

Nifty Tidbits

By CHUCK RIGBY

In my reading about the early United States, I have occasionally come across the term, "The Year Without a Summer." This is usually used as part of the explanation why a family has moved out of the New England coastal area and ended up in Ohio or western New York.

Weather records really show that 1816 had an extremely cold summer. In New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Maine, the newspapers reported an almost normal cold winter of 1815-1816. March and April were colder than normal, and pastures did not start to grow, so livestock had to be fed from supplies meant for the following winter.

On the 12th of May, a series of cold waves began to hit the East, and frost was reported as far south as Virginia. Then the end of May showed a warming trend; farmers planted their crops, and trees began to produce blossoms. June 6 was the beginning of more frost, and most of the crops died in the ground, as well as newly shorn sheep in the pastures. Peach and apple blossoms were entirely destroyed throughout most of New England.

Another warm spell occurred during the end of June, but this was followed by more frosty periods in July, which was devastating to farmers, which then affected the city dwellers without food storage. The wheat and rye fields were still alive until Aug. 13-14, which brought more frost to the New England area. Very little fruit, vegetables, corn, and wheat were available for farmers or their livestock. This meant that little was available to sell in the towns to pay for taxes and mortgages. The few years previous to this had not been great, and some farmers already were having troubles. Consequently, farms began to be taken over by banks, and families had to leave their farms.

The whole effect was a major shift of population to Ohio and western parts of New York and Pennsylvania. A term, "Ohio Fever," is used by some historians for this movement, which was repeated in the 1840s, called "Oregon Fever." This, of course, was because of different circumstances. Europe also suffered during this same summer, with heavy frost and food shortages reported. These problems, along with a typhus epidemic, caused the deaths of approximately 65,000 people in Europe alone.

What caused this disastrous summer cold? One theory deals with an increase in sunspot activity, but most scientists lay the blame on volcanoes, as 1812 and 1814 were years of high volcanic activity in the Philippines and the Caribbean Sea. The most explosive eruption of the period was Mt. Tambora, sometimes called Tombora in Indonesia near Java.

This is in the same area that Krakatau would explode in 1883. On April 5, 1815, a series of eruptions began on the island of Sumbawa, which culminated in a massive explosion on April 10, completely blowing the top of the volcano away. This released huge amounts of dust, ash, and sulfur dioxide into the atmosphere, which, within months became noticeable all over the Earth. The tidal waves, explosions, magma and destruction of food killed an estimated 92,000 people, but the atmospheric debris affected sunsets and the climate around the globe.

In 1980, Mt. St. Helens erupted in Washington state, and an estimated 2/3 of a cubic mile of material was released. By comparison, about 12 cubic miles, or 18 times as much material, was ejected by the eruption of Mt. Tambora. Dust and ash from Mt. St. Helens created much hardship and crop damage, but it was minor compared to the eruption of Mr. Tambora in 1815.

Sports Challenge By WALTER BRANCH

1. What male tennis player became the youngest ever to reach the number four world ranking?
2. What college did 1981's Heisman Trophy winner George Rogers play for?
3. What former Swedish tennis great fell for Italian singer Loredana Berte in 1988?
4. How many world diving championships did Greg Louganis win?
5. What number was on Billy Martin's jersey when he was fired for the fifth time as Yankee skipper?
6. Which hand did Boomer Esioner throw footballs with?
7. Who became the world's number one women's tennis player on August 17, 1987?
8. What American League West baseball team finished the 1988 season 33 1/2 games behind the Oakland A's?
9. What linebacker was the New York Giants' first choice in the 1981 NFL draft? Sports Challenge Answers: 1. Andre Agassi; 2. The University of South Carolina; 3. Bjorn Borg; 4. Five; 5. 1; 6. The left; 7. Steffi Graf; 8. The Texas Rangers; 9. Lawrence Taylor.

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MORE POWER! - At least two stories were told about how a four-wheel-drive pickup truck reached the top of a large dirt pile off Rockydale Road. However the vehicle reached its location, it must have been impressive.

Help available for chronic pain despite lack of info

By CAROL MISRACK
Oregon Dept.
of Human Services

Some people have trouble believing this:

Thousands of Oregonians suffer from a chronic condition for which most doctors still won't prescribe medication and insurance companies often won't pay.

The condition is called chronic pain.

I remember speaking about chronic pain several years ago to a group of physicians and one stood and said, "This is bunk."

Although attitudes are changing, too many physicians still won't treat chronic pain even though it afflicts millions of Americans.

Recently, I read a 50-state University of Wisconsin report that rated the states on the quality of pain care. Oregon got a C+ and, to illustrate that this is a serious national issue, that put our state among the 20 "best" states. The researchers gave no state an A.

The good news for pain sufferers is that 85 percent of chronic pain can be successfully managed in a primary-care doctor's office. But probably as little as 10 to 20 percent is.

I understand. Although chronic pain is my job, I've also experienced it. After cancer-related chemotherapy treatments, I was in pain for 18 months, at times so severe that I could not work. For people in such circumstances, pain is real.

It is so real, in fact, that chronic pain is every bit as much a disease as diabetes or heart disease, for example.

If you or someone you know is experiencing chronic pain, I urge you to consider these tips:

*Find a physician you can talk to. If he or she says something you disagree with, address it.

*Work with your doctor as a team. Develop a workable treatment plan that gives the doctor and you a role in managing your pain.

*Be factual. Be able to tell your doctor when and under what circumstances you experience pain, what medications you're taking, the pain's 1-10 intensity.

*Learn as much as you can from credible resources in magazines, Web sites and resources in your library.

*Identify community resources such as water-aerobics, low-impact exercise and nutrition classes; find out about alternative

strategies such as yoga, acupuncture and massage.

Some physicians fear state Board of Medical Examiners (BME) and federal Drug Enforcement Agency sanctions.

But they can address these concerns by following BME requirements such as accurate record-keeping, having contracts with patients, and advising patients of potential risks. My office offers tips to help doctors spot drug-seeking behavior, and particularly those wanting opiates.

Statistics also show that opiate addiction is smaller concern than some news coverage suggests, and should not be confused with dependence. Those in pain become dependent on medication -- just as a diabetic becomes dependent on insulin -- but if the pain disappears, in most cases they lose their need for the medication.

There's cause for encouragement. Nurses working on the front lines are on board. The Pain Society of Oregon is active. And a new state law will require all physicians to enroll in pain-related continuing medical education beginning in 2006, although the bill passed by a single vote.

The legislator who cast the deciding vote said, "I've seen too many people die in pain. I vote 'aye'." My hope is that more medical professionals will "vote" that way, too.

(Carol Misrack, a registered nurse, is pain management coordinator in the Oregon Dept. of Human Services.)

Reducing stress? Yes ...

Help to reduce stress may be as close as a friend or spouse.

But if a you think that you or someone you know may be under more stress than just dealing with a passing difficulty, it may be helpful to talk with a doctor, spiritual adviser, or employee assistance professional.

They may suggest a visit with a psychiatrist, psychologist, social

worker, or other qualified counselor.

To help reduce stress, consider the following:

*List aspects which cause stress and tension in your life.

*How does this stress and tension affect you, your family and your job?

*Can you identify the stress and tensions in your life as short- or long-term?

For resources, phone (800) 969-NMHA.

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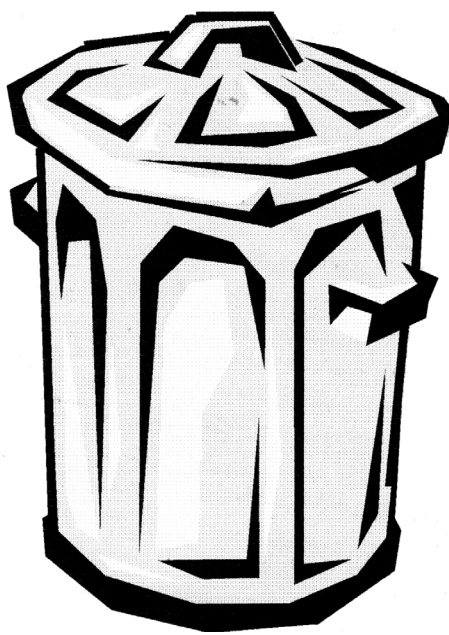
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