

What are results of rheumatic fever?

DEAR DR. GOTT: At the age of 5 my son was diagnosed with rheumatic fever. He took penicillin for years. When he was 17 we moved and changed doctors. The new doctor said he'd never had rheumatic fever. Now he gets very white, nauseated, coughs a great deal and sometimes his heart beats so hard you can see it. What, in your opinion, are we dealing with?

DEAR READER: I don't know. Unless your son had heart-valve damage from rheumatic fever, a doctor could not say with certainty 12 years later whether or not he had rheumatic fever as a child. In other words, the new doctor is guessing.

Penicillin is used to prevent valve infection in youngsters whose hearts are affected by rheumatic fever. Evidently, your original doctor believed that your son's heart was affected. Since he was present and examined your son, I'd take his word, in preference to the new doctor who never knew your son as a child.

Rheumatic fever used to be a common consequence of untreated strep throat. Sometimes young patients would develop heart inflammation and valve damage that resulted in a murmur, an extra whooshing sound in the heartbeat. Often the heart valves were temporarily affected and healed. Frequently, no serious heart inflammation took place.

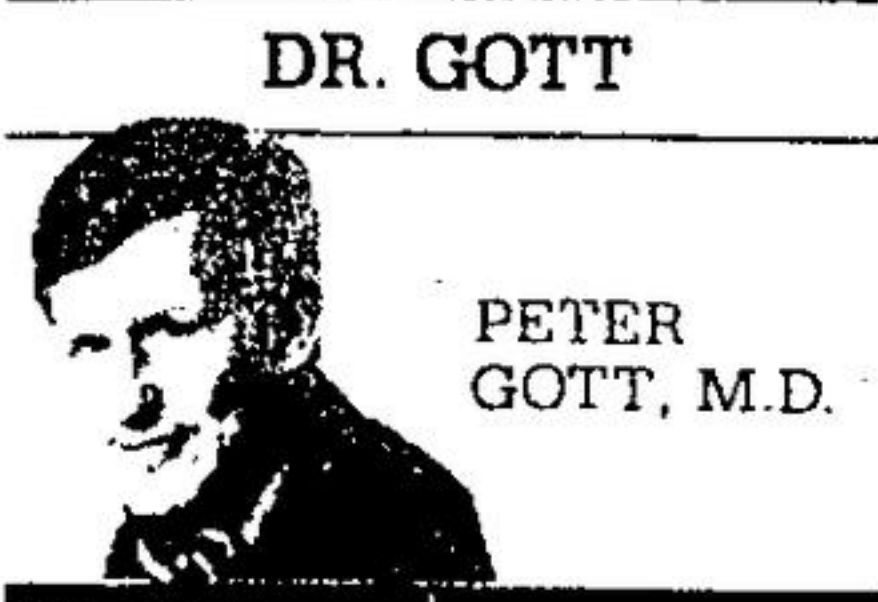
Therefore, your son should have tests made to determine if he had silent heart damage from the rheumatic fever. Tests, such as an electrocardiogram and cardiac ultrasound, would also show if your son's present symptoms are due to heart problems from another cause.

If your son's present doctor seems unable to get at the root of the problem, I suggest you request a referral to an internist, a medical doctor who is specifically trained in diagnosis. From the sound of your question, something is going on and it's about time you obtained some help in discovering what it is.

For more information, I'm sending you a copy of my Health Report "Choosing a Physician." 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: I get attacks in my gums. I can't eat or talk right, get small round blisters on the gums and tongue and there is sharp pain. I wear dentures but my dentist says they are not the cause. What can you suggest?

DEAR READER: You seem to be



DR. GOTT
PETER GOTT, M.D.

suffering from either canker sores or oral herpes infection. Canker sores are recurring, localized infections, probably viral, occurring in or around the mouth. They can be triggered by food allergies, emotional stress or minor injuries such as you might get from poorly fitting dentures. They can be treated by mouth-washes or chemical cautery (burning with a stick dipped in an irritating chemical).

If you have more than two or three blisters, you may have chronic herpes. This cyclic virus infection causes crops of painful blisters in the mouth. Herpes can be diagnosed by an analysis of the fluid within a blister; the ailment is treated with the anti-virus drug acyclovir.

You need a diagnosis. See your doctor.

DEAR DR. GOTT: I have inherited the shakes from my mother and grandmother, and now at age 85 it is showing up fast. My doctor says nothing can be done. I'm tempted to change doctors.

DEAR READER: As people age, they often exhibit a tendency to shaking or tremulousness, called "benign essential tremor" in medical parlance. This is a harmless annoyance for which there is no cure. The tendency to the condition appears to be inherited; the ailment is probably accelerated by the normal aging process that is associated with progressively poor circulation to the brain from arteriosclerosis.

This shaking must be differentiated from Parkinson's disease, a more severe but treatable affliction, marked by involuntary muscle movements.

Rather than change doctors, I suggest that you ask your physician to refer you to a neurologist for a second opinion and suggestions for treatment, such as drug therapy.

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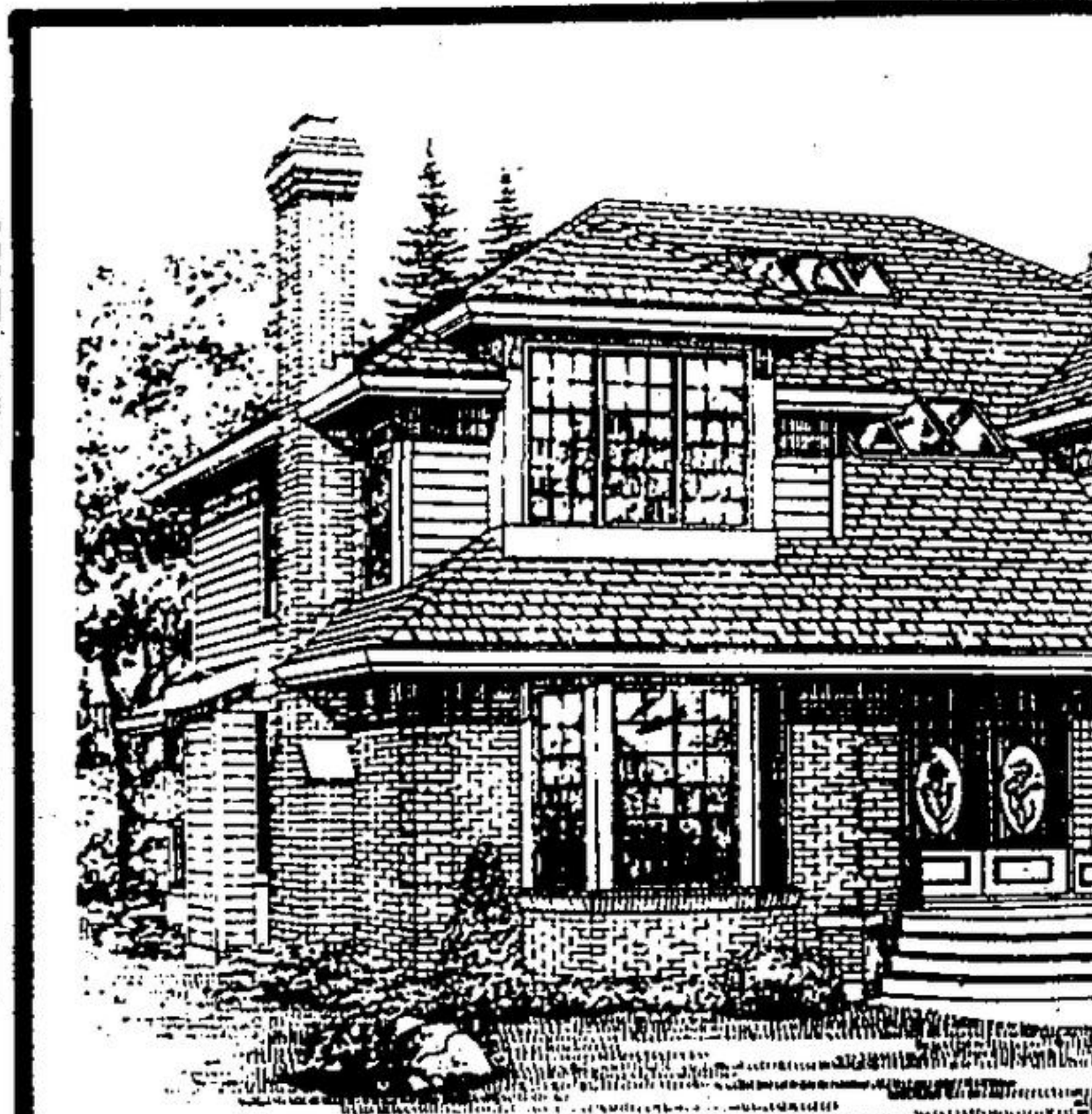
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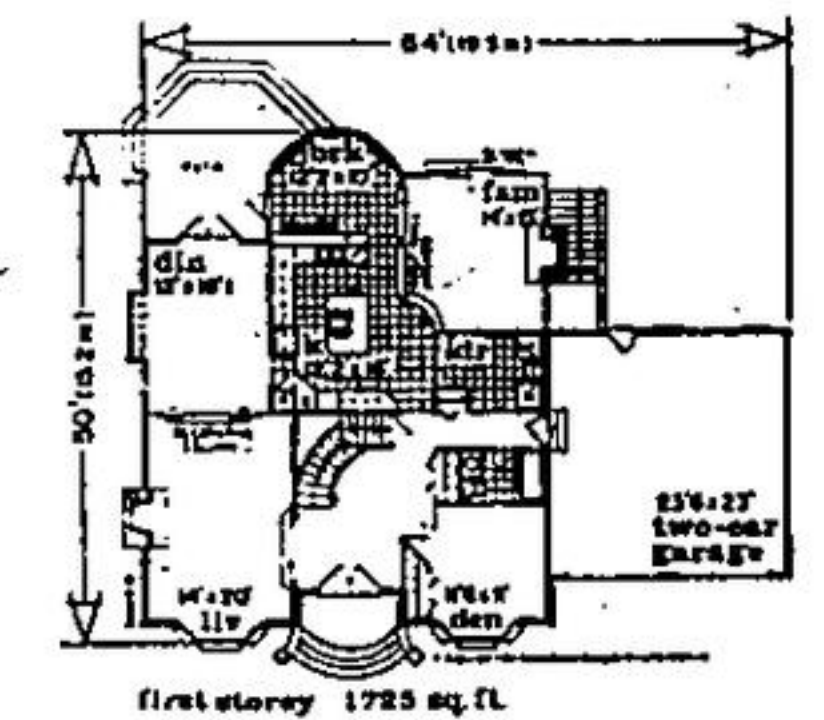
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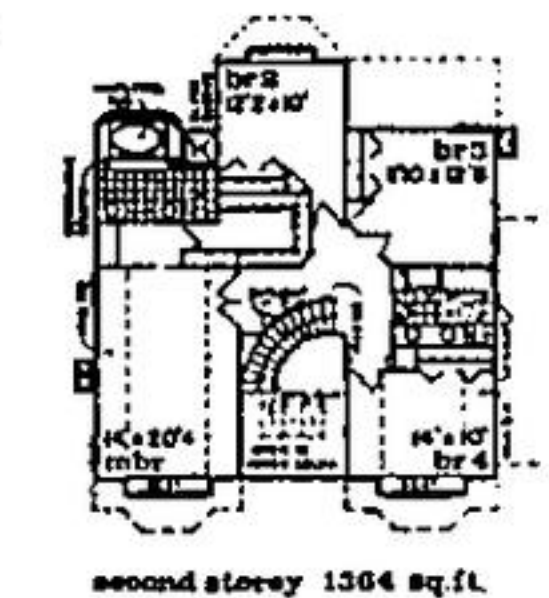
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Yuk! It hit on the news this morning, and I watched with the knowledge that comes with the territory. Interest rates have jumped over the 13 per cent mark, and that means certain reaction in the resale market. It also means that our "boom" market is probably over, or at the end of its peak, and there will be some reductions coming into place soon, on some houses that were trying to cash in on this great market. It's all on a scale though, for, even though there will certainly be a softening of the selling market, it will also help those who want to buy. Every market works on the same scale; sell high, buy high - sell low, buy low - unless you have been caught with buying on the high side, and have not sold your home yet. There's where the crunch can hit the hardest. My phone rang before eight o'clock this morning and it was my nephew, who has had his home on the market, in Toronto, for about two months. It was probably priced on the high side during the boom, but now, he is a little frantic for advice as to how he is going to bail out of his particular problem. I hate to be the bearer of bad tidings, but it is family and I had to level with him. Cut down the price to the line, and hope that it sells fast, and get on with your life. One can not always win in this market!

Frankly, I'm glad to see the end of this type of market, for I find it difficult to price homes accurately, when prices are jumping around like a flea in a fit. I really hate to tell first time buyers that if they had started looking two months ago for a home, instead of starting "now," they could have bought the same home for considerably less money. It is the first time buyers that are hit the hardest in the boom market, and naturally like most real estate agents, I work with many. Actually I love finding a first home for people, for it is a joy that is hard to replace. First time buyers are always so excited, and so happy with their purchase. The next time around, that joy is not usually so ecstatic and is met with more reality over heart!

Now things will settle down, the game of Russian roulette is over, and sanity will set in once again - at least until the next "boom." I hope your Irish eyes are smiling this week - I know mine are.

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