

DEAR MEG



Meg Whitcomb

Worried inmate cons his mom

By Meg Whitcomb

DEAR MEG — I'm a 23-year-old prisoner with a year left to serve. The problem is, I haven't told my mom where I am.

I was in the Army, and she thinks I'm still overseas. Dad knows the truth, and helped me work out the story.

My wife and I are arguing. She thinks I should tell the truth, but I don't want to drop a bomb. Actually, I'm scared to tell Mom. I'd rather wait until I get out of this place.

ANXIOUS INMATE, OSSINING, N.Y.
DEAR A.I. — Do what makes you feel most comfortable. Your relationship with your mother is your problem, not your wife's.

However, you run the risk of hurting Mom more in the long run by letting her be the last to know the true story. With both her husband and her daughter-in-law in on the secret, how long can she be kept in the dark? And how will she feel when she finds out?

Rather than trying to protect her, your family would be smart to get involved in Prison Families Anonymous. It's a support group to help her (and them) cope with the fact that you are in jail and how to behave when you get out. PFA can be reached at (516) 538-6065.

Meantime, you should be spending your time and energy during the next year on your rehabilitation so that you'll never have to drop the same bomb on Mom again.

DEAR MEG — When I was 10, my mother got into a huge argument with my father's parents. Since then, she hasn't spoken to my grandparents, and neither has my sister nor I.

Now I'm married with a baby, and my grandparents wrote that they'd like to visit us. My husband thinks we should invite them for a weekend.

But I don't know them anymore. It's been 13 years since I've seen them, and I can't forget how they hurt my mother with the terrible things

they said. I know Mom would be upset if I saw them, but my husband says when they're dead and gone, I'll wish I had. What would you do? — ESTRANGED, RACINE, WISC.

DEAR ESTRANGED — Your mother's rift with her in-laws is her

business. She may have enlisted your loyalty as a youngster, but, as an adult, you're entitled to make your own decision about seeing your grandparents.

Which, in my opinion, wouldn't be a bad idea. Remember, there are two sides to every argument, and your grandparents may feel just as hurt as your mother does.

Don't rush into a decision. And should you decide to try for a reunion, meet them at a neutral place. A weekend is too long for a first visit.

DEAR MEG — My little girl wants to start preschool, but I'm afraid to let her go. There are so many articles in the paper and reports on television about child abuse.

I know Darlene needs to grow up, and I don't want to be overprotective. How do I choose the right school? What questions should I ask about the school and its employees? — WOR-

RIED MOM, CHATTANOOGA, TENN.

DEAR MOM — Pick your school

carefully and monitor it closely after Darlene enters. Both factors are important in making sure she is in the right place. Here are some pointers for making a good choice and avoiding risk:

1. Get recommendations from parents satisfied with their children's preschool programs.

2. Check on administration and staff qualifications, as well as ratio of teachers to youngsters.

3. Visit the school several times, once or twice without notice. Are the children busy, happy and at ease with the teachers?

4. Once Darlene is enrolled, discuss her days with her in detail. If you sense problems, get involved right away.

Write to Meg in care of this newspaper. Meg can only answer letters that contain a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Questions of general interest will be discussed in future columns.

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DR. GOTT



Peter Gott, M.D.

Should she find another doctor?

By Peter H. Gott, M.D.

DEAR DR. GOTT: During my physical, my doctor seemed perturbed because he found a slight swelling in my liver. A CT scan showed fat, but no tumor in the liver. Now he wants me to have a liver biopsy. I'm having no symptoms and the doctors won't tell me what they are looking for, so why should I agree to surgery?

DEAR READER: In the first place, don't consent to any surgery — even a simple biopsy — without first knowing what the doctors are looking for. All surgery carries with it certain risks. The hazards of liver biopsy include hemorrhage, peritonitis and infection.

I think that you would be better served by insisting on more non-invasive (non-surgical) testing. For example, blood tests of liver function and an ultrasound examination would be helpful in delineating the cause of your fatty liver. Furthermore, the use of alcohol is a common cause of fat deposits in the livers of Americans. If you drink, give up booze — including wine and beer — and see if within a few weeks your liver shrinks in size. A biopsy may not be necessary. However you are entitled to complete information at least, if a biopsy is being seriously considered.

To give you more information, I am sending you a free copy of my Health Report, "An Informed Approach to Surgery." Other readers who would like a copy should send \$1 and their name and address to P.O. Box 91369, Cleveland, OH 44101-3369. Be sure to mention the title.

DEAR DR. GOTT: My daughter-in-law has multiple sclerosis. She just returned from a West German clinic where she went for treatment, contrary to her physician's advice. She is taking medicine not available in the United States, but her improvement, both physical and mental, is remarkable.

The relationship with her physician has always been open and courteous, but now she feels some guilt over acting contrary to his advice and cannot bring herself to return to him, either for the MS or for normal health problems for herself and her family. Should she "less up" or find another doctor?

DEAR READER: Fess up. Your daughter-in-law has been twice-blessed. First, she has a doctor who sounds like a pretty decent, accepting person. Second, she has responded to the treatment she received in Germany. If I were her doctor, I'd be very enthusiastic about the fact that she

was helped by therapy, albeit probably experimental.

I am sure that her doctor, with whom she has an "open" relationship, would be delighted to learn more about this treatment and will continue to be supportive of her. At least give the physician a chance; if he becomes surly and defensive, then your daughter-in-law can consider changing doctors.

Investigation about cures for multiple sclerosis is proceeding on several fronts: from hyperbaric oxygen to antibody treatment. Perhaps the Germans have hit on something sensational; it wouldn't be the first time. In my view, the danger of alternative, unproved treatments is that — aside from the risks — they may dissuade patients from receiving appropriate, curative medical therapy. To determine the validity of any new treatment or research development, patients should first check with their local branch of the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Since MS is untreatable by present means, I can't see why the doctor would be unhappy or angry that your daughter-in-law sought another option.

DEAR DR. GOTT: I'm 48 and have been quadriplegic since age 18. No pain pills have been able to touch the burning pins-and-needles feeling in my legs. I've been suffering from them for the last three years. What do you suggest?

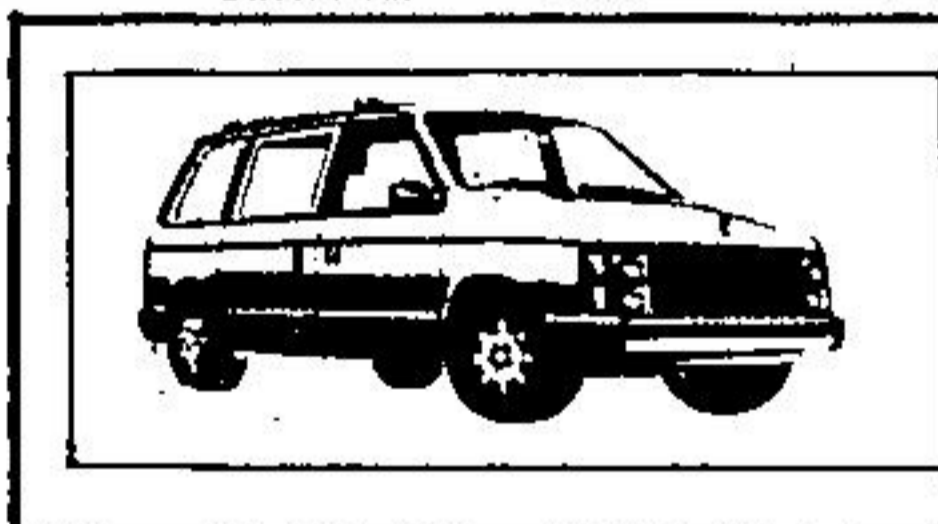
DEAR READER: Chronic pain syndrome from any cause is a terrible burden to bear. If your doctor is unable to help you overcome your symptoms, I suggest that you request a referral to a pain clinic. Many teaching hospitals offer this service to patients. In such a setting, specialists will assist you in coping with the problem, using medication, hypnosis, biofeedback, acupuncture, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) and other techniques.

You can be helped. The problem is finding a facility close enough to be convenient. To give you more information, I am sending you a free copy of my Health Report, "Managing Chronic Pain." Other readers who would like a copy should send \$1 and their name and address to P.O. Box 91369, Cleveland, OH 44101-3369. Be sure to mention the title.

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Every Wednesday & Saturday in the HERALD & OUTLOOK

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