When it comes to life, exactly what is unsafe?



Magic John-son is back with the Lakers; con-doms are offered along with doms are offered along with school lunches; and all is well with the world. Now if we can only elect a president who will make AIDS re-SCHADEN search a top priority, we will be safe at last.

bome tree and as a state last.

Such thinking reminds me of that proverbial awamp land for sale at a great price for those willing to pay cash.

ing to pay cash.

It has been said that there are none so enslaved as those slaves who think that they are free. By the same token, it might be said that there are none so unsafe as

those who think they are sofe when, indeed, they are not.

It may be true that condoms make for safer sex. However, safer does not necessarily translate to safe. What is safe sex anyway?

If sexual activity is little more than indoor sport, a means of interpersonal conquest or a quick release of pent up hormones, then perhaps we can define safe sex as any genital activity in which there is no chance for the transfer of disease. If a roll in the hey is little more than an attempt at the illusion of relationship, if the expectation is no more than a very temporary fix for chronic loneliness, then condoms might provide some sort of safety when they work.

If an the other hand, any of the

some sort of safety when they work.

If, on the other hand, any of the above leaves you cold, then perhaps we have not come close to addressing the matter of safe sex.

If sexual activity is seen as something more than an exercise of narcissism then latex can wear tather thin in fixing a problem that goes way beyond venerally transmitted diseases.

Granted, that in an effort to deny our animal nature we may go too far in romatticiting sox, even to the point of unreality. However, is it extreme to suggest that truly safe sex has its best chance in a committed relationship that is stable enough to support all the physical, emotional, psychological and spirtual dimensions that this powerful experience carries with it? Trivialized sox can hardly be safe sex, since trivialized sex trivializes ext people who take part in alizes the people who take part in it, and trivializing people is never

There is little doubt that we are an impatient lot. Delayed gratifi-cation is not exactly the strong

auit of a society in which instant everything is far more in voque than delayed snything. We have become used to being able to microwave our food. We expect the photo lab to have our pictures back by yesterday noon. We seek instant fixes for longstanding problems. Working at anything problems. Working at anything problems. Working at anything the program is often the same, the lilusion of instant relationship is often more attractive than the

time and the effort it takes to build the kind of relationship that will be growth producing for both persons. Sex can provide that illusion, but when illusions become confused with reality safety is seldom present. All too often the unmet expectations do little more than to make one or the other trusting disabled.

Relationship that is simply about protecting ourselves from one another can hardly be safe in the fully human sense, in that it puts isolation and altenation

ahead of sharing and mutual growth.

If that which threatens life is deemed unsafe, then perhaps only that which contributes to life can truly be said to be safe. Magic deem't seem to be the only one to have missed the ball on that one.

The Rev. Robert Schaden is with Newman House on the cam-pus of Schoolcraft College in Livo-nia.

Agencies offer toll-free numbers

A number of agencies and government departments offer free information or advice on a wide variety of subjects of interest and service to older adults and their families. Following is a list of toll-free numbers. Operators will be happy to answer your questions or direct you to other proper information sources.

AT&T Special Needs Center 800-233-1222
Alzheimer's & Related Disorders Center 800-231-0379
American Cancer Society 800-ACS-2345
American Cancer Society 800-ACS-2345

American Council for the Blind 800-424-8666

American Diabetes Association 800-232-4372

American Parkinson's Disease Association 800-223-2732 Arthritis Foundation 800-283-7800

Auto Repairs Complaints 800-292-4204 Cancer Information Center 200 Cancer Information Center 800-422-6237

Center for Independent Living 800-482-0222

Sou-492-022
Energy Assistance 800-292-5650
Hospics 800-331-1620
Housing Discrimination, Hug 900-424-8590
Lawyer Referal 800-968-0738 Legal Holline for Seniors 800-347-LAWS
Medicaid Information (Social Services) 800-638-6414
Medicard Appeals 800-385-6899
Medicare Inquiry (Part B) 800-482-4045 Medicar

re Inquiry/Part A (Hos-Michigan Bell Special Needs Center 800-482-8254 Nursing Home/Long Term Care 800-292-7852 Physically Impaired Associa-tion of Michigan 800-274-7426 Prescription Drug Credit (form) 800-367-6263

800-367-6263
Social Security 800-234-5772
Taxpayers Assistance (State) 800-487-7000
Taxpayers Information (Federal) 800-829-1040
Utilities (Public Service Commission) 800-292-9555
Veterans Information and Assistance 800-482-0740

Rence Mahler is a gerontologist and the director of communications and admissions at a Rochester Hills nursing facility. She is a member of the Michigan State Commission on Services to the Aging. Send your questions to her at Observer & Eccentric, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009.







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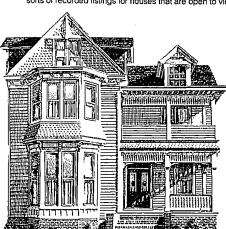
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