

Create A Holiday Miracle.



Bernice was on her way to visit family in Iowa and rushing to her flight. Struggling to catch her breath, she knew something was wrong.

After an appointment with her primary care physician and a series of tests, she was scheduled for double bypass surgery and correction of her mitral-valve. Six hours of surgery *saved* Bernice's life.

Now 83 years old and going strong, Bernice is looking forward to spending the holidays with her family.

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD

BY CHUCK SHEPHERD

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Can't possibly be true

► In a March change of regulations, the Pentagon began saving money by reducing "combat-injury" benefits for all except those wounded while actually fighting, explaining that combat-related injuries were simply not worthy of full compensation. Thus, in examples offered by The Washington Post in November, Marine Cpl. James Dixon and Army Sgt. Lori Meshell were not entitled to full combat-injury coverage for their Iraq wounds (Mr. Dixon from a roadside bomb and a land mine, and Mr. Meshell while diving for cover during a mortar attack) because neither was actually fighting at the time. (Mr. Dixon, initially denied about \$16,000 by the classification, recently won a hard-fought reversal, but Mr. Meshell, drawing \$1,200 less per month because of the change, is still appealing.)

► *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, reporting the latest of 10 lawsuits against dentist Thomas Laney, 55, found "flaws" in Wash-

ington state's medical disciplinary system, in that Dr. Laney was apparently doing "full-body cosmetic surgeries." Dr. Laney was being sued this time by a woman for allegedly botching her breast-reduction. His attorney told a reporter that negative outcomes happen, but that Dr. Laney should not be held responsible unless the patient suffers deformities that are "terribly, terribly wrong." (When an earlier patient of his died after surgery, Dr. Laney was "disciplined" with a fine and an order to get additional training.)

► The British Federation of Herpetologists announced in November that the number of reptiles kept as pets in the U.K. is probably greater than the number of dogs (8.5 million to about 6 million, with cats at 9 million). One benchmark the federation uses for its calculation is the booming sales of reptile food, such as locusts, frozen rodents and crickets (now about 20 million a week). ■

Inexplicable

► The Wishroom lingerie shop on Japan's Internet shopping mall Rakuten announced in November that it had already sold more than 300 of its new bras specially made for men (about \$30 each) since the product launch earlier in the month. A Wishroom official told a Reuters reporter: "We've been getting feedback from customers saying, 'Wow,' we'd been waiting for this for such a long time."

► Twice recently (in November, off Atlantic Beach, N.C., and in October, off Amble, Northumberland, England), anglers encountered (and rescued) dogs that were swimming about a mile from land and headed toward the open sea. The pooches, a Labrador retriever and a cairn terrier, were both said to be disoriented and uncooperative with rescuers. ■

Unclear on the concept

► When Arien O'Connell posted the fastest time in October's Nike Women's Marathon in San Francisco, she expected of course to be declared the winner, but the shoe company apparently had promised a group of elite runners (to attract them to enter the race) that one of them would be the "winner," and consequently, first place went to a woman who ran 11 minutes behind Ms. O'Connell. After a storm of complaints, Nike reluctantly settled on calling both women "winners" and said next year it

would scrap the two-tier system.

► London's Daily Mail reported (after an investigation under Britain's freedom of information act) that more than half of the local government councils responding admitted that they were using anti-terrorism laws and surveillance equipment to monitor such mundane activities as whether residents put their garbage out at the proper times for pickup. Said one prominent critic, "We are no longer living in what most would recognize as a free society." ■

Modern obsessions

Professionals at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, told an annual meeting of radiologists in Chicago in December that they had discovered an alarming new teenage trend of self-mutilation: girls deliberately inserting objects into their arms, hands, feet, ankles and necks (including needles, staples, wood, stone, glass and a crayon). According to

the Chicago Tribune, the hospital reported extracting 52 such objects from 10 girls in a three-year period and regarded the practice as an extension of the more common self-cutting. Other studies have shown that at least 13 percent of high school students have deliberately injured themselves at least once. ■

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