

Rippling rifles

photo by Rose Delano

Members of the Ross Volunteers practice the drill they will perform at Mardi Gras on Tuesday. There will be 110 members making the trip to New Orleans.

Weather halts rescue attempt

United Press International
ST. JOHN'S, Newfoundland — Ice-encrusted ships sailed into port bearing some of the dead crew members from a sunken oil rig and Soviet ship while other vessels braved the Atlantic's latest storm Thursday in search of more victims.

By Wednesday, 19 bodies had been recovered from the rig that sank Monday and another 20 from the Soviet freighter Mekhanik Tarasov that followed it to the bottom Tuesday.

Two supply ships, carrying the bodies of two victims, arrived at St. John's harbor Wednesday where a temporary morgue has been set up in a waterfront warehouse.

Several other ships with 37 more bodies aboard, continued the search for more of the 117 victims facing snow, high winds and stormy seas.

The five ship survivors were aboard a Canadian Coast Guard ship that was not planning to return to port immediately because the survivors were in excellent health and required no medical attention, a spokesman said.

Mobil Oil spokesman William Grisdale said the firm will send two one-man Mantis submarines to search for the wreckage of the Ocean Ranger oil rig as soon as the storm lets up.

In Ottawa, Energy Minister Marc Lalonde said two remaining rigs operating close to where the Ocean Ranger sank would be towed to Newfoundland for safety checks when the weather improved.

Grisdale said an inspection would show why the 30,000-ton rig tipped and sank in a storm far less severe than others it had weathered.

The fleet of search ships was battered during the night by the

second storm this week to ravage the oil fields, 170 miles southeast of St. John's. Aircraft were called back from the search because of the dangerous conditions.

Several inches of ice on parts of one of the supply ships that arrived in St. John's underscored the severity of the weather.

A spokesman for the sunken rigs' operator, Mobil Oil Canada Ltd., said the two smaller rigs suspended their operations when the Ocean Ranger developed the list that led to its sinking.

One of the rigs, the SEDCO 706, was on charter to Mobil from the South East Drilling Co. of Houston. The other, the Zapata Uglan, was on lease from the Zapata Off Shore Drilling Co. of Houston.

The government of Newfoundland set Friday as a day of mourning for the lost Ocean Ranger crewmen. It was the first such commemoration in a province where seafaring disasters have been common for centuries.

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Medicine for elderly: prescribe with caution

United Press International
NEW YORK — Some older people take and possess so many drugs that they are mini-pharmacies, and a specialist says that means doctors must use extra caution when prescribing tranquilizers and other mind-affecting drugs for the elderly.

"Elderly patients often take several medications simultaneously, which can lead to altered drug effect," Dr. Carl Salzman of Boston, told fellow doctors in a journal of the American Psychiatric Association.

"As the physical health and independent status of an older person declines, the number of drugs taken usually increases," Salzman said. "This combination of failing health, aging body and multiple drug prescriptions may contribute to alterations in drug effect."

"Practicing clinicians must be aware of these alterations and adjust their prescription of psychotropic drugs accordingly."

He made these other points about tranquilizers and other psychotropic drugs:

- they usually will take longer to work in an older patient, will stay longer in the body, and often will produce a greater effect per milligram dosage than they would in a younger person
- delayed onset of action can be caused by slower absorption and distribution of the drug

Salzman suggested that before prescribing the drugs to elderly patients, doctors:

- remember that psychotropic drugs usually have a prolonged and heightened effect on the aging body
- determine all medications an older patient is taking before prescribing a psychotropic drug. This includes self-prescribed drugs (borrowed or old pills), medications from other physicians, and over-the-counter preparations.

• conduct a careful, complete assessment of the patient's physical health before drug treatment begins.

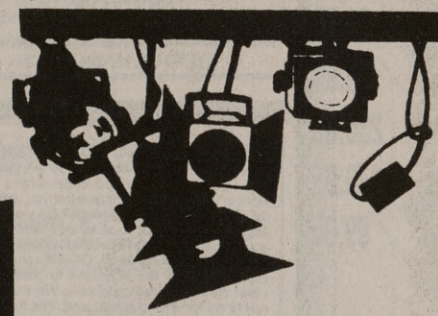
Salzman reminded doctors that any older patient who is receiving a psychotropic drug and who appears restless, agitated, confused, forgetful or depressed may have psychotropic drug toxicity. Drug dosages should be reduced or the drug should be discontinued before another drug is added to the regimen.

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