

## Look-alike drugs have filtered in from US

DR. Usoa Busto pulls open a slender drawer of a small filing cabinet in the pharmacy offices. Inside are rows of brightly colored capsules and tablets—transparent blue, green, speckled, bi-colored—even a couple heart-shaped tablets, sorted neatly into individual compartments.

"They're quite pretty, actually," she says, closing the drawer. She pulls open another filing cabinet. "Here are some more," she says. "We have about 50 tablets and capsules and information about another 200 or so products—probably one of the most complete collections of look-alike drugs in the world."

The Addiction Research Foundation's pharmacy staff began collecting pills and related advertisements and information in the late 1970s, shortly after look-alike drugs first appeared on the scene. At that time, they were manufactured in illicit basement laboratories in the US. The pills contained varying combinations of pephedrine, phenylpropranolamine (PPA) and caffeine, and were sold as stimulants. They were often misrepresented as speed or sold in capsules that resemble those of legally manufactured amphetamines.

"They have an interesting history," adds Eva Janecek, the head of ARF's Pharmacy Service.

"One of the main entrepreneurs, if you like, was a trucker named Edward Seay. He used amphetamine stimulants himself, but various legislative changes made it increasingly difficult to buy them on the street. So Seay began manufacturing look-alikes, made up of caffeine, and selling them through truck stop and mail order sales. His operation was called "Peashooter", which he took as his CB radio handle. At its peak, Peashooter was moving five million look-alikes per month, under names like black beauties, pink hearts and what have you. Strictly speaking, there was nothing illegal about it in the US."

But by 1981, the look-alikes were causing widespread concern. Not only were they used by truckers, they were also seen as initiating young people into a world of drugs and drug dealing. Furthermore, when taken in doses high enough to stimulate the central nervous system, these drugs can produce such side effects as high blood pressure, irregular heart-beat, and agitation. Deaths due to stroke were also reported following massive doses of caffeine combined with PPA.

Drug Administration moved to restrict the traffic of look-alikes by announcing that triple combination products were new drugs and consequently anyone who wished to manufacture these drugs was required to apply to the government for a licence. Manufacturers were also informed that such drugs would have to be certified. It was unlikely, of course, that the small manufacturers who produced look-alikes would file required documents.

"The situation now is very different," says Dr. Busto.

"Even the name has changed. Since many of them

no longer resemble the amphetamines they originally imitated, they're now called street stimulants instead of look-alikes. And they're often marketed as weight loss or anti-fatigue medicinals. Most of them contain only caffeine."

In Canada, where even caffeine tablets require authorization, street stimulants are brought here from the US via different routes.

"Ads for look-alikes tend to appear in drug culture magazines like "High Times", says Dr. Busto, "but every now and then, a mainstream magazine

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**IN MEMORIAM**  
**BAXTER, BETTY**  
In loving memory of our dear mother and grandmother, who passed away April 10, 1988.  
*Deep in our hearts  
Her memory is kept,  
To love, to cherish,  
And never forget.*  
Loved and sadly missed by Don, Karen, Rachel & Brian

**IN MEMORIAM**  
**BAXTER** - In loving memory of Betty Baxter, a dear mother and grandmother who was called to rest on April 10th, 1988.  
*If tears could build a stairway  
And heartaches make a lane  
We'd walk the path to Heaven  
To bring you back again  
No longer in our life to share  
But in our hearts  
You are always there.*  
Lovingly remembered and sadly missed by Wayne, Lynda, Wendy and Cindy.

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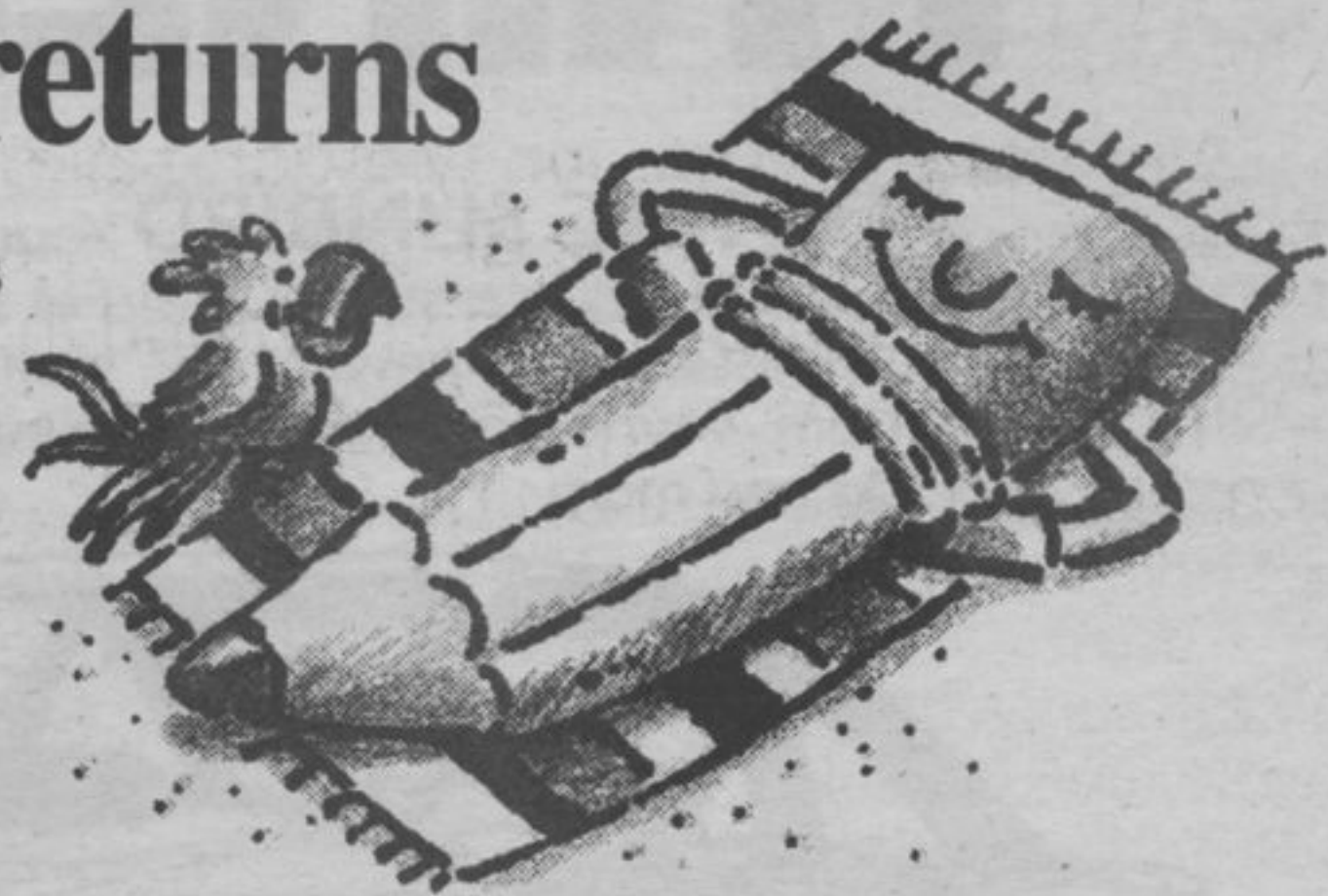
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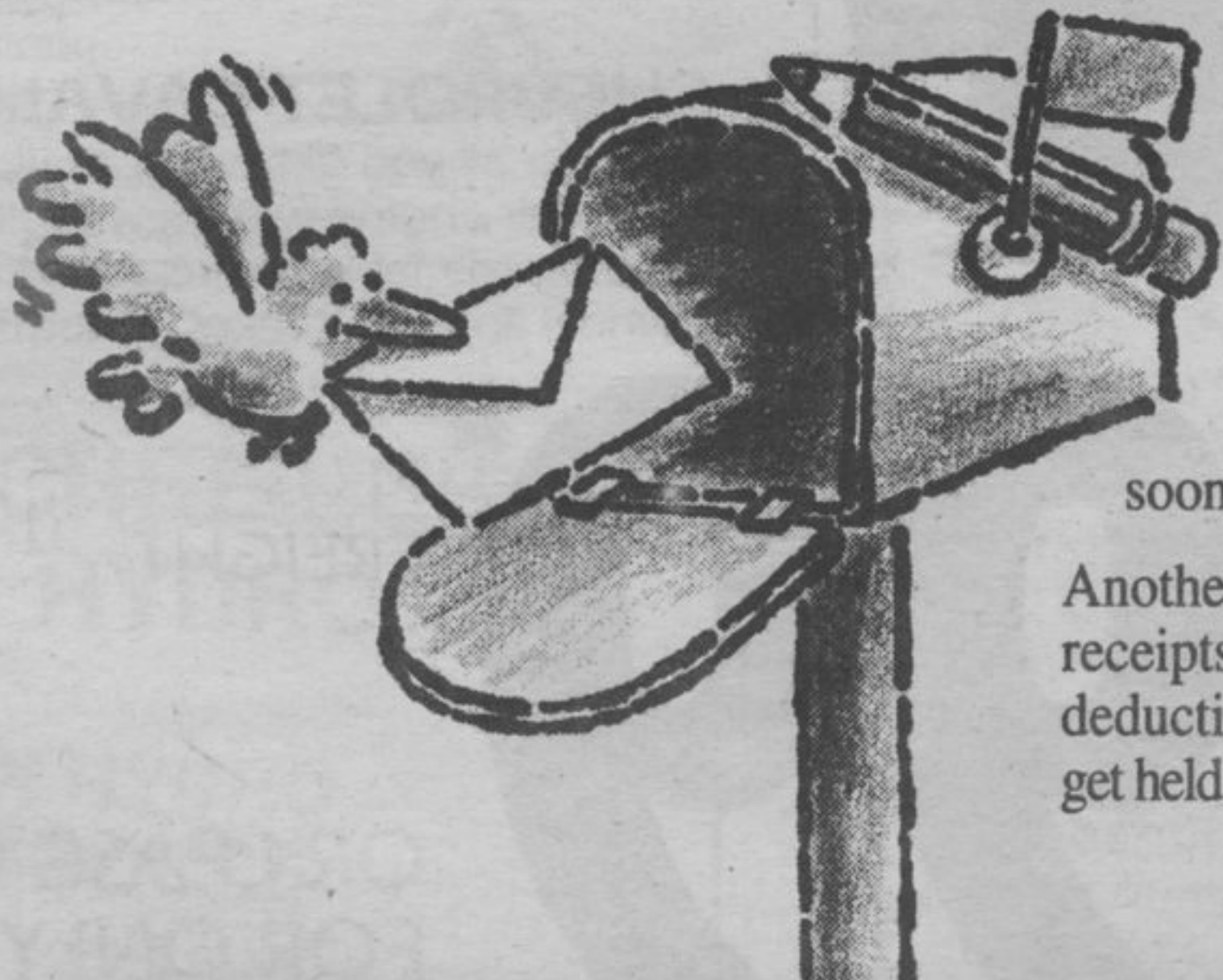
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