

TREE CARE — John M. Haller — *Macmillan*, 224 p., illus., \$5.95. Telling the home owner what trees need, how much he can provide himself and when he needs the services of a professional tree man.

VANISHED CITIES — Hermann and Georg Schreiber, translated from the German by Richard and Clara Winston — *Knopf*, 358 p., illus., \$5.75. In this readable book, the authors restore the vanished peoples to long-ruined cities of the past.

Science News Letter, August 24, 1957

GEOPHYSICS

IGY Data Center Opens in Washington

► THE FIRST information center for the International Geophysical Year in the United States is now in operation by the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey in Washington, D. C.

The record center will house the complete original results of all IGY experiments on the earth's magnetism, earthquakes and the pull of gravity conducted in the Western Hemisphere. Data will be exchanged with foreign centers.

The office is one of 11 being set up in the U. S. and Alaska to record all data gathered in the various fields of scientific endeavor into which the IGY has been divided. The IGY, which started July 1, is an 18-month scientific assault on the earth, its seas and atmosphere.

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PHYSIOLOGY

Find "Growth Rings" In Snake Bones

► BONES of living creatures may show dry and wet seasons in somewhat the same manner as "growth rings" on trees.

Dr. Frank E. Peabody, zoologist at the University of California at Los Angeles, finds this is possible after studying a matching series of annual growth rings in several head bones of a Kansas bullsnake.

The snake bone growth rings consist of 11 narrow winter zones and 12 broad, summer zones, Dr. Peabody reports. Winter zones show a tendency to become wider and to appear double, suggesting a small, local increment of growth following the regular growth season—perhaps reflecting Indian summer.

In the middle of the 11½-year record in bone are two summer zones which are unusually narrow. Inasmuch as the bullsnake was known to have been killed in a specific year, 1931, the two summers of deficient growth during its midlife can be identified with reasonable accuracy as the summers of 1925 and 1926, according to Dr. Peabody.

The UCLA zoologist checked weather records of the area in which the snake lived and found severe droughts occurred in these two summers.

Thus the narrow growth zones may reflect a crisis in the snake's food chain. The drought affected summer vegetation and in turn the number of rodents on which the snake feeds.

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PUBLIC HEALTH

Reducing Pills Described As Fraudulent

► REDUCING PILL promoters are too fast for the Government and "make a killing" on a gullible public before they can be stopped.

This was reported by Miss Maye A. Russ, director of the food, drug and cosmetic division, National Better Business Bureau, Inc., New York, to a House subcommittee studying false and misleading advertising.

When the Government finally does catch up with the promoters they will quickly agree to discontinue the sale of the product and then, "in contemptuous disregard" of the law, start campaigning for a similar drug or the same one marketed under a different name.

The whole field of weight-reducing products is full of deception and outright fraud, and is particularly fertile for promoters because of the great number of persons worried about their weight, Miss Russ said.

None of the known weight-reducing products sold over the counter will in themselves cause a person to lose extra pounds. This can only be done by reducing the number of calories taken in through food.

Many products claim to induce the user automatically to eat less food. Almost invariably, however, these products are accompanied by a "plan" that requires the user to follow a restricted diet.

Many of the current so-called "miracle" drugs contain the compound phenylpropranolamine hydrochloride which was reported in 1939 as successful in curbing appetites. But the amount of the drug contained in reducing pills is far below the amount originally reported on.

The Post Office Department has forced many of the companies to discontinue the mail order sales of their products, but in some cases vigorous promotion of the products still goes on in drugstores.

Miss Russ called for a stronger Medical Fraud Unit of the Post Office Department and for greater use of criminal prosecution by the Department of Justice.

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MEDICINE

Boy Shakes Bullet From Brain After Shooting

► A RIFLE bullet that went through an eight-year-old boy's skull and lodged in his brain was shaken loose in about five weeks and removed from the same hole it entered.

The unusual case of "bullet migration" is reported by Drs. C. Verner Thompson, Lodi, Calif., Tom Huff, Stockton, Calif., and Warren Wass, Lodi, in *California Medicine* (July).

The youngster was riding a bicycle and looking back over his shoulder at a companion who, running to catch up with him, tripped and fell, discharging a .22 caliber rifle.

The bullet entered the victim's right forehead, traveled across the brain, and came to rest just under the skull on the other side. He was taken to the hospital half

conscious but within a few hours was out of shock and showed no signs of neurological damage.

He was given antibiotics against any possible infection and the devitalized brain tissue and a few fragments of bone and metal were removed. Then the head wound was closed and an anticonvulsant drug was administered.

He was discharged from the hospital and told to lie face down each night before going to sleep and jar his head against the bedding from time to time.

X-ray films taken at intervals thereafter showed the bullet to be slowly traveling back through the brain toward the point of entrance. Five weeks later it was close enough to the original wound to be removed along with several fragments of bone.

The youngster returned to school and has shown no physical or emotional signs of brain damage for a year and a half, the doctors report.

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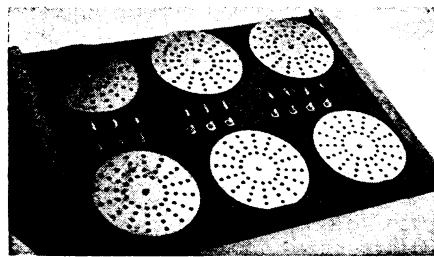
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