

Is That So?

By EUGENE BURNS
Ranger-Naturalist

Bairut — Lebanon's valley of El Beqa is a beautiful place but I shall always remember it because of the necklace of bezoar stones a Mohammedan tried to sell me.

The stones ranged from a half-inch diameter to golf ball size, and the owner swore they had the special merit of coming from wild Persian goats. For that reason, plus their carved cabalistic designs, whoever wore it would never have to worry about

bezoars up to 150 years ago, especially those from the Orient.

But the principal reason for the cures claimed for bezoars in the past, as well as in much of the East today, must be due to something other than astrigent action. In fact, since many cures were for illness in which astrigent action would be of no benefit whatever, the success must be due to the faith of the patient in the remedy.

And very possibly in the case of bezoars from goats, the patient felt the stone was acting like a scapegoat and carrying off his disease.

(Released by McClure Newspaper Syndicate)

Free: By special arrangement with the editors of the Encyclopedia Americana, my panel of judges will award each week to the reader who sends me the best true-life nature adventure, the best nature observation, or the best question on nature and wildlife, a complete 30-volume set of this world-famous reference work in a handsome Sealcraft binding. Each week new submissions will be considered. Sorry, I simply can't answer your many friendly letters. Please address your letter to: Is That So? c/o Medford Mail Tribune, Box 1069, San Francisco, Calif.

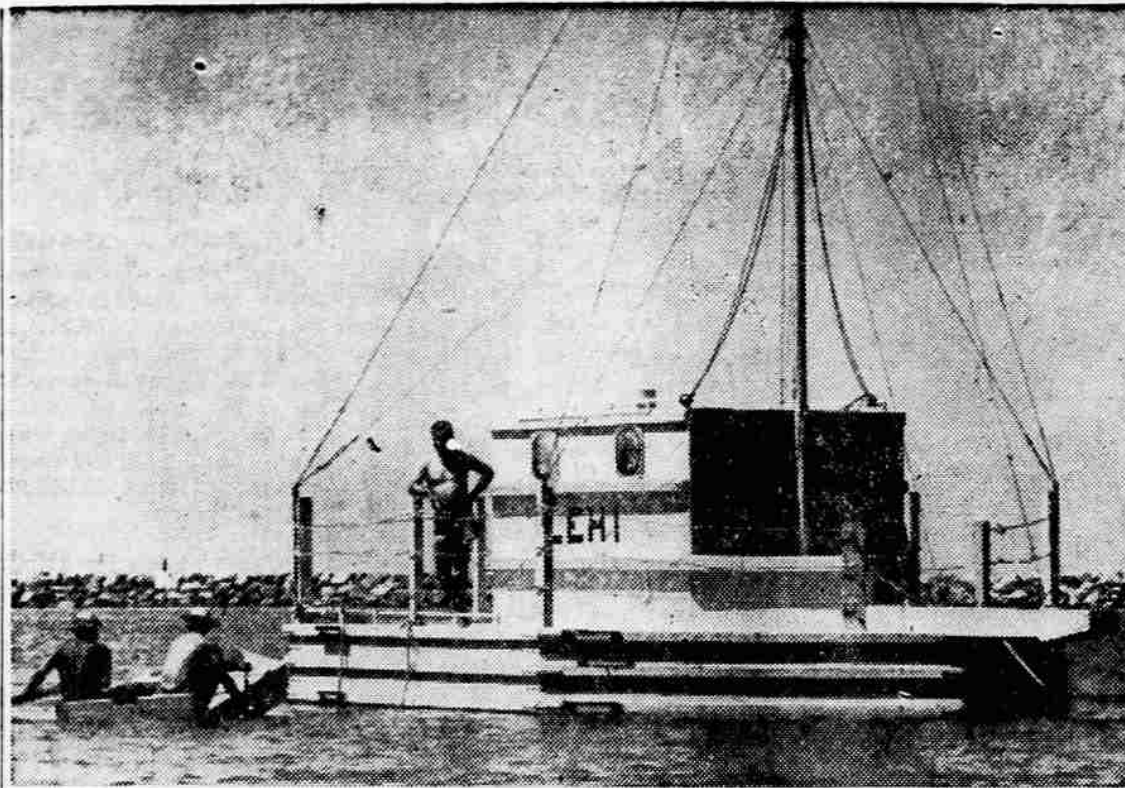
Regardless of his story, the bezoar stones had probably never been nearer Persia than the abdomens of the goats or sheep of Lebanon.

A bezoar is like a hairball but doesn't necessarily have any hair. Its center may be composed of almost any kind of substance foreign to the animal and around which organic materials, acted upon by internal acids and other secretions, form in a resinous, almost concrete mass.

A bezoar that I saw from a Peruvian llama was composed almost entirely of llama wool, held together by a sort of cement, mainly calcium phosphate. It was as large as a sizeable orange. Another, from a leopard, was of a rather soft consistency, like a hairball. Our domestic cats sometimes cough up at home.

The bezoars of the Near and Middle East, however, apparently tend to have less hair and to consist generally of concentric layers of a stone-like substance. In the case of those from wild Persian goats, chemical analysis has shown them to have an amount of ellagic acid, a crystalline type that can be produced from oak bark and gallic acid.

Very likely the astrigent action of the acid is the sole physical cause for the high value our ancestors placed on



HERE WE GO AGAIN—The 12-ton raft Lehi IV, looking much like its disaster-stricken predecessors, makes a trial float at Redondo Beach, Calif. Capt. Devere Baker, the Lehi's owner has been trying for some time to float a raft to Hawaii to prove his theories on ocean currents. Baker hopes to drift the raft to Hawaii, and then from the Persian Gulf to South America. Previous attempts have been unable to get away from the California coast.

Navy Barge Oldest Boat in Service

Washington — (UPI) — The Navy's oldest boat in service is an unnamed 50-foot barge now flying the flag of Rear Adm. Harold Davis Baker, commandant of the Potomac River Naval command.

No portion of the all-wood hull structure has been removed or replaced because of deterioration or mechanical damage since the barge was put in service 46 years ago. It shows no signs of decay or rot and is still seaworthy.

It has gone to battle in three wars aboard the battleships Louisiana, Utah, Florida, Arkansas and New York. And, the Navy says, it will continue in service as long as it is so sound and trim.

It was built in 1912 by the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company of Bristol, R.I., at a cost of \$12,000.

The cedar planking, white oak keel, stem, frames, timbers and deck beams, the Oregon pine clamps and barge stringers, and the teak deck and cabin are still showing no signs of wear and tear.

The original gasoline en-

gines, however, were replaced by 105-horsepower diesels. Admiral Baker is its sixth commander.

Students Practice At Restaurant

Grand Rapids, Mich. — (UPI) — Cafe-owner Ralph Arriaga speaks English but not when Grand Rapids high school students enter his restaurant.

Students from various high schools practice their classroom Spanish at Arriaga's place by ordering meals and conducting dinner-table conversations in Spanish.

The student who skips his studies and can't come up with the right words or lapses into English while trying to order gets a smiling "no comprendo" from the waitress.

"Almost all conversations in Spanish and, naturally, all orders for meals must be spoken in Spanish—on order of the teacher who accompanies the class," said Arriaga.

Complex Molecule Said Disease Cause

Madison, Wis. — (UPI) — Discovery of a complex organic molecule has led a University of Wisconsin biochemist to believe that it may be a cause of plant wilt, including Dutch elm disease and oak wilt.

Prof. Mark A. Stahmann said the plant disease, fusarial wilt, is caused indirectly by the Fusarium group of fungi.

The molecules, called pectic enzymes, cause clots in the plant's "blood stream," he said. This results in wilting and the plant's death.

Stahmann said crude extracts and tissue fluids from plants which resist fusarial wilt slows the growth of the fungi.

Further tests with the parasitic fungi on host tissues may be "valuable in screening or detecting resistant varieties of plants," he said.

The name "Quakers," referring to the Society of Friends, is said to have originated with an English magistrate arraighing the founder.

The Family Council

Editor's note: The Family Council consists of a judge, a psychiatrist, three clergymen, a newspaper editor, a women's editor and two writers. Each article is a summary of an actual report. The Family Council does not give advice; it merely reports on problems that have been dealt with by responsible agencies and counselors.

Karen S. — Margaret made trouble in our office.

Margaret M. — Cheating galls me.

Karen S. — I am 19 and work in a large office with a lot of girls of about my own age. Recently I brought in one of my best friends to work here, too.

Margaret has always been the kind of girl who gets into the middle of every mix-up and sure enough, that's what happened here. Some of the girls were doing something wrong in order to avoid an extra amount of work. Margaret went and told the supervisor. She got them in a lot of trouble.

Now everyone is sore at me. Nobody speaks to me because I am Margaret's friend. Margaret says she did the right thing and I shouldn't even want to be friends with with those girls, but I used to have a lot of fun with them and I miss them.

Margaret M. — I am two years older than Karen and a lot more experienced in many ways. I can see that if Karen went on being friends with those girls, she would get to be like them—irresponsible and dishonest. She is a very sweet kid and I would hate to see that happen.

I was brought up to be honest and sincere and when I see cheating it really galls me. Those other girls were getting good money for handling their job, but they just refused to give service in return.

The way Karen treats me now I can see she just doesn't want me around and is sorry she ever brought me here. But believe me, the supervisor isn't sorry I came here. She is grateful to Karen.

The Council—Margaret appears to have appointed herself general supervisor of the morals of everyone around her. She may congratulate herself on her virtue, but she can't expect others to like her when she takes on the role of the office informer.

Honesty and sincerity are certainly great assets in the working world and Margaret's virtues and abilities would certainly be recognized by her superiors, but this does not justify her spying on fellow-employees.

The supervisor is undoubtedly grateful for the information she got, but we wonder whether she is greatly impressed with Margaret as a person.

We believe Karen made a mistake in bringing Margaret into her office. One of the satisfactions of a job is in finding new relationships, often quite different from the ones experienced in the past.

Karen has a right to get to know and understand the girls she works with—even if their characters are not the best. She must discover her own values and stick by them. She has a right to make mistakes—and to remedy them in her own way.

If she cannot undo the damage to the relationship with the girls in her office, Karen ought to try to find another job.

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TV Quiz Show Heads Into Fourth Tie Game

New York — (UPI) — Quiz queen Elfrida von Nordoff headed into a fourth tie game with school teacher Robert Leicester Monday night in a close battle in which she set her sights on a \$295,500.

Miss von Nordoff, 32, has won \$253,500 on the quiz show "Twenty-One" to become the highest money winner on television. She and Leicester now are tied 10-10 in a fourth game which will be played off next week. She could boost her winnings by \$42,000 by defeating him.

Cornerstone of the U.S. Capitol was laid in 1793.

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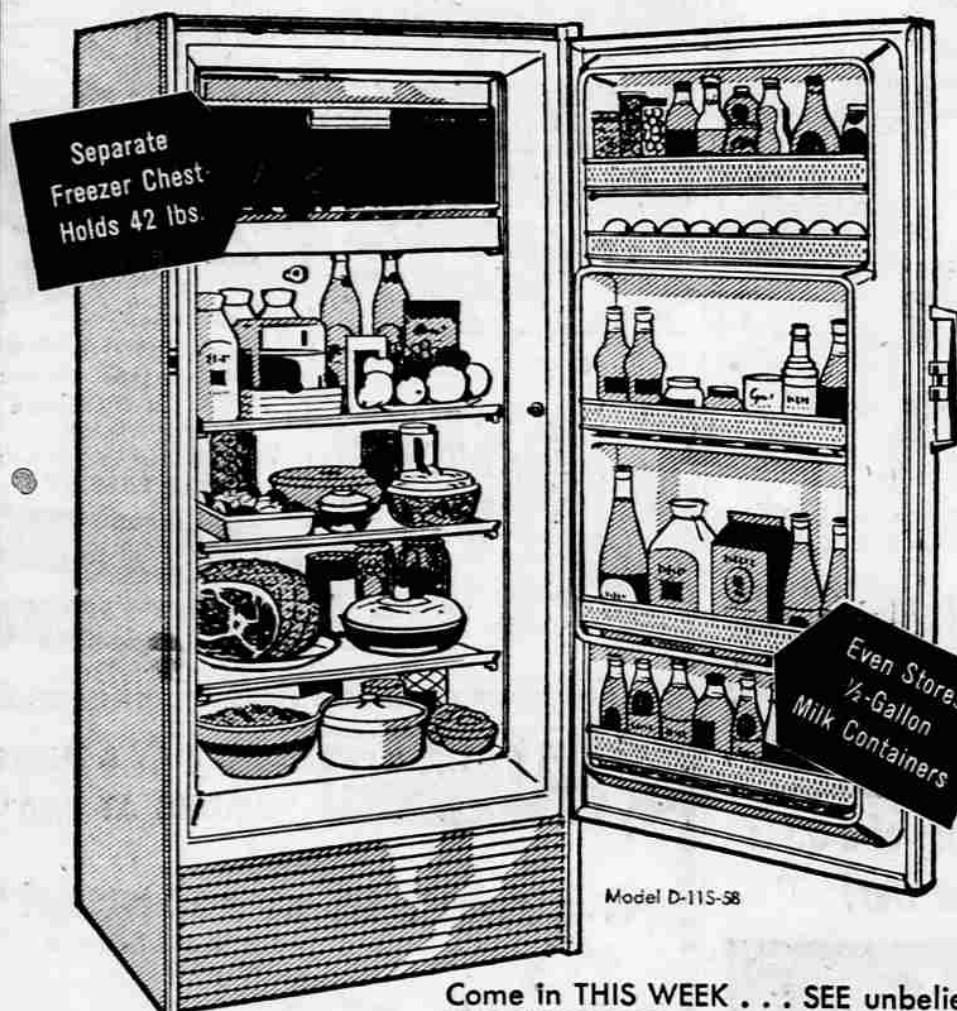
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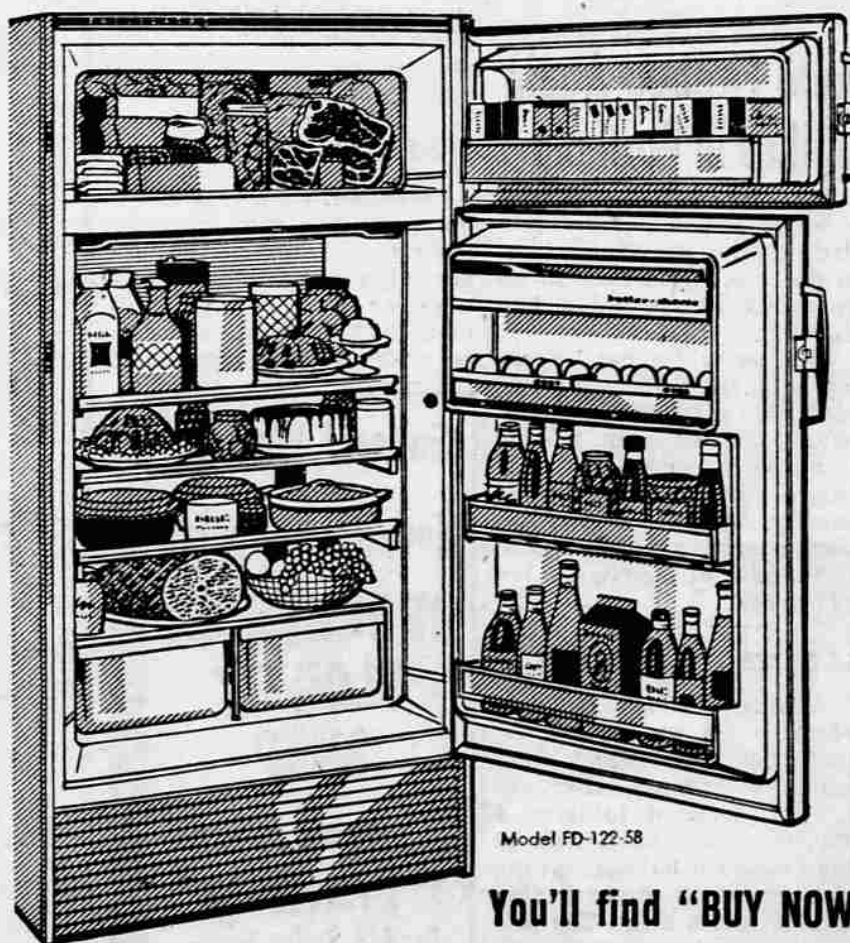
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