

Warped

by Scott McCullar

Life's meaning is not in age, historian says

United Press International
HOUSTON — Keeping elderly people alive as long as possible — despite their health conditions — may often do more harm than good, a cultural historian said Thursday.

"The question is not how long can we all live, but how long can we live with meaning to our lives," said Dr. Thomas R. Cole, an assistant professor at the Institute for the Medical Humanities at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. "But not many medical professionals appear to be discussing this dilemma seriously."

Cole said physicians and researchers tend to undercut many religious and cultural tra-

ditions by insisting all older people be kept alive at all costs.

"I fear by the year 2000 this country will be faced with many more frail and dependent old, old people than we can economically cope with — and I'm greatly concerned that today not much thought is given to why we're doing this," Cole said during an international symposium on aging sponsored by the Texas Research Institute of Mental Sciences.

He said the number of people over age 65 is expected to reach 20 percent of the American population within the next 25 years. Cole said medical scientists should examine their efforts to extend the length of

life through new machines and medications.

He blamed some science fiction stories for promoting the notion that people can live for extraordinarily long periods — perhaps even forever.

"Remember that old Greek myth about the man who wished to the beautiful goddess that he could live forever?" Cole said. "Well, he forgot to also wish to remain young, so he gradually wasted away until he was nothing more than a voice. The goddess finally took pity on him and turned him into a grasshopper."

"I think it's critically important for us to ask if we want to be a nation or a world of grasshoppers."



Long Island man held for mail death threats

United Press International
NEW YORK — The brother of a former Green Beret doctor convicted of murdering his pregnant wife and two children was arrested on Long Island Thursday on charges of sending a

threatening statements to both Smith and his family.

MacDonald told Caden he had been working as a cook on Long Island, although his address was listed as 39 Corinthian Walk, Long Beach, Calif.

"I am hoping, as silly as it may sound, that the letter might appear to be humorous to Mr. Smith," MacDonald said.

He said he also wrote to President Reagan and had been waiting for a response from Smith rather than an arrest. He wondered if Smith "misunderstood my intent."

MacDonald, who admitted submitting voluntarily to psychiatric treatment in 1979 and 1980, said the McGinniss book about his brother's case, which concluded the doctor was guilty of the murders, had prompted the letter.

"That was another thing that prompted me to write those letters," he said.

In a sometimes rambling speech to the court, he also said he was concerned about his brother's safety should he be let out of jail.

Dr. Jeffrey MacDonald is serving three consecutive life terms at a federal prison in Texas.

The McGinniss book on the

case, currently on The New York Times best seller list, mentions James MacDonald as having a history of mental problems.

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threatening letter to the U.S. attorney general.

James MacDonald, 41, of Long Beach, Calif., said the Joe McGinniss bestseller, "Fatal Vision," about the 1970 murder case against Dr. Jeffrey MacDonald, was one of the things that prompted his Sept. 27 letter to U.S. Attorney General William French Smith.

U.S. District Court Magistrate John Caden ordered MacDonald held on \$100,000 bond pending further hearing. MacDonald was charged in California with using the mail to send a threat to the attorney general. The letter, postmarked from Long Beach, Calif., made

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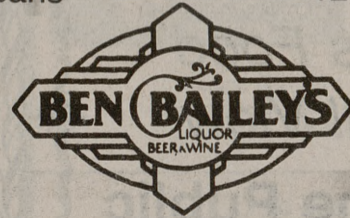
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