

consumer mailbag

As we begin a new year and a new decade, it might be worth looking at the environment we live in from a different perspective. It's one that Concern has advocated for a number of years.

In a special report for "Newsweek" magazine a few months ago, Gregg Easterbrook summed up this environmental perspective very succinctly. The following is a condensed version of his thoughts:

"Every reference to the environment is prefaced with the adjective 'fragile.' Nothing could be further from the truth.

The environment is very nearly indestructible. It has survived ice ages, bombardments of cosmic radiation, fluctuations of the sun, reversals of the seasons caused by shifts in the planetary axis, collisions of comets and meteors bearing far more force than man's doomsday arsenals and the lightless "nuclear winters" that followed these impacts. Mischelous human assaults are pinpricks compared with forces of the magnitude nature is accustomed to resisting.

One aspect of the environment is genuinely delicate, namely, the set of environmental conditions favorable to human beings. Earth's ecosystem is ever so flux. Climates, configurations of the continents, dominant biological and chemical forces shift endlessly. A scant 20,000 years



Terry Gibb

ago, the rivers and lakes we now fret about preserving did not exist. Turn back a few pages and none of the rain forests or wilderness tracts we fear "irrevocably" losing existed to lose, nor did any human forebear.

TO MOTHER Nature our contemporary infatuation with endangered species must seem callow sentimentality, for extinction is the environment's norm; 99 percent of the creatures ever to have come into existence have vanished. Nature doesn't care if the globe is populated by trilobites or thunder lizards or six-eyed telepathic slugs or people. What nature cares about is that the ecosystem live. Should man spur the environmental conditions now slanted in favor of his existence, creatures will rise up in our place that thrive on murky greenhouse air, or dine on compounds human metabolisms find toxic.

In the modern world even if a nation renders its own environment clean, no amount of wealth or military strength will enable it to escape the side effects of environmental

abuses elsewhere. This suggests the coming century will hold either general environmental misfortune, the distress to be suffered everywhere, or increased international cooperation, the benefits to be shared by rich and poor alike. Perhaps the environment, the place where we all must live, will become the bond that finally brings the nations of the world together.

We should not view our actions as protection of the environment — but protection of ourselves, the human race. Because without the necessary components of sustainable life, clean air, water and land, other creatures with different requirements will inhabit the earth we've thoughtlessly neglected.

The Consumer Mailbag and Concern hopes each of you has a happy, healthy and safe New Year.

The Consumer Mailbag answers your questions. Address mail to the Consumer Mailbag, Concern Detroit, One Kennedy Square, 4th Floor, Detroit, MI 48226

Hearing loss is subtle

Dear Jo:
I would like to use your column to vent some of my anger and frustration!

I spent last week traveling with my sister and her husband. They are retirees in their late 60s.

What was planned as a nice vacation to look at the beautiful fall colors ended up being a week of frustration. My sister's husband Reg is hard of hearing. He doesn't think he has a hearing problem at all. We have suggested that he ask his doctor about this and perhaps wear a hearing aid — but no, he prefers that we repeat everything we say, sometimes three and four times, until we become impatient, angry, and downright tired.

He was upset when we wouldn't let him drive. We couldn't because by the time he understood where we wanted him to turn, we were well past where we wanted to go.

Here I am, after a supposedly relaxing trip, more tired than before I left.

Jo, what can we do? He used to be a great guy.

gerontology



A. Jolayne Farrell

Sign me,
Mrs. T.
P.S. He reads your column.

Dear Mrs. T:
I'm sure Reg is still a great guy. Thirty percent of the elderly population have age-related hearing loss. It is more prevalent in elderly men than in elderly women. It often goes unnoticed because it comes on very slowly. They not only have a problem with communication, the loss also has an impact on their physical

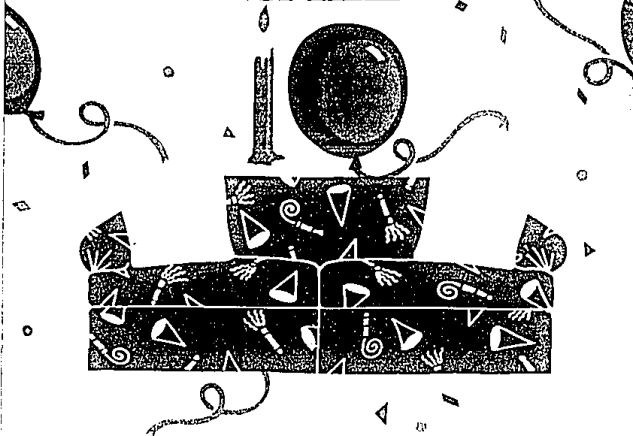
stability, their mental health (it is thought to be related to depression), and all their social interactions.

For Reg's own well-being, he must have an evaluation (with an otologist and an audiologist) and then follow through with the professional recommendations.

I suggest that you and your sister confront Reg. Tell him, again, of your frustrations. Explain how exhausting it is for you to have to repeat everything you say time and time again. He has to take the responsibility for his hearing loss and do something about it.

We had this problem in our family and, after years of frustration with the older person not getting help, we all refused to repeat ourselves. He now wears a hearing aid and hears better.

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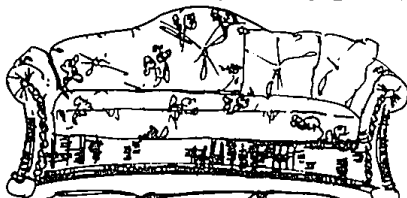


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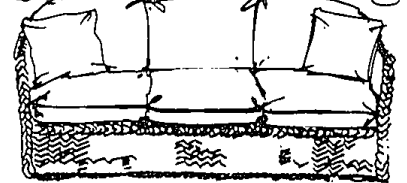
January Clearance Sale

All Winter Inventory Must Go.



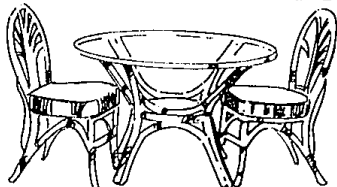
Wicker & Rattan Seating 50% off.

We're clearing out our winter inventory to make room for summer. All sofas, chairs, end tables, cocktail tables and entertainment centers in rattan are on sale now at 50% off. A great time to decorate the sun room, family room or great room for spring.



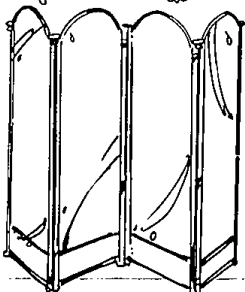
Wicker & Leather 50% off.

Something new — leather cushioning on rattan from Oaston on sale now at 50%. Also available in fabric, but now is the time to buy. All rattan seating is on sale in stock from such leading manufacturers as Ficks Reed and Kranwood. We also have swivel rockers from \$99.50.



Rattan Dining up to 50% off.

Our rattan dining groups are on sale also up to 50% off. Available groups are in white washed or pecan finished rattan. Some with woven leather. You must see this sale. Perfect groupings sized for any dining area or game room.



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casual concepts

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