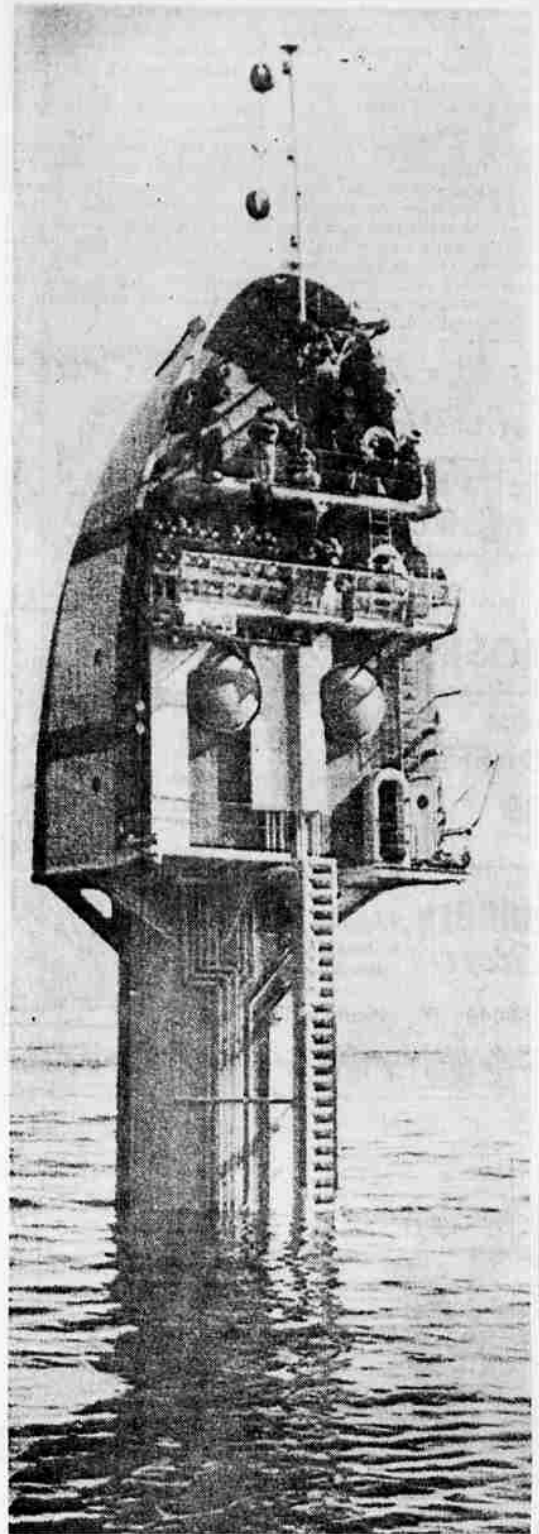




STABLE PLATFORM—Flip, looking like a big parking meter in the ocean off La Jolla, Calif., rides in a vertical operating position. The vessel, which starts operation in January, furnishes a stable platform for delicate underwater acoustical measurements. —(UPI)

The Medical Roundup

by

Walter Alvarez

Emeritus Consultant in Medicine
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 (Register and Tribune Syndicate, 1962)

Raynaud's Disease of Fingers

Scores of people write to ask me what to do about Raynaud's disease, why it has come to them and what produces it. As most of these people know, in cases of this disease, one or more fingers tend to become almost white because of a spasm in the blood vessels. This spasm is produced usually by a "storm" in the so-called sympathetic nerves, which regulate the bore of the small arteries in the hand.



Usually I think the patient is of a high-strung type, with highly irritable nerves, and I can remember a number of cases in which a woman developed the disease immediately after some mental shock, such as discovering that her husband was being unfaithful to her.

If I had Raynaud's disease, I would try hard to live quietly and without violent emotion. I would try never to get all stirred up about things, or angry or anxious. Then, in cold weather, I would wear wool-lined or fur-lined gloves to keep by hands warm—because cold can make the spasm worse.

Years ago, at the Mayo Clinic, after much research, the doctors found out how to cut the sympathetic nerves that supply the blood vessels in the hands, but the operation proved to be a difficult and dangerous one, and as far as I can learn, it has been largely given up. Operations of this type can perhaps cure the Raynaud's disease, but they can produce a severe and constant pain in the arm. I do not know of any medicine likely to work a cure.

Many people have one or more little fatty tumors under the skin; they are not fastened, and so they can be moved around a little. They are soft, and usually round, like a disc. The tendency to get them runs in families. I can remember only one case in which one of these tumors got big enough to cause trouble—the man's belt rubbed against it all the time, and so I had a surgeon remove it. In all of the other hundreds of cases I have seen, there didn't seem to be any need for removing any of the tumors, and there was no need of fearing that cancer would develop in any of them.

Artificial Tears

Dozens of people write me to say that their eyes feel dry and their doctor tells them that they haven't enough tears. Usually these people are given a prescription for "artificial tears"; they get the liquid at a drugstore, and keep putting drops in their eyes at intervals during the day.

I have read of operations in which the tube which carries saliva into the mouth is turned up and connected to the lower eyelid, but as yet I do not know how well these operations have worked out.

One Kidney

People write to ask if they will be able to live comfortably, or at all, with only one kidney. The chances are they can, even if the other kidney is not perfect. I have known women who went successfully through the strain of a pregnancy with only one kidney. Animals get along with a kidney removed. Usually, the kidney that has been left grows larger so that it can take on part of the work of its mate that has been removed.

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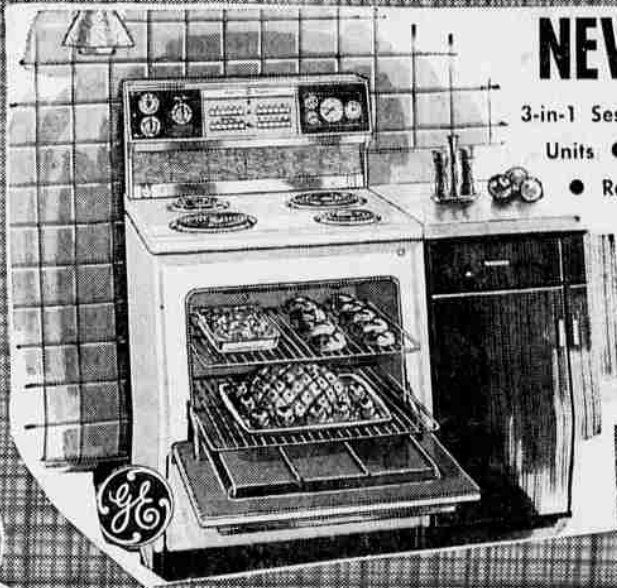
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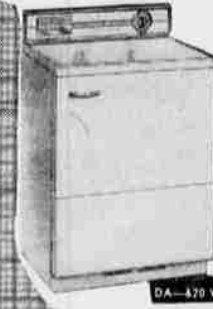
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