neural activity. A third theory is that these drugs, because of their chemical structure, may be able to pass through natural physiological barriers and penetrate the reaches of the brain.

The more optimistic of the investigators are looking to the drugs to unravel the mystery of mental disturbance. Others, more cautious, fear the drug may hold more perils than benefits.

The explanation of how the drugs work has, so far, remained as elusive as the visions they produce.


PUBLIC HEALTH
Program Organized to Improve Nursing Homes

A NATIONAL COUNCIL for the Accreditation of Nursing Homes, jointly sponsored by the American Medical Association and the American Nursing Home Association, has been organized to carry out a nationwide program to promote high standards among nursing homes.

Organization of the new council, including the appointment of a nine-member board of directors, was completed at a meeting of representatives of the AMA and the ANHA in Chicago.

The National Council for the Accreditation of Nursing Homes will be headquartered in Chicago, with a full-time executive director to administer the program.

The number of skilled nursing homes increased from 7,000 in 1954 to 9,700 in 1961, with a total bed capacity increase from 180,000 to 338,700.


PSYCHOLOGY
Military Psychologists Take on New Roles

MILITARY PSYCHOLOGISTS no longer are concerned mainly with testing the intelligence of troops or printing propaganda leaflets to drop among the enemy. Today they prefer to think of themselves as “human engineers.”

“Our job has become much more complex,” said Col. Donald C. Almy, one of the Air Force’s top psychologists. “We must know as much about the behavior of machines as we do of men.”

Col. Almy, who is with the Systems Command Headquarters, Andrews AFB, Washington, was named to head a four-day conference attended by 71 psychologists from ten North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries.

The closed-door conference held in the State Department is the third get-together in the past two years by NATO psychologists. This one was called to thrash out problems of military communications between men and computer-run weapons.

The military human engineers want to make sure that new NATO weapons are not so complex that they become useless to the fighting man who will need them.


ANTHROPOLOGY
Underworld Borrows Rites from Witchcraft

WITCHCRAFT on a large-scale supposedly died in the 17th century, but underworld syndicate “Cosa Nostra” is reviving some of its practices.

The initiation peculiarity in blood and oath of silence, with which ex-gangster Joseph Valachi recently made headlines, are part of the oldest story in the world.

The mingling of blood, the element which bestows brotherhood on a person, is taken from the cup, for the benefit of the new member. History is full of stories about men of opposing races and countries who became “blood brothers” in this way.

A more modern version of this is the practice of joint prayer, a ceremony in which the blood is shed in the initiates’ names, and the group unites in a blood covenant.

An ancient Egyptian custom required that those wishing to join a secret society break from their ordinary lives and shed their blood in the cup, for the benefit of the new member. History is full of stories about men of opposing races and countries who became “blood brothers” in this way.

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PSYCHOLOGY
Adults Often Mistaken In Children’s Abilities

GROWN-UPS have strange and stereo-typed ideas about the abilities of the normal, average child.

They expect too much of the seven-year-old’s mental powers and not enough of the four-year-old’s play ability.

These are the “remarkable” and “systematic” results of studies on Italian adults reported by Prof. Ezio Ponzo of the University of Rome.

Even adults who are most familiar with young children and who might be expected to know better have these misconceptions. Mothers and school teachers, Prof. Ponzo told a 17th International Congress of Psychology meeting in Washington, D. C., are no more accurate in their judgments of children’s abilities than other adults.

Studies of the growth and development of the normal child have shown that the average four-year-old, or preschool, child has many motor skills. He has come a long way from the clumsy, uncoordinated two-year-old, and can climb, jump, trike, and throw a ball with a great deal of control. He is adept with his hands and fingers. These are the abilities that adults may underestimate.

In overestimating the intellectual capacity of the seven-year-old, adults may expect the child to understand and remember more than he can. They may think the child has insight into a situation when he actually cannot judge what is taking place.

Misconceptions of children’s abilities are often buried in the adult’s mind, Prof. Ponzo said. Stereotypes may arise from watching the child’s behavior and may be maintained by the adult’s desire to see the child independent or dependent.