

Ongelukke met Gewere

Jaar na jaar kry geneeshere, hetsy in die privaat-praktyk of by ongevalledepartemente, te doen met skietongelukke. 'n Baie klein persentasie van hierdie voorvalle kan beskou word as moontlik onvermybaar weens spesiale omstandighede—'n opslagkoeël, 'n jagter wat verdwaal het en sy vriend vir 'n bobbejaan aansien, of iets dergeliks. Maar die oorgrote meerderheid is ongetwyfeld die gevolg van blote kriminele nalatigheid.

As ons die herhaalde berigte oor sulke ongelukke wat in die koerante verskyn in oënskou neem, is dit werklik moeilik verstaanbaar dat daar steeds sulke ongeërgdheid met die hantering van vuurwapens aan die dag gelê word. Nagte lank staan die teaterspan en opereer om die lewe van iemand wat 'n skoot in die rug gekry het, te probeer red, en die enigste verduideliking wat gegee word, is dat 'die skoot per ongeluk afgegaan het'. Soms sit die huilende, half-histeriese vriend wat vir die ongeval verantwoordelik is, buite die teater en wag om te hoor wat die finale uitslag van sy agtelosigheid is, en die familie of hospitaalpersoneel probeer hom troos. Soms is dit die vader wat handewringend aanhou vra hoe dit met die seun gaan wat homself met 'n gelaaide rewolwer raakgeskiet het. Verwyt kom altyd te laat, maar óns wil in al hierdie gevalle weet waarom die vuurwapens gelaai was.

Ervare jagers, skerpskutters en diegene wat gereeld met vuurwapens te doen het, gee die versekering dat as die korrekte voorsorgmaatreëls getref word, daar min gevaar van ongelukke sal wees.

Ons wil dit aanvaar, maar waarom word hierdie voorsorgmaatreëls dan nie getref nie? Ons is nie wapenskundiges nie, maar is dit dan werklik so moeilik om seker te maak dat 'n rewolwer of 'n slotgeweer heeltemal ontlaai is?

Die enigste antwoord, soos in so baie ander opsigte in die lewe, lê in beter opleiding en 'n groter gewaarwording van die gevaar, en die stappe wat nodig is om dit te vermy. 'n Mens wil nie sensasielektuur aanmoedig nie—daarvan is ons koerante reeds tot oorlopende toe vol, maar hier is één opsig waar ons wel wil vra dat groter, en veral meer noukeurige, publisiteit aan die detail van die ongelukke gegee word. Nie aan die grusaamheid van die skietwond nie, hoewel dit ook in 'n mate sal help om andere af te skrik, maar wel aan die laakbare gebrek aan voorsorg wat vir die afgaan van die skoot verantwoordelik was. Al kan dit weens geregtelike omstandighede nie net na die skietvoorval gepubliseer word nie, sal ons graag na afloop van alle hofsake wil lees presies hoe seun of dogter, of man of vrou sus-en-so weens agtelosigheid, traak-my-nie-agtigheid of blote moedswilligheid, nie toegesien het dat die vuurwapen ontlaai is alvorens daarmee roekeloos rondgespeel is nie. En al is daar 'n mate van lastergevaar, wil ons graag lees dat 'hy die slotmeganisme van die geweer oopgetrek het om seker te maak dat dit leeg was, en te stompsinnig dom was om ook te kyk of daar nie 'n patroon in die loop agtergebly het nie'. Sal sulke berigte help? Miskien nie, maar daar is skynbaar geen ander skoktaktiek wat enige uitwerking sal hê nie.

Jubilee Congress

There are certain milestones that are customarily regarded as causes for celebration, such as a silver wedding anniversary, the coming-of-age of a child, set at a seemingly arbitrary 21 years, and particularly in South Africa, the 10-year mark as the age of mellowness of a good brandy. Occasionally we see news items about a person who has managed to reach the 100-year mark in more or less robust health. Such celebrations are good and important for they simultaneously emphasise maturity and give those who do the rejoicing an excuse to have a jolly time.

In 1975 the Medical Association of South Africa will have every reason to display banners and to show a proud face to the world, for then we hold our 50th Medical Congress in Johannesburg. We have come a long way, from humble beginnings, through struggling years of depression, war and other setbacks, to the stage where our general congresses are virtually too big for any but the most sophisticated venues. There has, over the past few years, been talk about reconsidering the acceptability of such very large congresses, but such misgivings can and must be set aside for at least another year or two, for no one, whatever his or her feelings may be about the value or form of these meetings, will disagree that to allow the illustrious half-century mark to slip by without a fitting celebration would be unthinkable.

The Jubilee Congress organisers are working like beavers and to the uninitiated it may even seem as if they are overdoing things. After all, it is still almost a year before the big event takes place. But

those who have in the past been involved with the work that such a meeting engenders, will agree that 2 years is a minimum period for the organisation of an event such as this. Already the organisers deserve our congratulations on what they have thus far achieved, and if the arrangements are indicative of what the final result is going to be, we can confidently say that this is going to be a congress such as we have never even envisaged in South Africa.

The venue, the speakers, entertainment, accommodation—there is hardly an aspect of congress-going that has not already received intensive and expert attention. Only one thing remains at this stage an uncertainty: the congress-goers themselves. Such a meeting can be organised to the 'nth degree and yet be a miserable failure if there is an insufficient number of our members who show interest and who are prepared to support this important celebration in the history of our Association. There is hardly a family chef, be it the man or the wife, who has not had the experience of preparing a *cordon bleu* meal, only to find that he or she sits down alone to enjoy it. The Congress Committee for the 50th Medical Congress will provide the fare, our contribution will merely be to make sure that we are there to enjoy it.

We have already published the first intention form (see issue of 20 April 1974, p. 849), and we intend repeating it at regular intervals. In order to assist the Committee, readers are requested to complete these forms at the earliest possible opportunity so that the necessary arrangements can be made for their accommodation.
