unending droughts, extreme hurricanes, melted glaciers, and acidic oceans. Quickened by pollution and the human race's ever-expanding carbon footprint, Earth's ability to support thriving life would diminish more and more quickly, until finally it would be uninhabitable.

Image: Crowd of people In the EXTREME OVERPOPULATION scenario...

There would be no food. No water. No resources to go around. The Earth's population has more than doubled in the past 50 years. If it continues to grow and becomes too much to control, sanitation would be more and more difficult to accomplish and people would live in squalor. Disease, starvation, and dehydration would claim the lives of the weak and only the strong would survive, attempting to continue the reign of the human race on planet Earth.

Image: Explosion In the NUCLEAR DISASTER scenario...

Tensions in the world would continue to grow, and war would become more and more sophisticated. There are over 20,000 nuclear weapons in the world today. If we experienced World War III, we would all be in danger of a global nuclear holocaust. When the bombs did drop, nuclear fallout in the form of deadly radiation and electromagnetic pulses would have immediate and lasting effects on humanity—and if enough of them were deployed, life would no longer be possible in the nuclear wasteland.

Image: Person wearing surgical face mask In the DEADLY EPIDEMIC scenario...

A natural spread of a new disease—or biological warfare utilizing existing ones—would devastate the world's population, as healthy humans would be decimated by lethal illness. We've seen it before: plague killed as much as one-third of Europe's population in the 14th century, and the Spanish Flu of the late 1910s is believed to have ended more lives than World War I. Even more frightening, it is now technologically possible to equip missiles and bombs with diseases like smallpox, against which much of the world is no longer immune.

Image: Queen bee with colony In the DEATH OF THE BEES scenario...

The 30 percent of the world's food that relies on bee activity would gradually disappear, causing food shortages and an inevitable struggle for survival. This is not as far-fetched as it may seem. Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) is an actual syndrome in which all of a colony's worker bees mysteriously die off, leaving a lone queen wandering around the hive. In the winter of 2008, 36 percent of the commercial beehives in the U.S. succumbed to CCD, the direct cause is unknown, and there is no known cure.

Read more: <http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/channel/ends-of-the-earth-theories#ixzz0W0wWsiFK>

17

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Early Human Ancestor Disproved? Christine Dell'Amore

October 27, 2009

Editor's note: This story has been corrected to remove the implication that *Algeripithecus* is or was considered apelike. The species has instead been seen as an ape ancestor (October 29, 2009).

A creature that could fit in your hand has long been seen as the strongest evidence that humans and apes originated in Africa.

But now scientists say 50-million-year-old *Algeripithecus* was not an ape or human ancestor and was more like today's lemurs, after all.

What's more, a new study of the 3-ounce (85-gram) fossil species could add weight to the idea that our earliest ancestors arose not in Africa but in Asia.

Discovered in 1992 in what is now northern Africa, *Algeripithecus* is considered to be the oldest known ape ancestor on that continent.

But the new analysis suggests the creature belonged to another ancient primate group, the crown strepsirhines.

Crown strepsirhines, which are not in the human ancestry, gave rise to modern-day lemurs, galagos, and lorises (see a loris picture).

Oldest Human Ancestors From Asia?

Asia is the only other known region where ape ancestors have been found. Whether apes arose there or in Africa is a "hotly contested issue" in the study of ancient primates, the study says.

The Africa theory rests heavily on *Algeripithecus*, now apparently exposed as a non-ape ancestor.

Other than Africa, Asia is the most logical ape-ancestor "birthplace," study leader Rodolphe Tabuce, of France's University of Montpellier, said in an email.

But evolutionary anthropologist Blythe Williams said "absence of evidence" is not enough to lend credence to an out-of-Asia theory.

After all, no one knows what evidence may still linger beneath African ground.

"It's quite possible that we haven't looked in the right places or that the sediments that would have preserved that portion of the fossil record no longer exist," said Williams, of Duke University, who was not involved in the study.

But she does agree that Tabuce and colleagues' research weakens the case for an African origin.

(Related: "Oldest Skeleton of Human Ancestor Found.")

Toothcomb Technicality

Algeripithecus fossils were first found in 1992 by researchers from France's University of Montpellier at the Glib Zegdou site in northeastern Algeria.

The French team has continued to unearth new, and more *Algeripithecus* fossils, notably skull fragments and jawbones, some nearly complete.

(Related: "Flying Lemurs Are Primates' Closest Kin.")

The jaw and skull of *Algeripithecus* lack classic features of anthropoids, which include monkeys, apes, and humans, according to the study, published in the September 9 issue of the journal *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*.

Instead, *Algeripithecus*'s jawbone has a long, thin formation, which the study says is "entirely compatible" with a "toothcomb," comblike lower front teeth used for grooming—common in strepsirhines, including modern lemurs. Despite the new evidence, *Algeripithecus* is still a crucial figure in early primate evolution—but instead as one of the oldest known examples of a crown strepsirhine, the study says.

Duke's Williams said the study's findings are helpful for scientists tracing how apes became human.

The new study, she added, does "focus our attention on Asia"—though it's impossible to say yet if apes originated there.

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THE NEWSWEEK

18 And a Life To Go By Krista Gesaman

The U.S. is the only country that sentences juveniles to life in prison without parole. Will the Supreme Court declare it unconstitutional? Nov 4, 2009

Iraq doesn't do it. North Korea considers it a cruel form of punishment. But in the United States sentencing a juvenile to life in prison without the possibility of parole is legal.

But on November 12, the U.S. Supreme Court will take up two cases involving juvenile offenders in Florida who claim their life sentences for rape and robbery violate the cruel-and-unusual-punishment clauses of the Constitution.

There are about 2,500 juveniles (ranging in age from 13 to 17) currently sentenced to life in prison in the United States. No other country in the world currently has adolescents serving this sentence, reports the Frank C. Newman International Human Rights Law Clinic.

"We aren't saying that all of these kid offenders should be let out," says Connie de la Vega, Professor of Law at University of San Francisco School of Law. "They should be given a chance to rehabilitate themselves. They should be given the chance to apply for parole, even if it's after 10 or 15 years."

The cases the Supreme Court will hear are *Sullivan v. Florida* and *Graham v. Florida*, involving cases of rape and robbery by a then 13-year-old and a 17-year-old, respectively. If the court determines these sentences are unconstitutional, Joe Sullivan, now 33, and Terrance Graham, now 22, currently serving life sentences without the possibility of parole, could each be granted a new hearing to determine a revised sentence.

If the court finds the sentence unconstitutional, it could give them the right to go before a parole board to determine whether they are fit to assimilate back into society. It's not a get-out-of-jail-free card, human-rights advocates are quick to note. Some juvenile offenders could still be forced to spend life behind bars, while others are set free early. "We don't let them vote or enter into contracts, but we are subjecting kids to sentences that are for a mature adult," says de la Vega. "I think the red flag is, How could we be the only country in the world doing this? Why are we treating our kids so badly?"

But some argue that juveniles should be forced to serve "adult time" when they commit serious crimes. "Most juveniles don't rape, rob, and kill. At some point, it has to be about holding people responsible," says Scott Burns, executive director of National District Attorneys Association, which filed a brief supporting the constitutionality of the sentence.

At least 135 countries have expressly rejected these juvenile sentences through their domestic legal commitments, de la Vega reported in a 2008 article. But besides the United States, 10 other countries have laws that could permit such sentencing procedures; however, none have juvenile offenders who are currently serving such a sentence. These nations include Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Belize, Brunei, Cuba, Dominica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Solomon Islands, and Sri Lanka.

Supporters of the sentencing claim life without parole is an essential crime-fighting tool—especially when considering the juvenile crime rates in the United States. The U.S. ranked third in murders committed by youths and 14th in murders per capita committed by youths in a 2002 World Health Organization study. The number of convicted juvenile killers in the U.S. puts it in the same category as countries like Colombia or Mexico, so some would say that we cannot afford to have the same, relatively forgiving, sentencing guidelines as developed countries in Western Europe. The conservative Heritage Foundation issued a report arguing, "If the juvenile crime problem in the United States is not comparable to the juvenile crime problems of other Western nations, then combating it may justifiably require different, and stronger, techniques."

Some adolescent offenders can claim more convictions than years they've been alive. By the time Joe Harris Sullivan was 13 years old he had already been convicted of 17 serious offenses. Sullivan was sentenced to life in

prison in 1989 after he and two other boys broke into the home of a 72-year-old woman and stole jewelry and coins. The elderly woman claimed that one of the suspects also beat and raped her, and Sullivan was convicted of the sexual battery. "It's astonishing that anyone could rack up this kind of criminal record at 13. This clearly isn't your typical 13-year-old," says Kent Scheidegger, legal director for the Criminal Justice Legal Foundation, an organization that pushes for stiff criminal sentences and filed a friend-of-the-court brief supporting the state's position.

At 33, Sullivan has been confined to a wheelchair for the past five years after developing a progressive form of multiple sclerosis. The stress and trauma of incarceration have exacerbated his health conditions, say his attorneys.

Terrance Graham was about a month shy of his 18th birthday when he was convicted of armed robbery while he was already on probation for a previous violent crime. In 2005, Graham was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. The Supreme Court will hear Sullivan and Graham's cases separately in order to determine whether it should distinguish the sentence based on the age of the juvenile. It could permit the sentence to stand for individuals like Graham who commit serious offenses when they are almost a legal adult, but it could prohibit life sentences for younger offenders in their early teens.

Neither Sullivan nor Graham committed murder. There are about 100 other juveniles in the country who have received the same sentence without actually killing anyone, de la Vega says. The court could find the sentence unconstitutional for non-homicidal offenders while deeming it appropriate for juveniles who are convicted of homicides. It could also hold that the sentence is unconstitutional for both homicidal and non-homicidal offenses. The science and psychology of juveniles could be factors in the justices' deliberations. Scientists say the brain and behavioral maturation of juveniles continues well into young adulthood, so adolescents should be entitled to less severe forms of punishment. "Compared to adults, adolescents are more susceptible to peer influence, less oriented to the future, more sensitive to short-term rewards, and more impulsive," says a study on adolescent development by Dr. Laurence Steinberg, professor of psychology at Temple University. "The development of the ability to stand up to peer pressure is something that happens over time. Just as people get better at walking when they are older, they get better at resisting peer influence," he says.

But should the science behind peer pressure, brain development, and adolescent behaviors be enough to get reduced sentences for juvenile offenders? "If this [scientific] theory is true, then why is it that only juveniles in our country are more inclined [than adults] to commit multiple crimes and murders? Is it something about the brain development of American juveniles or is it the theory that's wrong? Wouldn't this theory apply across the world?" asks Charles Stimson, senior legal fellow at the Heritage Foundation. Burns of the National District Attorneys Association calls these scientific claims ridiculous. "An elderly woman is raped and beaten, and trying to blame it on some theory that juvenile brains are different doesn't help the victim," he says.

The landscape surrounding juvenile sentencing has drastically changed over the past few years. In 2005, the court in *Roper v. Simmons* held the death penalty was unconstitutional for individuals who were under 18 when they committed a crime. The court referred to international law in determining whether the juvenile death penalty constitutes cruel and unusual punishment, and Amnesty International argues that the court should invoke these international standards once again in determining the constitutionality of juvenile life sentences.

In fact, the United States and Somalia are the only countries that aren't a party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which seeks to protect and promote child development and bans a life sentence without parole for juveniles. "Even if we ratified the CRC, it's not clear whether it would apply to the individual states," Stimson of the Heritage Foundation says. So even if the U.S. joined the CRC that would only ban such sentences for federal crimes; each state could potentially decide whether it still wants to uphold life-without-parole sentences for juvenile offenders.

Many legal scholars predict a 5-4 decision with Justice Anthony Kennedy as the swing vote, but it's not clear which argument the court will favor. The new dynamic of the bench with the addition of Justice Sonia Sotomayor also makes predictions difficult. "One of the things to speculate about Sotomayor is that she might be more conservative than [her predecessor Justice David] Souter because of her experience as a prosecutor," says John Eastman, dean of Chapman University School of Law. Ultimately, there is no single right answer. "Whatever is cruel and unusual punishment is what five of the nine justices say it is," says Burns.

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THE NEWSWEEK

Why Politics Makes Us Kill

By Raina Kelley | NEWSWEEK

The surprising roots of homicide.

Published Nov 5, 2009

From the magazine issue dated Nov 16, 2009

It's no secret that America is polarized. Now a new book makes the case that our relationship to government may explain rises and falls in another U.S. pastime: murder. In *American Homicide*, Randolph Roth, a professor of history and criminology at Ohio State, traces the history of our murdering ways through the lens of our feelings about those in power. (Click here to follow Raina Kelley)

Even putting aside our obsession with crime-fighting TV shows, we live in an incredibly violent country. That's been true since the early 19th century when we became the most homicidal country in the Western world—a title we still hold. As Roth writes, "two-thirds of the world's people live in nations that are less homicidal than the United States." And he does not hesitate to use statistics to an even more dramatic effect: "nearly 1 of every 200 children born today will be murdered."

What *Homicide* also does is upend much of the conventional wisdom about crime. Even casual followers of the news can recite the most commonly named causes of American homicide: institutional poverty, class envy, lax gun laws, gangs, drugs, and the TV favorites—jealousy, greed, and unrequited love. But none of those reasons accounts fully for either the fluctuation of murder rates over hundreds of years or the consistently high rates that have always been our country's burden.

Roth argues that how we see ourselves in relation to our government—fringe movement or ruling party, patronized or disenfranchised—is at the heart of many decisions to take another life. "What matters," Roth writes, "is that [citizens] feel represented, respected, included, and empowered." If an individual feels secure in his social standing, it's easier to get over life's disappointments. But for a person who feels alienated from the American Dream, the tiniest offense can provoke a murderous rage. (That's why easy access to weapons doesn't help.)

We accept as a matter of course that throughout our history "Americans were deeply divided by race, ethnicity, and religion," and as Roth reminds us, "homicide rates rose further when those divisions were politicized." Looking at the fluctuating homicide rate at various times in our history, Roth tracks the historical consequences of shifting power. After the Revolutionary War, murder rates soared as the newly formed U.S. struggled to absorb British loyalists. The end of the Civil War didn't relieve the bitterness many Southerners felt toward the government—and it shows in the precipitous rise in homicides in the rural South. On a positive note, Roth credits FDR for falling murder rates in the 1930s as Roosevelt's New Deal "increased Americans' faith in the country, their leadership, and one another." What also becomes clear in *Homicide* is that our nation's bruising fight for racial equality has given us cause to be suspicious of speech that pits people against each other based on the color of their skin. That has led to violence many times in our past: the New York Draft Riots in 1863, the riots after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and the attack on the Holocaust Memorial Museum by James von Brunn.

Roth's book also offers a warning about our volatile political rhetoric. Words can have real-life, even violent, consequences. *Homicide* is a vivid reminder that politics isn't just about winning—it's also about how you treat those who lose.

I doubt that President Obama has forgotten the firestorm that resulted from his campaign description of white rural Pennsylvanians as people who when "they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them...as a way to explain their frustrations." Afterward, Obama seemed to realize that such divisiveness might help him with his liberal base, but it wouldn't win over hearts and minds of the whole electorate. I believe it was then that Obama learned what Roth posits is the key to mending our murderous ways—inclusion is central to satisfying our multicultural nation. Despite the recession, crime rates have dropped sharply nationwide this year. Perhaps despite our political divide, we want to believe Obama when he says, "If the people cannot trust their government...to protect them and to promote their common welfare, all else is lost." But if people are still giving Obama the benefit of the doubt, there are signs we may be preparing for the worst: The Washington Post reported that gun and ammunition sales are up nearly 50 percent from a year ago. Here's hoping that Obama stays on his centrist path.

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THE NEWSWEEK

Nirvana Heaven, and Hell

By Seth Colter Walls | Newsweek Web Exclusive

Just in time for the holidays, there's new material from Kurt Cobain's band. But true worshipers may not be thrilled.

Nov 3, 2009

When a catalog is so noteworthy, and yet so pitifully small as Nirvana's—three studio records, an outtakes collection, an inconsistent box set of demos, and multiple live shows that duplicate most of these songs again and again—a passionate base of support turns into something like a church. And like any religious order, true believers protect canonical gospels from the Gnostic. In 2009 the Church of Kurt Cobain objected most strongly to the revelation that an "avatar" of the Nirvana lead singer would appear in the next version of the Guitar Hero videogame—which allows players to simulate performing their favorite hits in the guise of various, well, rock heroes. And not just an avatar, but an "unlocked" one, which could be used to play—perish the thought!—non-Nirvana material. "You can even make Kurt Cobain sing a motherf--king Bush song. He does it all while dancing like he's at a Phish show, accompanied by a mohawked skeleton drummer and an angel-winged, top-hatted bassist. It's nuts," the tastemaking Web site Pitchfork moaned, adding: "On the plus side, it's not like Kurt Cobain can kill himself a second time."

And yet, the Guitar Hero contretemps may not have been the most audacious provocation lobbed at the Church of Kurt in 2009. Before I can explain, you should know that this is, unofficially, Nirvana Nostalgia Week for music retailers. Both of Cobain's labels, Sub Pop and the David Geffen Co. (now part of the Universal Music group), are putting out new(-ish) material from the band, just in time for the holidays.

The more interesting, complicated, and—depending on your membership in the church—potentially problematic release is Universal's official issue of a much-bootlegged concert: Nirvana's headlining show at England's Reading Festival in 1992. In the year after the breakout success of *Nevermind*, Cobain's life had changed considerably. His marriage to Courtney Love was fodder for rumors of drug abuse in the press, and Cobain's health was an open question toward the end of the year. At Reading, Cobain tweaked the audience (and the press) by having himself rolled out in a wheelchair as he sported a wig and hospital gown. He crooned a line from Amanda McBroom's "The Rose," and then staged a collapse. After getting back up, the band blazed through a 94-minute set, playing most of their repertoire. The show instantly became the stuff of legend, with write-ups in *Rolling Stone* and the British press. (The rock magazine *Kerrang* has also placed the show at the top of its "100 Gigs That Shook the World" list.) But the performance was not without its quirks, either. Cobain, already bored with the popularity of his megahit "Smells Like Teen Spirit," started its iteration at Reading with a piss-take reference to the Boston hit "More Than a Feeling" before doing the song for real (the chord changes used by the two songs are similar, but not exact). Cobain also contradicted Dave Grohl when the drummer denied the rumors that this would be the band's last show, before pivoting once again and saying he was just kidding.

While you can see all this and more on Universal's new DVD of the Reading date, what's strange about the stand-alone CD version (which is also available in a deluxe box with the DVD) is how these moments have been excised. Also missing on this CD: a heartfelt tribute Cobain offered to his wife before debuting "All Apologies." Certainly economics are at play here: the concert was more than an hour and a half long, while a standard CD holds only 80 minutes. (And perhaps there was an impulse to avoid paying royalties to Boston for both the DVD and CD.) The early Nirvana cover "Love Buzz" also didn't make it onto Universal's CD version, either. But at 78 minutes, it's clear there was room for including a little of the between-song Kurt on the stand-alone disc, too.

All practicalities aside, these edits also have the effect of changing the entire flavor of the concert as it happened. In between songs on the DVD version, we see Kurt stomp off the stage to change guitars—without a word to the audience, leaving his bandmates to fill space by cracking awkward jokes. On the CD version, the band blazes through one anthem after another, efficient and, you'd assume, happy to be there. It's a Nirvana live show you could listen to while working out at the gym. But of course Kurt wasn't totally happy to be at Reading, playing for a stadium-size crowd. In his suicide note not all that long afterward, he took himself to task for not enjoying the big audiences enough. That he still was capable of raw onstage power while feeling personally ambivalent is beside the point. What's off-putting about this CD release of the Reading concert is how it hopes to make us forget that fact while we're sweating it out on the elliptical trainer.

Though my own membership in the Church of Kurt isn't terribly consistent, it seems to me that this futzing with the actual recorded history is more problematic than the Guitar Hero virtual scandal. A cursory look at our less legally constrained remix culture shows a robust—and often celebrated—desire to put Cobain in new contexts, at any rate. During the mashup craze of the mid-2000s, 2ManyDJs smooshed together Nirvana's totemic anthem, "Smells Like Teen Spirit," with "Bootylicious" by Destiny's Child, and no one much complained. (It was a bangin' combo.) Critical darling Gregg Gillis, better known as Girl Talk, has paired Nirvana songs with Salt-n-Pepa's "Push It" and Young Jeezy's "Soul Survivor" on his two most recent remix CDs without incurring Pitchfork's ire (in fact, it has been to their unambiguous approval). Viewed in that light, the Guitar Hero gambit—while not particularly appealing on an aesthetic level—doesn't really do anything that isn't being done (better) elsewhere. But if our nostalgia is going to be courted every holiday season with new, Nirvana-for-real tchotchkes—indeed, if we're going to have our latent desire for more Cobain tempted by what is arguably inessential material—why bother to leave any of it on the cutting-room floor? Give it to us raw and uncut or not at all.

That's the route Sub Pop, Nirvana's first label, has taken, in remastering and rereleasing the band's first, independent album, *Bleach*, which is also out this week. Famously cut for \$600 by producer Jack Endino in 1989, part of the reason the sessions cost so little was that the band recorded over unfavored takes in order to save tape. (Oh, the analog '80s!) That means there aren't any studio goodies available to tack onto this 20th-anniversary package. Thus, Sub Pop unearthed a previously unreleased, contemporaneous live show by the not-yet-world-beating band, and had Endino remaster that concert for use as a bonus alongside the new release of *Bleach*. The show in question is a tight 30-minute set from a Portland, Ore., club in 1990. Chad Channing, not Dave Grohl, sat behind the drums during this era, and his straightforward, enthusiastic beating fits the intimate-sounding scene. Overall, it's a charming document that any Nirvana aficionado should appreciate, as it includes a rare live performance of "Dive," and a couple of other curiosities. (It's also nice to have Nirvana's debut album remastered, so that it plays on your iPod with a loudness equal to the band's subsequent work.) It doesn't make any claim to being their biggest show, or the best anything. It's just a document—one that, when we remember how much we miss Cobain & Co., a lot of us backsliders will be glad to have lying around.

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THE BOSTON GLOBE

Kids' menus? Oh grow up!

By Devra First, Globe Staff | November 4, 2009

Restaurants offer chicken fingers, but it could be the small set want sushi or pho, fajitas or dumplings. Oliver Bentley is 8 years old. His sister, Anna, is 6. At Zenna Noodle Bar in Brookline, the two are waiting for their Asian noodle soups to arrive. In the meantime, they're eating fresh rolls with peanut sauce and clams. "They're interested in food," says their father, Chris. They like sushi, Mexican, and Italian. Anna loves lox, and she'll often have capers as a snack. As a baby, Oliver adored baba ghanoush.

Down the street at the Japanese restaurant GinGa, Jack Broomhead, 5, is gleefully sucking down salmon sashimi and shrimp tempura. And at Dok Bua Thai Kitchen, Hannah Siegenberg, 10, and her sister Julia, 17, are drinking tea and sharing a Thai appetizer of dried shrimp, lime, chilies, and Chinese broccoli wrapped in spinach leaves. Hannah's choice for where to celebrate her recent birthday: the Japanese restaurant Fugakyu.

Children's tastes have become more sophisticated. Yet look at kids' menus around town and you see the same dishes again and again: chicken fingers, grilled cheese, spaghetti, hot dogs (as if you need the list recited for you).

"It's a vicious cycle," says Nancy Tringali Piho, author of the book "My Two-Year-Old Eats Octopus: Raising Children Who Love to Eat Everything." "Restaurants have those things on menus because they think that's what parents want, and parents order them because they're there."

The obvious problem with children's menus is their nutritional value. Offerings are often high in fat, sodium, and sugar. "Most kids' menus don't even come with a vegetable," says Allison Lauretti, lead clinical psychologist in the Optimal Weight for Life Program at Children's Hospital Boston, which evaluates and treats children who are overweight. "When we go out to dinner, we have to order a vegetable off the regular menu to give to the kids."

This has started to change. In a survey of hot trends for 2009 conducted by the National Restaurant Association, nutritionally balanced kids' dishes ranked number 4 (right between organic produce and new cuts of meat), mentioned by 81 percent of the more than 1,600 chefs polled. Legal Sea Foods, for example, serves kids' meals with fresh fruit and vegetables, unsalted fries, and nuggets made from naturally raised chicken. (It was named the best family restaurant in a 2008 Parenting magazine poll.) At Aura in the Seaport Hotel, chef Rachel Klein has instituted Fine Dining Family-Style nights, where the food is made in house, down to the seasonal purees for babies. "It's not a freezer-to-fryer kind of experience," she says. "If you're going to feed your kid pizza - and more power to you, I know I do - at least you know it's being made and not out of a box." And at chain restaurants such as Denny's, Uno Chicago Grill, and Red Robin, parents now find some lighter options, whole grains, and fruits and vegetables on the menu.

But even when kids' food is healthier, it is often, as Gabriel Fortney, 8, of West Roxbury succinctly puts it - "booring!" A baked chicken finger is still a chicken finger. Chefs work hard to craft interesting food for adults. If a restaurant goes to the trouble of creating a children's menu, it should offer them a comparably interesting experience. In a lunch bag or at home, peanut butter and jelly is lovely. At a restaurant, peanut butter and jelly is lazy. It's time for kids' menus to grow up.

"Everyone likes chicken fingers and burgers, but they're pretty boring and always the same," says Connor Daitch, 13, of Norton.

"I think kids' menus are unimaginative," says Matthew Amster-Burton, who writes about eating adventurously with his daughter, Iris, 5, in the book "Hungry Monkey." "I'm not so much concerned about the health aspect,

but for me the fun of having a kid and being a person who loves food is sharing the food I love with my kid. The kids' menu says exactly the opposite. It says: I'm going to eat this and you're going to eat that, and we're not going to have a shared experience."

That's the heart of the matter: the shared experience, what eating is all about. But if urging kids to consume Japanese soba and Mexican mole feels too foodie-yuppie (fuppie?), consider how eating habits are formed. While some food preferences are innate, others are learned. "Kids tend to prefer sweets initially," Lauretti says. "The two most important predictors after that are exposure and role modeling." Then there's the behavioral reinforcement of giving children the same menu items over and over, accompanied by fun toys and crayons and games. "It forms the foundation of what they come to expect when going out for meals," Lauretti says. Parents don't want chicken fingers for dinner - not all the time, at least. And parents don't want their children growing up to want them either.

"I want my kid to eat healthy and have a really broad experience with food, flavors, and textures," says Klein. "I don't want him to be grilled cheese guy." (Her son loves Indian masala sauce, fajitas at Acapulcos, tomatoes with aged balsamic vinegar, and medium-rare steak.)

I see that thought bubble above your head, the one that reads: "But so many kids are picky eaters!" Let's think of it as discerning. They like what they like, as adults do. It's just different stuff. (Witness Elmo.)

Research shows that children prefer colorful food, Lauretti says. "Most restaurant food, like macaroni and cheese or chicken nuggets, has less color, yet they come to prefer that. Take a bunch of vegetables and make a smiley face out of them on the plate. If you serve a salad as you would to an adult, it's not going to seem so interesting to them." Many kids will choose apples over fries with their Happy Meals at McDonald's, she says: The fruit is colorful, and what they really care about is the toy.

Piho suggests restaurants serve smaller portions of the same things adults can order, perhaps with spicy or "super-weird" dishes toned down a little. "It needs to look good," she says. "But it should be a modified version of what an adult might expect a nice entree to look like."

Amster-Burton recommends variety. "Kids don't like to be presented with one food and told, 'This is one thing and you're going to eat it.' It's a tough position to put a kid in psychologically. It will make the most mild-mannered kid a rebel." Adults don't like it much either.

This is why sushi - all raw and fishy, the quintessence of what you might think kids would find "yucky" - can in fact be the perfect kid food. It's colorful. There's variety. It's fun to dip it in soy sauce. It's fun to pick it up and eat it with your hands. Less expensive but equally satisfying are Chinese dumplings, seldom more than a few dollars per plate.

Putting more variety and sophistication on kids' menus isn't just good for children and the parents who love them. It's good for restaurants. Rich Vellante, executive chef and executive vice president at Legal Sea Foods, notes that the kids' menu offers fun-to-eat popcorn shrimp, half-lobsters with the meat cut up, even fish-shaped cheese ravioli. "Instead of just providing chicken fingers and things of that nature, we felt strongly we should also offer items jump-starting children into seafood."

Klein, the chef at Aura, says, "Kids are our future customers."

Nonetheless, she believes chicken fingers are what kids want nine times out of 10. For now, she may be right. Lauretti says children often need to be exposed to a new food a full 15 to 20 times before it's clear whether they don't like it or are simply reacting to unfamiliarity.

So let's give the kids some options. Continuing to offer them the same menu items again and again is like using baby talk with a grade-schooler: unnecessarily simplistic. Just ask adventurous eater Anna Bentley, who stops using her empty clamshells as castanets long enough to answer a question.

"Anna, is there any food you wouldn't try?"

"Yes," she replies after a little thought. "Light bulbs."

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THE BOSTON GLOBE

Some people need help to kick their Internet and computer gaming obsessions By Elizabeth Cooney, Globe Correspondent | November 2, 2009

The trouble signs are all there. They don't sleep enough, they don't eat right, they've lost touch with their friends, and their school performance has dropped off a cliff.

Their worried parents bring them to the doctor, fearing drug abuse or depression, but the evaluations come up empty. A doctor at Children's Hospital Boston says something else may be at work. "We see kids who are just gaming, and they appear to their parents to have all of the signs and symptoms of drug use," Dr. Michael Rich

said about the seductive world of online games. "But in fact they are only hooked on the drug of electrons on their screen."

Climbing levels in games like World of Warcraft, where unlimited numbers of role-playing competitors play around the clock and around the world, can be habit-forming and disruptive for both adolescents and adults. Other online activities, from visiting porn sites to incessantly checking e-mail, can also interfere with work, school, and relationships. In a world where always being connected seems as vital as breathing, how much is too much? And does excessive Internet use equal addiction?

A debate already divides behavioral addictions such as compulsive gambling or shopping from physiological addictions to alcohol or other drugs. People don't die when they unplug from the Internet, Dr. Ronald Pies points out.

"A person who is hooked on a barbiturate, taking tons and tons of it every day, and is suddenly cut off from the supply will go into a physiological withdrawal, which could kill him and often does," said Pies, a clinical professor of psychiatry at Tufts University School of Medicine. "I have yet to be convinced that a teenager who sits in his room using the Internet for five, six, seven hours a day, as troubled as he or she may be, has a condition that can reasonably be compared to barbiturate addiction. Which is not to say there aren't people with a severe, pathological use of electronic media."

In fact, there have been a small number of reported deaths attributed to Internet addiction in Asia, where much of the academic research into the issue has focused and where many of the treatment centers are located. A 28-year-old Korean man died after not eating or sleeping during 50 hours of nonstop gaming, according to a commentary published last month in the Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine. A companion article said attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in girls and hostility in boys can predispose children to later Internet addiction, which they estimate affects 4 percent of children in Korea and 15 percent in China. A separate Stanford telephone survey of US adults found that 1 in 8 people consider themselves addicted.

Rather than "Internet addiction," Pies prefers to say "problematic use of electronic media," arguing that no one would make a distinction between Twinkie-induced obesity and nacho-induced obesity. But whatever you call it - and referring to the BlackBerry as a CrackBerry is just one term borrowed from the addiction lexicon - specialists say that when Internet use frays the fabric of daily life for adults or impedes development for children, something's wrong.

Online games can be particularly consuming because players are afraid of what they might miss if they walk away. In Asia, where gaming cafes are more common, people don't eat, sleep, or go to the bathroom for fear of giving up their seats. Other problematic use across cultures could be porn-site use to the point of sex addiction - another controversial diagnosis - or compulsive instant messaging.

"It's obviously to the detriment of their lives if they are instant messaging all day long at the job or surfing porn sites instead of crawling into bed with their wives" at home, said Rich, the Children's pediatrician who specializes in media issues. "Typically there's a loss of sense of time, so they're sitting down for eight, 10, 12 hours and not responding to basic needs."

The concern with children goes beyond their grades in school, Rich said. Developmental tasks of adolescents, such as learning how to control their impulses, can be delayed or derailed. Research in adults is exploring whether changes in the brain's reward pathway, akin to what happens in smokers and gamblers, might occur with excessive Internet use. Rich says problems show up predominantly in middle school boys, who may become socially isolated if they retreat to their computers rather than take part in after-school activities. Some do suffer from other problems.

"The kids I see for the most part, as far as I can tell, wouldn't necessarily meet the criteria of addiction, but would meet the criteria of problem Internet use or problem video gaming," he said. "It's the difference between an alcoholic and a problem drinker in the sense they probably wouldn't experience full-blown withdrawal symptoms, but they are 50 percent or 60 percent of the way there."

Parents should expect push-back from their kids if they enforce the cold-turkey approach Rich recommends as treatment, before reintroducing limited computer use in a shared room in the house.

"They need to press the reset button and start living their lives without the 'drug,'" he said. "Whether it's an addiction or not matters less to me than if it's affecting his or her function in the world and affecting his or her development and health."

Cutting anyone's Internet connection is a sobering thought. Dr. Jason Elias of the OCD Institute at McLean Hospital said many people with obsessive-compulsive disorder use the Internet to manage anxiety. Other people might use online gaming or social media sites to escape from stress. But we're all hard-wired to keep checking our e-mail or monitoring our Facebook pages, he explained, and it takes a conscious effort to set limits.

The concept called “variable ratio reinforcement” says that pressing a button and getting the same reward every time is less satisfying than never knowing when we might get a treat. That red light blinking on the BlackBerry might be spam or it might be gold. And often we can’t resist seeing which one it will be.

“We all seem to be really hooked on this technology of e-mail and BlackBerries and the Internet,” said Elias, who imposed rules on himself restricting how much time he can spend on e-mail.

Chris Latina, a computer science major at Tufts University, says he checks his messages or his Facebook page constantly.

“You feel the need to go back when you know nothing has happened,” he said. “I want to check updates on Facebook in five minutes when I know it’s inconsequential.”

He thinks his generation excels at being superconnected, with five tabs open on a computer screen, allowing them to balance “the nonsense and the truly beneficial.”

“I’d call it a controllable addiction, if you use it wisely,” he said.

Smart phones with wireless Internet capability make the stereotypical Internet addict locked away in a room obsolete, he said. But just because you can walk around checking e-mail all the time doesn’t mean social interaction is untouched, another Tufts student said.

Walker Holahan, a sophomore who is also a computer science major, has seen what happens when Internet access disappears. Two blackouts, one recently and one over Columbus Day weekend last year, knocked out electricity and Internet connections on campus.

“Everybody was freaking out because they couldn’t check e-mail,” he said, even though the very people they hoped to be in constant contact with were likely in the same boat.

The break had its benefits.

“It brought people closer together. During freshman year, it’s how I got to know my friends really well,” Holahan said. “It removed the space that the Internet supplies. It sounds lame, but if reality is shoved in your face, you have to deal with it.”

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THE SCOTSMAN

Guilty: CIA men who seized cleric off street

By Nick Pisa in Rome

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TWENTY-THREE CIA agents have been found guilty of kidnapping a Muslim cleric from an Italian street – and ordered to pay him 1 million in damages.

After a landmark "extraordinary rendition" trial, the head of the CIA's Milan station, Robert Seldon Lady, received the longest sentence – eight years – while his 22 spy colleagues were each given five years. However, none of the Americans was in court for the verdict and they are not expected to serve their sentences.

The trial centred on the kidnap of cleric Osama Moustafa Hassan Nasr, also known as Abu Omar, on 17 February, 2003, from a street in Milan. He was then taken to a United States airbase at Aviano, near Venice, before being flown on to Germany and then, finally, Egypt.

He was held there for four years before being released without charge. The cleric claimed he had been tortured while being held.

This was the first time an extraordinary rendition case had been brought to trial anywhere in the world.

Judge Oscar Magi took three hours to reach his decision. While he found the 23 CIA men guilty, he cleared former Italian Secret Service director Niccolo Pollari and his colleague Marco Mancini.

Prosecutors had asked that they be given 13 years and ten years in jail respectively, but the judge said he could not reach a verdict on them because of aspects of the case governed by state secrecy.

However, two Italian agents, Pio Pompa and Luciano Seno, were found guilty for their part in the kidnap and given three years each. The then head of the CIA in Italy, Jeff Castelli, was cleared because of diplomatic immunity.

Judge Magi also ordered all those found guilty to contribute to the 1m (£895,000) damages he awarded Abu Omar as well as a further 500,000 for the cleric's wife.

Despite not securing convictions for all the accused, prosecutor Armando Spataro said he felt vindicated by the result of the trial. "The verdicts have established the truth uncovered by our investigation," he said.

Defence lawyers had argued they were unable properly to defend their clients due to a state secrecy injunction obtained by the Italian government.

The trial was seen by many critics as a sham, as the Italians had said they would not be seeking the extradition of the Americans – but it did cause tension between the two countries.

It also saw friction between prosecutors and the Italian government, which obtained a Constitutional Court ruling that some evidence was covered by state secrecy.

During the two-year trial in Milan, the CIA refused to comment and its officers remained silent, until Lady told an Italian newspaper during the summer that he had been "only following orders".

Speaking from a secret location, the now retired CIA man said: "I console myself by reminding myself that I was a soldier, that I was in a war against terrorism, that I couldn't discuss orders given to me."

Joanne Mariner, of Human Rights Watch, said the verdict "sends a strong signal of the crimes committed by the CIA in Europe". Those crimes were "unacceptable and unjustified," said Ms Mariner, who was in the court room for the verdict at the end of the trial.

In Washington, CIA spokesman George Little declined to comment on the convictions. He said: "The CIA has not commented on any of the allegations surrounding Abu Omar."

THE MAN THEY KIDNAPPED

ABU Omar is a member of al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, an Islamic movement dedicated to the overthrow of the Egyptian government.

The group has been linked to the murder of President Anwar Sadat in 1981 and a terrorist campaign in the 1990s that culminated in the massacre of western tourists in Luxor in November 1997. As a result, it is considered a terrorist organisation by the both the United States and European Union.

After the Egyptians declared the group illegal, Nasr sought asylum in Italy. His seizure while walking to a Milan mosque was described by Swiss investigator Dick Marty as a "perfect example of extraordinary rendition".

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THE JAPAN TIMES

Music-thanatology can soothe the dying By SEANA K. MAGEE

Harpist hopes practice catches on in Japan

Kyodo News

PORTLAND, Ore. — There is no set routine or repertoire for the soothing harp music Sharilyn Cohn chooses to play for her patients in medical facilities or homes in the Portland area. Sometimes she even adds her voice.

News photo

Soothes the soul: Music-thanatologist Sharilyn Cohn plays the harp for wheelchair-bound Lois Braunschweiger in Portland, Ore., in this undated photo. KYODO PHOTO

The 55-year-old hopes the idea of using such music for end-of-life palliative care continues to gain momentum in the United States and spreads to places like Japan, where the population is rapidly graying.

"Music-thanatologists use harp and voice to address the physical, emotional and existential issues with the perspective delivery of music," Cohn said in a recent interview, explaining that the field is about 30 years old but has become better known in the last decade or so.

"We are watching them, we are listening to them with all of our being and then responding musically to what we are observing and to what we are sensing," she said.

As a certified music-thanatologist, she has intensely studied music, medicine and spirituality to carry out "vigils" for the sick who are in the last minutes to year of life. Tuning into their breathing patterns and factoring in their medical records, she then produces just the right sounds.

Suffering from Alzheimer's, Lois Braunschweiger was unresponsive at first to the vigil held in her home, but the wheelchair-bound woman eventually opened her eyes, lifted her head and wore a tranquil expression as the music filled the living room.

Once the singing began, the 87-year-old surprisingly chimed in with her own phrase, repeating "hear our prayers" seemingly in time.

Her daughter, Debbie Schulz, was astounded. Other family and medical aides were moved by the first-time experience. Some even cried.

"She has been talking about her mother and angels, so I think this was really comforting to her," Schulz said.

"She is stuck between here and there and this is a nice transition step."

As a professional cellist who thrilled thousands during her career with symphonies in Memphis and Atlanta, Cohn emphasized her music is not meant to entertain but to ease patients and their loved ones as the end draws near.

"When we are with a patient and their family it's not a concert, it's not entertainment and there's not applause," the Florida native explained. "Music-thanatology takes us back more to the healing arts aspects of music."

Just as the ancient Greeks played special music at temples dedicated to Asklepios, the God of Healing, the Benedictine monks of Cluny, France, later used it to perform rituals for the dying. Their chants are still used today.

By altering the harp's melody, harmony and rhythm, Cohn explained a "compound medicine" is unlocked and delivered in a way that is "medicinal and healing."

During a vigil at a Portland hospital for Deanne Johnson, Cohn's selections were barely audible above the ventilator and other loud medical equipment at first. Yet, as the session progressed, the 52-year-old, whose liver was failing, opened her eyes several times. By the end her breathing became less labored and seemed to flow in time with Cohn's sounds.

"My mom loved music and did not like hospitals. This was just a half hour of nice restfulness," her daughter, Genevieve Brown, said. "It helped block out the beeps."

Cohn and other music-thanatologists are increasingly in demand as word of their services spread since Cohn cofounded the organization Sacred Flight back in 2001.

After graduating from the Chalice of Repose Project School of Music-Thanatology in Montana, Cohn and a few classmates hatched a plan to form a nonprofit organization in the Portland area.

Working hard, they reached out to the community and have succeeded as greater numbers of physicians, nurses and other medical staff have grown to rely on them.

While the executive director believes it is a solid accomplishment, she said, "We still have a long way to go." Her sights are now set on achieving bigger dreams.

"My path is not only to do this work, but to help develop and expand the field, hence the birth of our new training program," she added. Another milestone was reached in July after the first batch of students graduated from Lane Community College's two-year program.

There are also glimmers of hope around the globe. Down under in Geelong, a certified music-thanatologist is single-handedly trying to promote training in Australia, while Cohn's American classmate in Tokyo is using her harp for therapeutic purposes and teaching others.

Cohn even envisions one day offering a university-level master's course for students from as far away as Australia and Japan. The instructor believes Japanese students, in particular, could enrich the program by adding Asian perspectives to end-of-life care.

"I would hope that the students would take music-thanatology back to Japan and begin the pioneering work there, helping to educate institutions and people and incorporate music-thanatology there," she said. "The use of music-thanatology in end-of-life care in Japan or any other culture could be beneficial to patients and their loved ones."

Robert Hugo Richardson, who first met Cohn and her business partner, Barbara Cabot, about seven years ago when he was director of the Intensive Care Unit at Northwest Kaiser Permanente, has no doubts about benefits to anyone in the world.

He watched as Cohn's sounds calmed the bodies, minds and spirits of countless patients. Some were delirious with physical pain. Others were guilt-ridden over illnesses, such as closet alcoholism. Still others could not recuperate and were removed from life support.

"Music finds someplace in the human spirit that other places cannot touch," he explained. "I think the harp, the Celtic harp, for me is not just the music, but the vibration and the rhythm and all of these things that bring peace."

Working closely with Japanese health professionals, Richardson believes the basic concept of music-thanatology could be incorporated into palliative care there.

"I think the music would have the same effect," he said. "I think it can work in Japan."

Chie Imaishi, a registered nurse in Oregon who also worked at Osaka's Kitano Hospital from 1998-2001, believes physiologically speaking the music has universal appeal.

"No matter who we are, in which countries, I think this works," she said, but stressed the importance of an individual's preferences. "So overall this works anywhere, I think."

The Japanese nurse first witnessed music-thanatology a couple of years ago at a dying man's bedside. With his family present, the leukemia patient's face seemed to become "less tense" and Imaishi also explained in an e-mail that she felt as if the sound "triggered (pushed) my most vulnerable part of my heart."

While her professional focus is on promoting ways of better teaching palliative and hospice care to health care professionals, Imaishi hopes to share her knowledge in her home country.

"In the future, I would like to become a bridge between the U.S. and Japan in terms of palliative and hospice care," she said.

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THE JAPAN TIMES

In Tokyo nothing is too good for your pet. By MELINDA JOE

Whether you're looking for a birthday cake for your beagle, or oxygen therapy for your tabby, you can find countless ways to pamper your pet in Tokyo.

Toru Sakuma with his bulldog Bu

Daylong companion: Toru Sakuma with his bulldog Bu, one of five dogs that keep customers company at the Copan hair salon in Nogata, Tokyo.

Japan has become a nation of animal lovers. According to the Pet Food Manufacturers' Association of Japan, the number of domestic cats and dogs in the country now stands at 26.8 million, up from 17.8 million 10 years ago. Many cafes and shops are now animal-friendly and there are several fun places for owners to take their furry friends out for a day on the town.

The menu at Les Deux Bleue in Toyosu's LaLaport shopping complex in Koto Ward reads like one from an upscale bistro — chicken-liver pate with a bountiful mix of organic vegetables, grilled beef and okara (soy pulp) hamburgers, apple pie with fresh cream and mint — except that's just for the dogs. "You can try it, but you'll definitely think it has no flavor," laughs manager Tatsuaki Matsumura, who explains that the dog-menu ingredients are the same as those used in the dishes for people, but with one notable difference: The dog versions are completely additive-free. "We don't use any preservatives, salt or sugar," says Matsumura. "Everything is fresh and healthy."

The cafe also specializes in elaborate doggy birthday cakes made with strawberries, blueberries, eggs and sour cream. Owners can personalize it with a message and request special decorations. These treats aren't exactly cheap — a medium-size cake costs ¥2,000, and a doggy dinner will set you back ¥1,800 — but Matsumura says they sell well. After all, for dog owners it's a small price to pay for a pet's happiness.

Perhaps after a lunch break at Les Deux Bleue, owners should pop next door to Ilio, where they can shop for designer snacks, fancy shampoos and jauntily colored toys. The atmosphere is one of unbridled cuteness, mingled with an air of sophistication. The shelves are lined with the latest in canine fashion — frilly petticoats, miniature knit jumpers and rhinestone-studded kerchiefs. Owners can even choose pet jewelry, from silver skull pendants on black leather bands to pink enameled roses on ribbons.

Most of the customers come with their dogs, which can be let loose on Ilio's "dog run" facility outside. For ¥500, any dog can roam on an open, grassy field overlooking the bay. Surrounded by a thin wire fence, the area is about the size of an Olympic pool, and there are places for owners to rest while the dogs play.

Ilio also rents dog carriages to LaLaport visitors who want to continue shopping around the complex but feel their pets need a rest. And at the end of the day, shoppers can also stop in at Belg Aube to unwind with a Belgian beer while their canine companions enjoy "Happy Lager" beer. The drink, which comes in a brown beer bottle with a kitsch label, is non-alcoholic and flavored with beef extract. The staff at Belg Aube admit, though, judging by most dogs' initial balking at the carbonation, the drink could be more fun for owners than for pets.

The relaxation lounge at Wag Style in Yoyogi Uehara, Shibuya, where dogs and owners can relax in separate oxygen capsules

Pet pampering: The relaxation lounge at Wag Style in Yoyogi Uehara, Shibuya, where dogs and owners can relax in separate oxygen capsules.

If all that still isn't enough pet pampering for you, it doesn't stop at restaurants and shopping. The Wag Style dog cafe and grooming salon in Yoyogi Uehara, Shibuya, features a relaxation lounge where both owners and pets can chill out in separate oxygen capsules. For humans, the treatment involves lying inside a bed-like hyperbaric chamber and breathing in pressurized oxygen. For animals, the pet-sized acrylic and aluminum chambers resemble giant PVC pipes with metal rims.

The cafe was originally a showroom for Air Press, a company that began importing oxygen therapy equipment from the United States in 2002. Air Press started experimenting with hyperbaric chambers for pets four years ago and is now manufacturing the machines.

Oxygen therapy yields anti-aging and stress-relieving benefits for both humans and animals, says company president Tsuyoshi Hirano. Hirano, who has been undergoing oxygen therapy himself for eight years, says that both his human and canine clients are happy with the treatment. "The dogs just relax in the capsules and sleep really peacefully," he says.

Wag Style's regular customers are mostly men and women in their 40s and their 50s who live nearby. They cater largely to dogs, but the service is also available for cats. A one-hour session for humans includes a short massage and costs ¥4,500, while a half-hour pet session is ¥2,000. Although Tokyo is Wag Style's only location, Hirano hopes to expand to other cities.

For most of Japan's dog owners, pet time equals playtime. At Copan hair salon in Nogata, Nakano Ward, however, work and play overlap. Toru Sakuma and his four dogs commute to and from work together every day.

When Sakuma started his own business six years ago, he couldn't bear to leave his first dog, a black-and-white bulldog named Bu, at home alone.

"If I left her at home, she'd be too lonely," Sakuma says.

The staff at Copan has since expanded to include two more people and four more dogs, one of which belongs to another member of Sakuma's staff. When the front door opens, the dogs rush to greet customers with excited barks — a canine version of "Irasshaimase!"

The pooches have become neighborhood celebrities, and people even stop by just to say hello to them. On the walls hang portraits of the dogs painted by local artists.

Clients with dogs are welcome to bring them, too. Small dogs are placed in the pen with the little dogs at the front corner of the shop, and large dogs are allowed to play with Akane, a large and active red Boxer, at the back.

"They're very popular," Sakuma says about his salon's dogs. He smiles and gives Bu a pat on the head. "The people who come here all love dogs."

For more information: Les Deux Bleue:r.gnavi.co.jp/g694103/ Ilio: ilio.jp Belg Aube: www.belgaube.jp/page/toyosu Wag Style: www.air-press.com/wagstyle/index.html Copan: www.shindo.to/

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