

The Medical Roundup

by *Walter Alvarez*

Emeritus Consultant in Medicine, Mayo Clinic
Emeritus Professor of Medicine, Mayo Clinic

Risks of Transfusions

Many people write to tell me that because they had a little anemia or were going to have an operation, their doctor gave them one or two transfusions. Perhaps two months later they came down with a severe form of hepatitis, or inflammation of the liver. In a rare case the person nearly lost his life because of it. The danger with transfusions is that so many persons carry in their blood the virus of hepatitis, and blood banks have no test that will enable them to weed out all these people.

A while ago several experts in this field begged doctors never to order a transfusion unless this is definitely necessary to save life. I am sure no doctor will ever transfuse me just to show his zeal in treating me. I will never accept a transfusion unless I greatly need it in order to recover. We doctors sometimes forget the injunction of the great Hippocrates who practiced 450 years before Christ. He said, "While



Dr. Alvarez

trying to help a patient see to it that you don't do him any harm."

I recently read in the Journal of the American Medical Association that Drs. W. A. Sayman, R. L. Gault, S. A. Star and J. G. Allen have found that if they will take just the plasma or fluid part of the blood, and keep it in a warm room for six months, the bad virus will die out. As a result, in the last group of cases of persons studied for months after they had an injection of this "stored plasma," there was no case of hepatitis. This represents a great achievement.

Diseases of Animals

In a recent issue of Science News Letter there is an interesting article by Benita Tall who says that diseases affecting animals cost American livestock owners more than \$2 billion each year. This averages out to more than \$11 for each man, woman and child in the country. About 10 per cent of all farm animals die annually as the result of disease or parasitism. Most of us who own pets know that dogs and cats and birds tend every so often to become ill, and to need the help of a veterinary physician. Few people realize how ter-

ribly many wild animals suffer from parasites of several kinds - which literally eat the animal alive.

A point I like to make in this column - if only for the benefit of the antivivisectionists most of whom hate all medicine and all medical research of any kind - is that the research laboratories which they so despise and would so love to close up, are constantly doing much to reduce the great suffering of domestic animals.

If antivivisectionists really cared much about animals, they would be supporting the work of the many research laboratories in which efforts are being made to find sera and vaccines and medicines which will save our millions of animals from suffering and disease. Let us all remember also that any discovery that is ever made by a veterinary researcher is likely to be found of great use to man, and every time a doctor of medicine discovers a new drug, such as penicillin, his friend, the veterinary doctor, immediately finds it of tremendous value in saving the lives of dogs and cats, cows, sheep, chickens and turkeys.

Good Sense in a French Judge

I recently read in the American Medical Association "News" of what I think was good sense in a French judge. An aging American woman brought suit for \$119,000 dam-

ages against a Paris plastic surgeon who, at her request, had tried to iron out her facial wrinkles, and the bags under her eyes; also to give her breasts a more youthful line and an upward tilt. She admitted that the results in her face were excellent, but she still doubted if her breasts looked quite like those of Venus de Milo. The wise judge ruled that "at a certain age, one should not ask the impossible." He found for the doctor and assessed the costs to the American woman.

What a wise judge, and how I wish there were more like him in this country. In this country, most plastic surgeons whom I know refuse to try to

beautify an elderly woman who really doesn't look bad. Why? Because she expects too much; she wants to be ravishing, and hence she is likely to be dissatisfied with any result she gets. The woman whom a plastic surgeon loves to operate on and help is one who, because of an auto accident or a burn, looks so bad, that any improvement which he can make in her appearance will be gratefully received.

Record of Unconsciousness
In the American Medical Association "News" is the story of a very wealthy woman who has just died after 11 years of lying unconscious and paralyzed after a bad stroke. This is said to be the longest

period on record of such unconsciousness. Doubtless she was kept alive by strenuous and expert medical care. I wonder how many persons are asking why she was kept alive so long. What purpose did it serve?

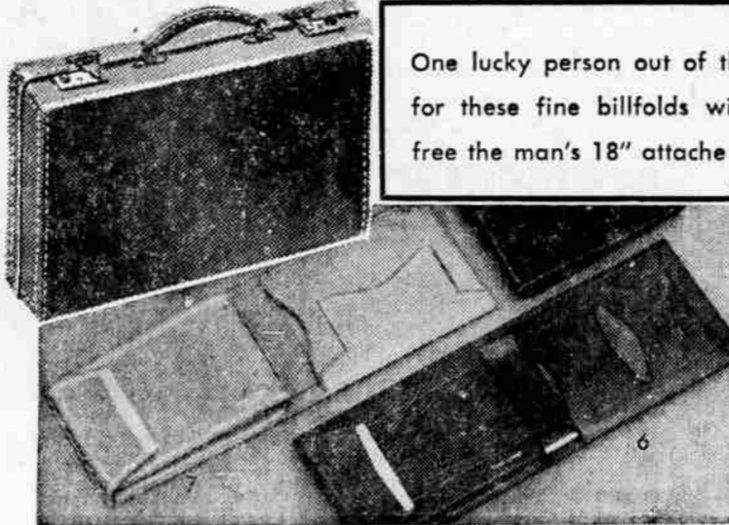
Dr. Alvarez' new booklet on menopause and hysterectomy may be obtained by sending 25 cents and a large, stamped, self-addressed, envelope with your request to Dr. Walter C. Alvarez, Dept. MMT, The Register and Tribune Syndicate, Box 957, Des Moines 4, Iowa. (Released by The Register and Tribune Syndicate, 1959)

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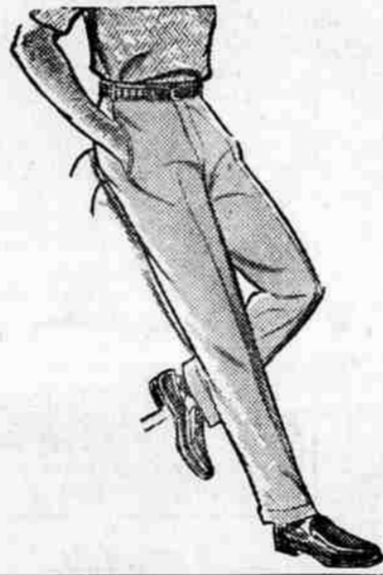
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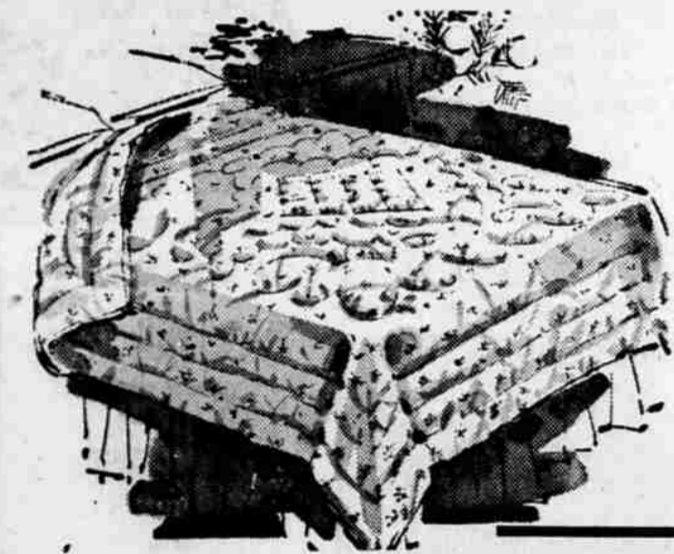
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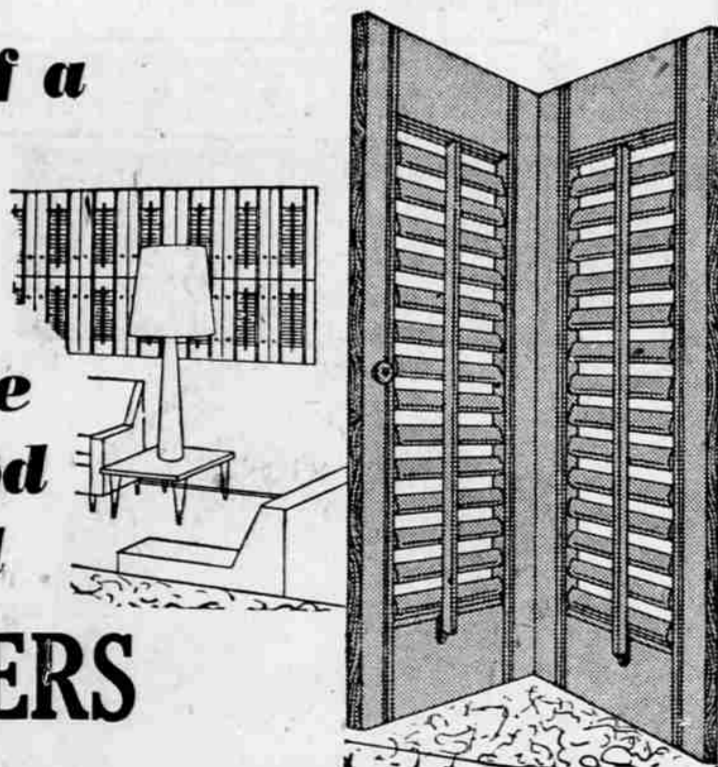
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