

Local

Brain implants help treat mental problems

United Press International
Brain pacemakers — battery-powered electrodes implanted just underneath the skull on the surface of the cerebellum — have been used for the first time to treat patients suffering from schizophrenia, depression and brain damage, and epileptics with behavioral pathology.

Dr. Robert Heath, chairman of Tulane University's department of psychiatry and neurology, is the first to use the pacemakers in this manner, according to Science Digest magazine. They had previously been used to treat epilepsy,

muscle-coordination problems and uncontrollable pain.

Dr. Heath experimentally treated 41 patients by implanting pacemakers on the surface of their cerebellums, which he says is the area intimately connected to the pleasure and pain centers deep inside the brain. The "least gratifying results" have been with schizophrenics, Heath says, "but with aggressive or depressed patients, results continue to be encouraging."

A new branch of psychology is taking Freud's theory of personality a step farther back in time.

Some birth psychologists say the roots of personality go back not to the first years of life but to birth and even back to the womb.

"All patterns in life are metaphoric reenactments of birth," says Leslie Feher, a psychologist and founder of the Association for Birth Psychology. In other words, Feher said, the way you were born influences your personality. Babies born by cesarean section miss labor contractions, the "essential process of birth" says Feher. As a consequence, they seek instant gratification. Feet-first breech births

promote aggression and overreaction. Pressure of forceps on the head can lead to chronic headaches or mental illness. And insensitive handling just after birth can result in an aversion to human contact. It's a highly controversial concept but many obstetricians, pediatricians and nurses are members of Feher's association. A congressional study of the theory is underway.

The heavy emphasis on population control in China has had one highly useful, major side effect other than keeping the birth rate down. One child per family has

become a widespread motto, and marriage is usually discouraged until men are 27 and women are 23. In some villages, couples form teams that decide each year the number of children the community can afford to have and which families should have them. The government offers financial "disincentives" to couples who limit family size. And along with the social pressure against large families have come strong taboos against premarital and extramarital sex — with the result that China's population of 950 million has a remarkably low rate of venereal

disease compared to other nations. Researchers from the Harvard Medical School may have discovered the biological clock that tells us when to sleep and when to wake up: it's a cluster of neurons in the hypothalamus in the brain.

"We believe this pacemaker sends out nerve impulses — like a clock in a computer," says R. Martin Moore-Ede, who headed the research group. "Destruction of the clusters in rodents and primates causes their periods of sleep and waking to be randomly distributed through the day," Moore-Ede explains. "We can't perform human experiments that would prove the cluster acts as a pacemaker. But the evidence strongly suggests that it does."

When you take your next nap, er, you'd do well not to scribble vigorously. Those 12 to 20 square feet of dead skin that cover your body help keep out foreign organisms, bacteria, fungus and radiation. The elbow replaces the outer layer every 10 days, but the inside of the forearm can take as long as 100.

Computer language helps teach math

United Press International
DALLAS — The inventor of a computer language specifically for children said students find mathematics difficult in school because they learn it under artificial conditions.

"In American schools, children learn French very slowly," Dr. Seymour Papert said by way of comparison. "But if they grew up in France they would learn it naturally."

Likewise, in his "math land"

children learn mathematics as a language — just as they would learn French in France.

"The mathematical concepts that are very laborious to teach in the classroom are picked up without the child noticing them" when he uses the computer, the profes-

sor of mathematics and education at Massachusetts Institute of Technology said.

"It's just like a child learning to talk — he doesn't consciously think, 'Now it's time to learn how to talk,' it just comes naturally," Papert said.

"We're moving towards the time when every child has a personal computer. It will be as natural as having a pencil; it's something that's just there. They can use the computer for everything they write, calculate, draw, even to compose music."

However, Papert said such extensive use of computers will not make a child lazy about calculating in his head.

"Children having difficulties with arithmetic usually don't like the subject, because they don't see the point of doing it," Papert said. "But get them to using the computer and they like learning. They are sufficiently intrigued about the computer that they start thinking about why and how it does things."

Papert's LOGO computer language system is different from the way computers usually are used in education. Instead of a "clever" computer teaching a "dumb" student, LOGO requires the student to teach the computer to carry out tasks.

He recently won the \$25,000 Marconi International Fellowship for the development of LOGO. Papert's project, developed at MIT during a 10-year period, is now being used by the Lamplighter School, a private Dallas school offering preschool through the fourth grade. But to insure the system's credibility of being able to work with all children, it is being tested in 15 classrooms of the New York public school system.

And even though the New York students are from a wide range of backgrounds and capabilities, "we're seeing very much the same sorts of results as at Lamplighter," Papert said.

Lamplighter School has 30 personal computers for its 400

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students to use during their time.

Papert's association with Lamplighter was instigated by Dr. Jonsson, one of the founders of the board of Lamplighter School. TI worked with MIT developing LOGO.

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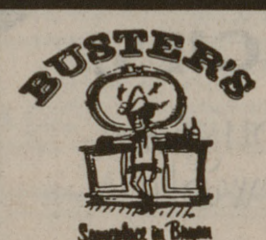
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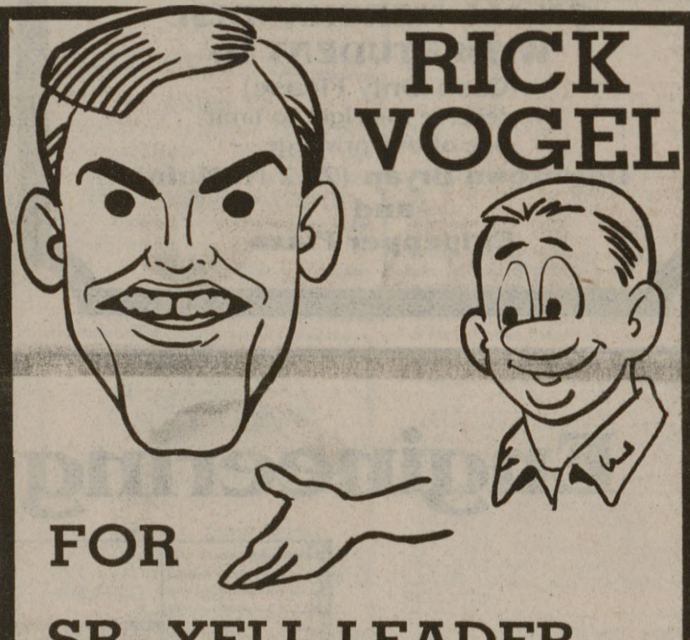
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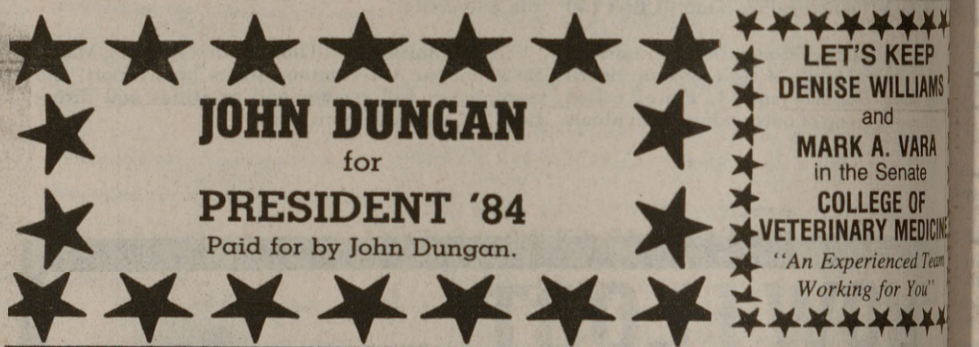
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