

Alcoholic elderly topic of seminar

By Susanne Teten

The assumption that alcoholics don't live long enough to reach old age is not necessarily true, said Helen Boosalis, director of the Nebraska Department of Aging.

Studies show that 15 percent of people over 65 are alcoholics, Boosalis said, which means that of the 205,000 people 65 or older in Nebraska, 50,000 of them may be alcoholics.

Boosalis made her comments Friday in a luncheon address to 60 participants at a seminar on alcoholism and drug dependency among the elderly. The seminar was conducted at the Nebraska Center for Continuing Education, 33rd and Holdrege streets.

Boosalis said the majority of Nebraska's elderly are healthy, vital and active, but the situation can change rapidly. The elderly have more health and financial problems, she said, and they also experience a great deal of loneliness. These factors lead some older people to seek relief and escape from their problems by drinking, she said.

One major problem with drinking among the elderly is the effect it can have when combined with medications, said Dr. David L. Songster, adjunct assistant professor of clinical pharmacy at the NU Medical Center. He said alcohol can have one of two major effects on medicine. First, large amounts of alcohol can decrease the "metabolic clearance rate" for some drugs, which means that the medication stays in the body longer because enzymes that

would ordinarily break down the drug are slowed. In a young person, one-half of the drug will be gone from the system in 20 hours. However, Songster said, in an elderly person, the same drug may take 100 hours to leave the body. This can cause medical problems for the elderly, he said.

Secondly, in some elderly alcoholics, the intake of alcohol can also stimulate the production of the enzymes, and speed up the elimination of drugs from the body, Songster said.

He said a combination of anti-arthritis drugs and alcohol may cause ulcers, possibly causing the patients to become chronic "bleeders".

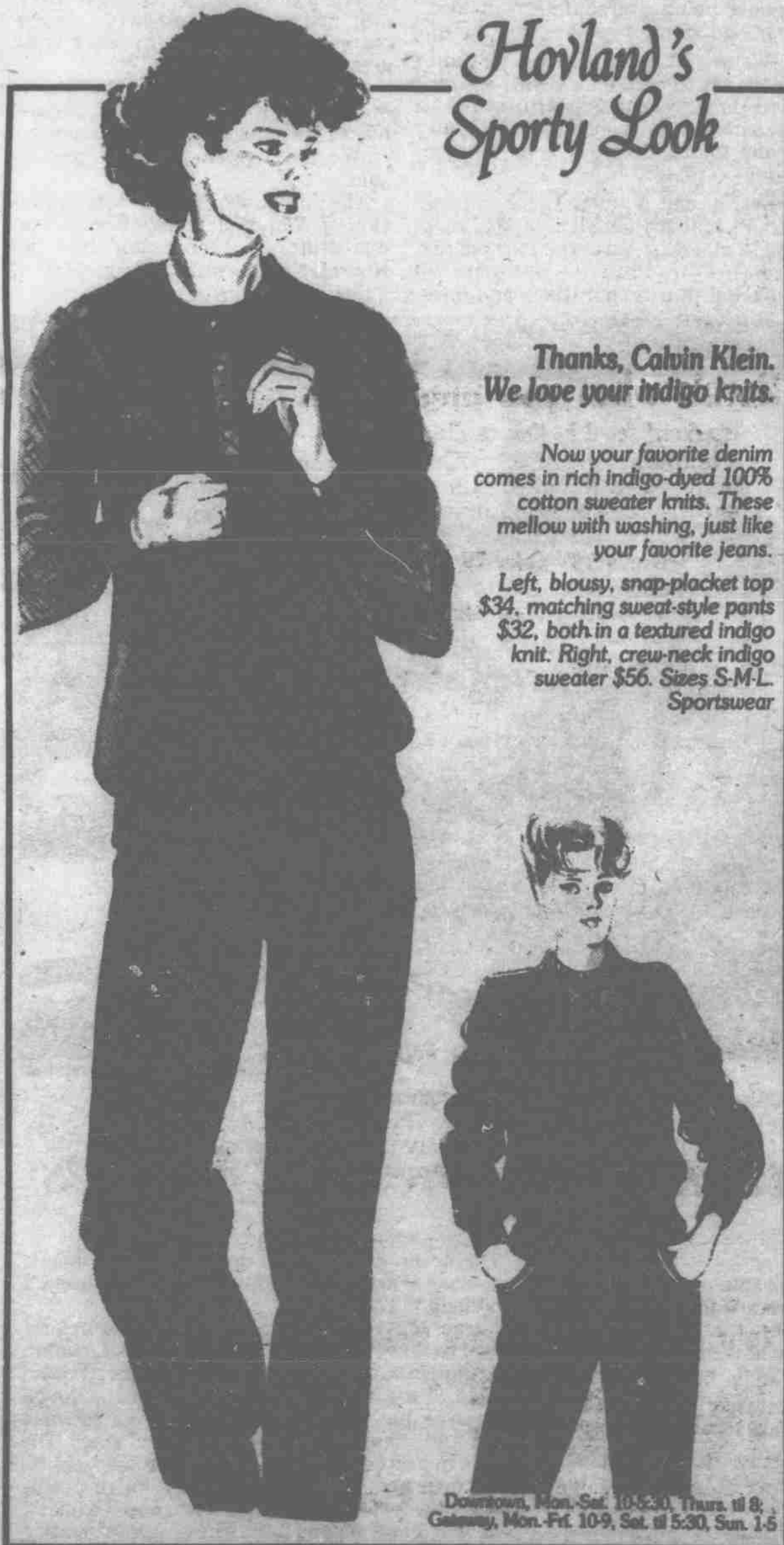
The problem of alcoholism among the elderly is often ignored because people don't want to look at another problem afflicting the elderly, said Sandra M. Schiff, an outreach therapist with Bi-County Community Hospital in Warren, Mich.

Schiff, who received her certificate and master's degrees in social work from Wayne State University in Detroit, Mich., said alcoholism among the elderly can be separated into two types: early and late onset.

The early-onset alcoholic is the person who has been drinking for most of his or her life. Schiff said this person has tremendous strength or else he or she would not have survived the years of alcoholism.

The late-reactive onset alcoholic drinks because of problems in later life. Medical, financial and social problems can lead people to find escape in drinking, Schiff said.

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Off The Wire

National and international news from the Reuter News Report

Rebels capture Arafat stronghold

TRIPOLI, Lebanon — Syrian-backed Palestinian rebels squeezed PLO leader Yasser Arafat into a tight corner in northern Lebanon Sunday by capturing one of his two remaining strongholds after four days of bloody fighting. Rebels forces advanced to within 1.5 miles of Arafat's base at the Baddawi refugee camp as loyalists put up what may be the guerrilla chief's last fight in Lebanon.

Arafat early had conceded the loss of the Nahr Al-Bared refugee camp, 10 miles north of Baddawi, and said he had ordered his men to withdraw in order to spare civilian blood. He vowed to fight on at Baddawi because, he said, "we have no alternative to self-defense."

Reports from Tripoli, 50 miles north of Beirut, indicated that Arafat's men stand little chance against the overwhelming firepower of the rebels, who are supported by Syrian troops controlling the area.

Search for black box ends

TOKYO — U.S. ships searching in the Sea of Japan for the wreckage of a South Korean airliner shot down by the Soviet Union Sept. 1 left the area Sunday, Japanese coast guard officials said. The move followed a Pentagon announcement Saturday that the United States was calling off its search in the area near the Soviet island of Moneron off Sakhalin for the wreckage from Korean Airlines flight 007. All 269 people aboard the airliner were killed.

A Pentagon spokesman said in Washington Saturday that neither the "black box" flight recording device nor any other wreckage had been found from the Boeing 747 jet. The United States had hoped to find the recording device for clues on the downing of the airliner after it strayed into Soviet air space.

From warship to jail

ST. GEORGE'S, Grenada — Bernard Coard and Gen. Hudson Austin, instigators of the bloody coup against Prime Minister Maurice Bishop three weeks ago, were transferred from a U.S. warship to the main jail in Grenada Sunday. The men and four others, including Coard's wife, Phyllis, were turned over to the custody of Caribbean security force on the island.

U.S. forces had arrested the Coards and Austin in the early stages of the U.S.-led invasion, which began Oct. 25.

Americans continued to draw strong support from residents of the island. Prominent Grenadians said Sunday that they still fear the presence of a shadowy "fifth column" and that they want American forces to remain on the island.

In Washington, U.S. officials said they still hope to remove American military forces from Grenada as soon as possible, despite requests from Grenada's governor-general that some U.S. troops remain until elections are held. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, interviewed on ABC-TV's "This Week With David Brinkley," said the timing of the withdrawal would depend on how quickly conditions on Grenada returned to normal and how rapidly forces from other Caribbean states could be assembled to take over a policing role.

Slow tow toward Cuba

WASHINGTON — A disabled Soviet nuclear submarine, under tow by a Soviet salvage tug off the U.S. Atlantic coast, is proceeding slowly southward in the direction of Cuba, the Pentagon said Sunday. U.S. Navy planes last week spotted the Victor-3 class attack sub, designed to hunt and destroy other vessels, on the surface of the choppy seas less than 500 miles east of Charleston, S.C. A Soviet tug from Havana reached the sub Saturday. U.S. officials have said the sub may have been damaged by underwater sonar detection gear towed by a U.S. Navy frigate.

Warner . . .

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"School has been good to me, but school just can't teach you all you need to know," he said. "I thought things were very structured, just get the job done right. But you have to learn to deal with people . . . no matter how knowledgeable or brilliant you are, you aren't going to the job done without the help of the people you work with."

After the Nielsen job, Warner worked for two years at the State Department of Administrative Services, where he met his wife, the former Joan Sendgraaf of Fremont. They've been married for three years, and have a five-week-old son named Drew.

Funds . . .

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Bahramzad said another of his goals is to work with local banks, loan companies and the UNL administration to establish a low-interest, short-term emergency loan for international students.

He said this type of loan is needed because it is difficult for an international student to get an American co-signer in order to be eligible for a regular loan.

The new president said he also will work to arrange better housing for international students during holidays. Although rooms in International House in Neihardt Residence Center are available, students need the permission of current residents to stay in them during breaks. This arrangement poses a problem for some residents who "don't want a stranger staying in their room," he said.

Other ISO officers elected Friday were Tony Ogbenta of Nigeria, vice president; Vijay Tatkar of India, secretary; Shankar Sharmugam of Malaysia, treasurer; and Khader Khayyat of Jordan, ASUN representative.