

Pot convictions hold

Court rules U.S. Coast Guard may board foreign ships

NEW ORLEANS — A federal appeals court said Tuesday Coast Guard ships have the legal right to board foreign vessels in international waters 200 miles off the U.S. coast to search for contraband.

A three-judge panel made the ruling in upholding a conspiracy to import marijuana convictions against 13 Colombians. Convictions for conspiracy to distribute the drug in the United States were overturned.

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The search and arrests came after federal drug agents received a tip that one of the defendants was seeking a vessel to rendezvous with the

freighter Labrador on the high seas for a marijuana transaction.

The 13 Colombians appealed, saying the Coast Guard had no authority to board a foreign ship at sea and, if that authority did exist, it would violate international laws governing the high seas.

Judge Alvin Rubin, in writing the decision, said the legal issues involving search and seizure at sea were unclear.

"At the heart of this case lies the question, 'May the U.S. Coast Guard validly board a foreign vessel carrying contraband intended for delivery to this country while the

vessel is in international waters, arrest its crew for conspiracy to violate the laws of the U.S. and seize its cargo?'" Rubin said.

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"Like the seas where the vessel was boarded, the problem is deep and shark-infested," he said. In a 19-page opinion quoting constitutional, international and criminal laws, Rubin said the Coast Guard can board foreign ships.

He said the Coast Guard's author-

ity extends "to persons whose acts have an effect within the sovereign territory even though the acts themselves occur out of it."

The 5th Circuit said a 1958 treaty codifying international laws regarding the seas — Convention on the High Seas — forbids the boarding of a foreign merchant ship on the high seas by a warship unless there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the ship is engaged in piracy, slave trade or refuses to show its flag.

But Colombia never has ratified the treaty, making it inapplicable to the case, Rubin said.

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Exercise good, but not cure-all

DALLAS — Medical research cannot prove exercise will lengthen a person's life, but doctors participating in a panel discussion provided numerous hints that active people are healthier than inactive people.

"Thousands of studies attempting to measure the benefits of leading active lives have proved inconclusive," said Dr. Jere H. Mitchell, professor of internal medicine and physiology at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School.

"Doctors do know that heart attacks are dropping as exercise increases. And doctors know that risk factors tend to take care of themselves. For example, blood pressure drops and smokers tend to quit (when they start running)."

Mitchell and two other physicians Tuesday discussed "The Exercise Prescription" during a session of the 51st scientific meeting of the American Heart Association.

All of the doctors agreed active lives were preferable to sedentary lives in the reduction of risk factors related to cardiovascular diseases, but all were concerned that people would expect too much from exercise, or that they would undertake an exercise program without exploring the problems.

"There are rocks along the road for many people who take part in this activity," said Dr. James P. Knochel, professor of internal medicine at the University of Texas Health Science center.

"Water depletion, the development of high body temperatures and the death of skeletal muscle which can dissolve and release contents into the circulatory system are potential sources of sudden death (while running)."

He said women do not encounter as many risks while running as men. He said females have less trouble with body heat, are lighter and seem to have more sweat glands. He said all of his patients with "dead muscle" problems except one were men.

Dr. V.F. Froelicher, director of cardiac rehabilitation and exercise laboratories at the University of California-San Diego, cited a recent study of San Francisco longshoremen that said people double their risk of coronary disease by leading inactive lives.

Women's rights issue not reason for voyage

LONDON — For a lady who survived a nine-month solo voyage around the world and a capsized 2,000 miles from land, women's rights are not an issue.

"I didn't sail around the world for women," said Naomi James, the 29-year-old rookie sailor who in June became the first woman to circumnavigate the globe alone via Cape Horn. "It was not a case of women's rights, just that men had already done it and I saw no reason because I was a woman that I shouldn't be able to do it."

The tall, slim blonde set the record for solo sailing around the world, clipping two days off the 74-day record of Sir Frances Chichester, when she brought her "Express Crusader" triumphantly into Dartmouth harbor in the south of England on June 8.

"I really don't think I've done anything exceptional," she told a crowd of 600 women gathered by special invitation for the annual Women of the Year luncheon at London's Savoy Hotel. "I just took that possibility and carried it out."

Still, the chances she took would have daunted a less intrepid person. She left England with only two years sailing experience, gained from husband Robert, a former British Merchant Navy officer and professional yachtsman. The 15-ton, 53-foot-long yacht she sailed

single-handed, was designed for a crew of eight to 10.

But the question of physical ability to handle the vessel didn't worry her.

"I've always been strong as a horse. And sailing doesn't depend on physical strength but on timing," she said.

What could have been demoralizing, but wasn't, was the loneliness.

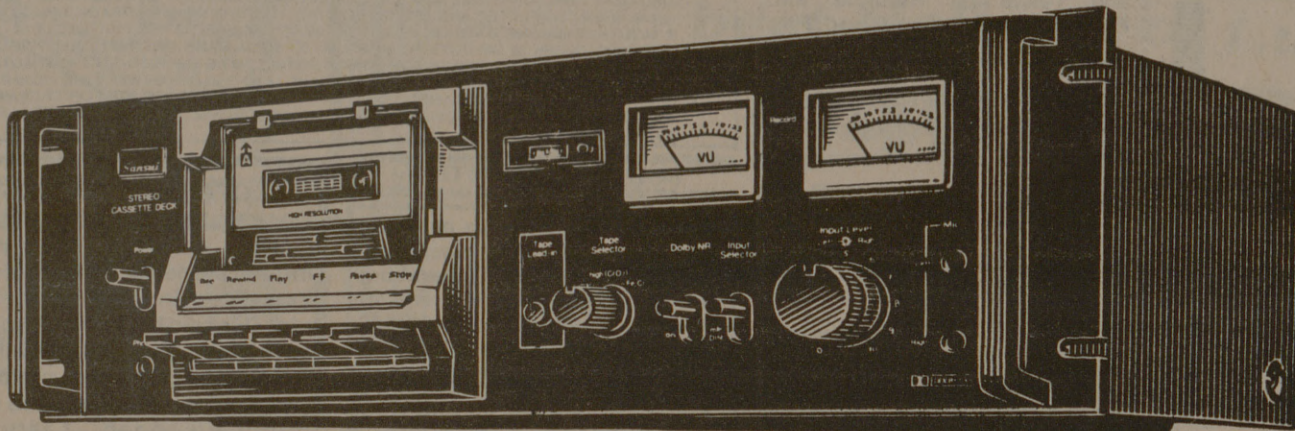
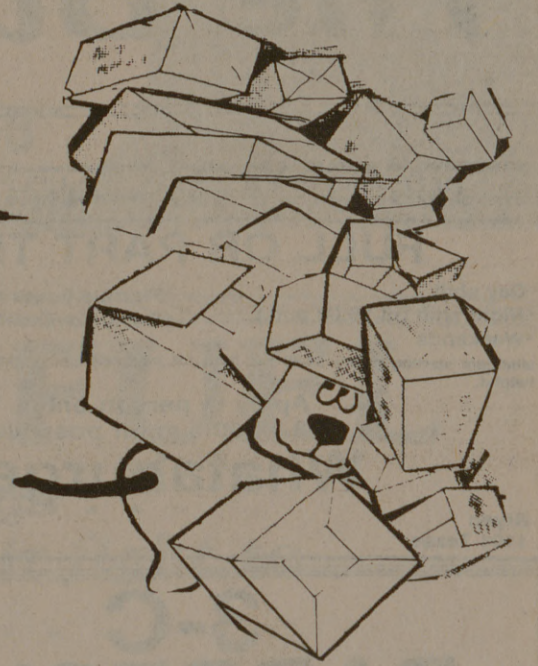
"One's world is contained to such a small unit," she said. "Survival is what one is limited to." Her clear blue eyes were far away for a moment as she thought back on the experience.

"I guess you could say my solitude was similar to that experienced by prisoners. But I chose to be alone, and I could do what I liked," — mostly reading — biographies, antique books, novels.

There was the one terrible moment when, 2,000 miles off Cape Horn, her rigging damaged, out of radio contact for almost a week, and in threatening weather, she decided to turn back to New Zealand, 3,000 miles away for repairs.

"Then the boat capsized, but the mast, with my makeshift rigging, held up, and the boat, as it's designed to do, righted itself. That's when I lost my fear — because it had been fear that decided me to go back, seeing waves that could kill you cresting and breaking in the distance. From then on it was easy," she said.

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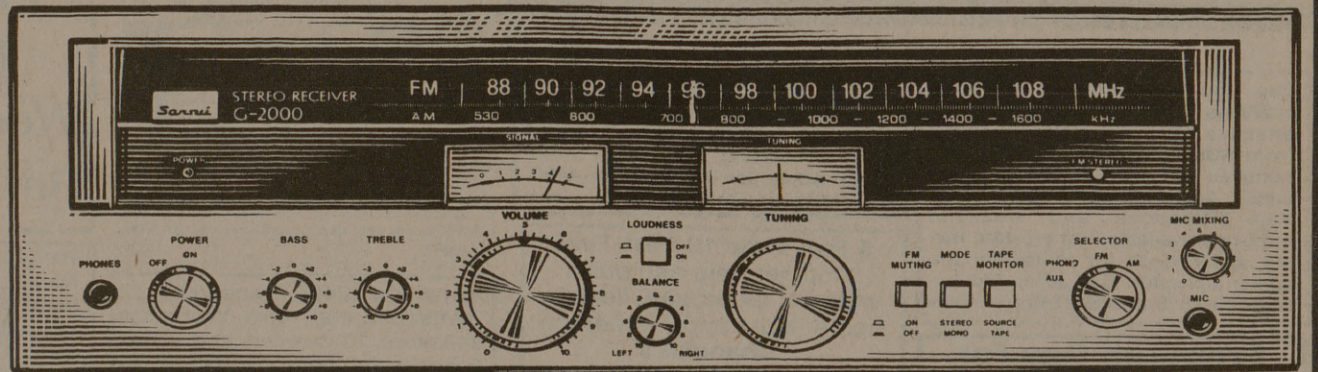
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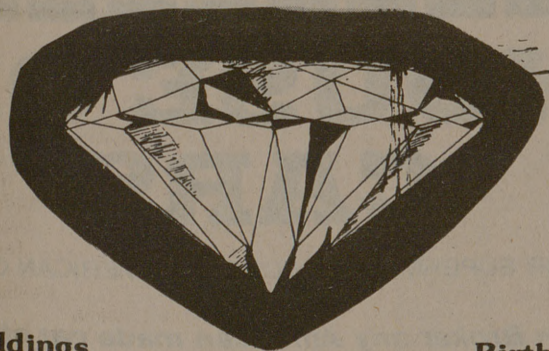
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