



By Lynn M. Watkins

Want to Know How Snakes are Charmed?

The majority of people abhor snakes, yet many of these same individuals are fascinated by them and seldom overlook an opportunity to be among those present when one is killed, or live specimens are displayed.

The fascination for snakes may explain, in part, some of the reasons for the so-called snake cults. These snake cults are as old as civilization itself.

There is an element of danger in handling the venomous kinds, and a certain thrill in watching another man triumph over a dangerous beast.

Tinged With Mystery

The performance at a snake cult is usually tinged with the mysterious. The handler professes faith so strong that the reptile would not dare bite him, or if foolish enough to do so, the faith possessed by the handler would prevent serious consequences.

Some handlers even profess a faith so strong that the snake's venom is harmless. If the cult leader is bitten and later dies from the bite, his faithful followers can say his faith was not potent or he didn't believe hard enough.

The leader's physical well-being, or the state or size of the reptile has a great deal to do with it, but this is never admitted to the followers. Harmless snakes would not serve the purpose, as there would be no element of danger—the act would be a complete flop.

To add another measure of mystery, snake cult meetings usually are held at night when everything seems a little more eerie. A snake is not as dangerous at night since the air is naturally cooler. If the nights are not cool enough to slow the snake down, a piece of ice in the cage helps. Chill the reptile and it is reluctant to bite or even move.

Holding Snake Still

The cult-leader, informed in some phases of natural science, is able to hold the snake in position before him merely by placing the reptile on a piece of glass or even on a piece of Brussels carpet. The snake can't move and the followers think the handler possesses some occult power over the reptile.

The snake has no legs, but it can walk on the lower part of its ribs which are movable inside the skin. The snake, however, on a piece of glass cannot move, which explains why the snake remains quiet at the snake cult meetings.

Some handlers remove the poison fangs from the snake's mouth. This would only be effective for a short time as the fangs readily and quickly grow back in again.

Removal of the poison sacs from the head is seldom done, as such an operation would be of an extremely delicate nature, and beyond the talents of the cult leader.

The secret of the snake cults is not the snakes, which are pretty well understood by the scientists, but is in the minds of men and women whose minds must harbor some strange beliefs to believe that a snake cult is a religion.

(Released by The Register and Tribune Syndicate, 1960)

Practical Joker Dies From Burns

Dothan, Ala. — (UPI) — Earl Lewis, 32, carried a gift of food Wednesday night to the home of a Negro helper. Before knocking on the door he put on a false nose and a pair of false glasses.

The man who opened the door was so startled that he threw a kerosene lamp in Lewis' face. Lewis was fatally burned.

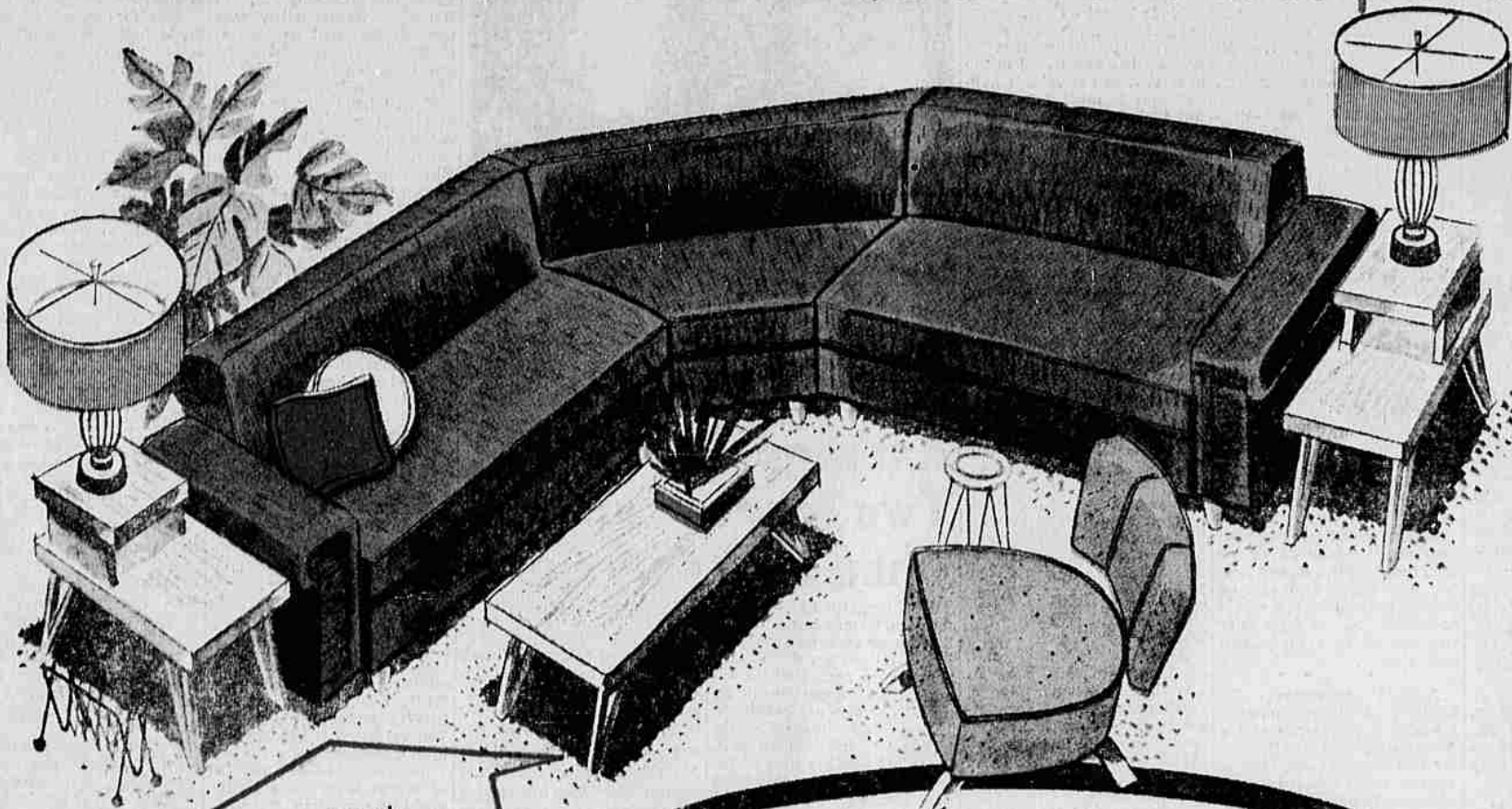
Just before he died Thursday, Lewis looked up from his hospital bed and told members of his family: "Don't play jokes like I did."

Special Dance Slated For United Crusade

A special United Medford Crusade benefit dance will be held Thursday, Oct. 6, in the Pioneer room of the Jackson hotel, according to Dr. D. P. Phillips, UMC special events chairman. The dance, which is sponsored by Arthur Murray Dance studio, will be from 9 p.m. to midnight.

Music will be provided by Caesar Muzzioli and his band. Special intermission entertainment will feature members of the Arthur Murray organization. The dance is open to the public.

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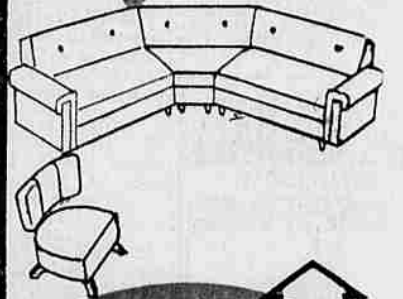
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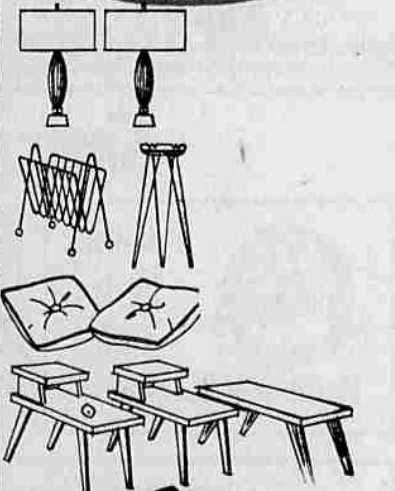


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