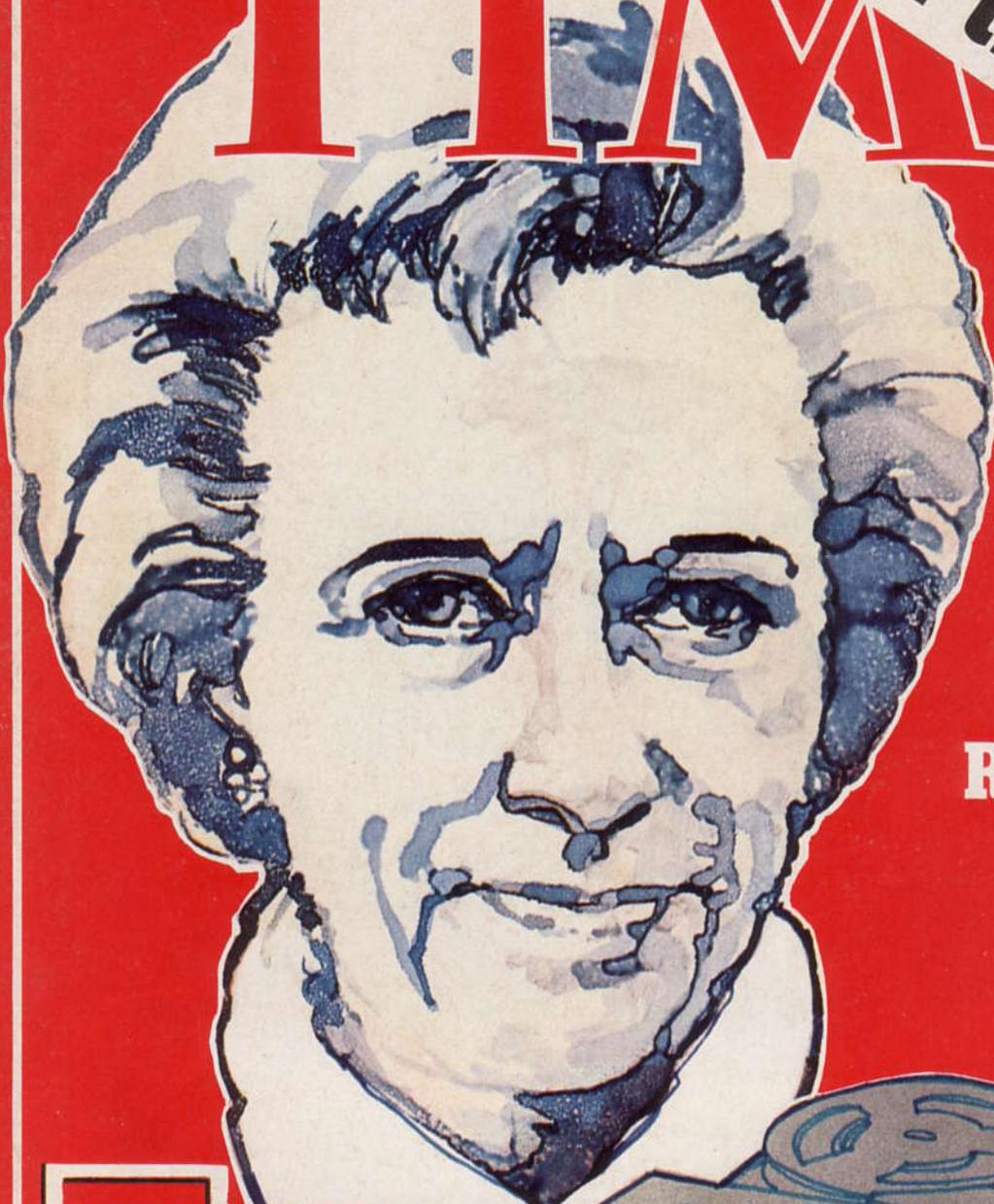


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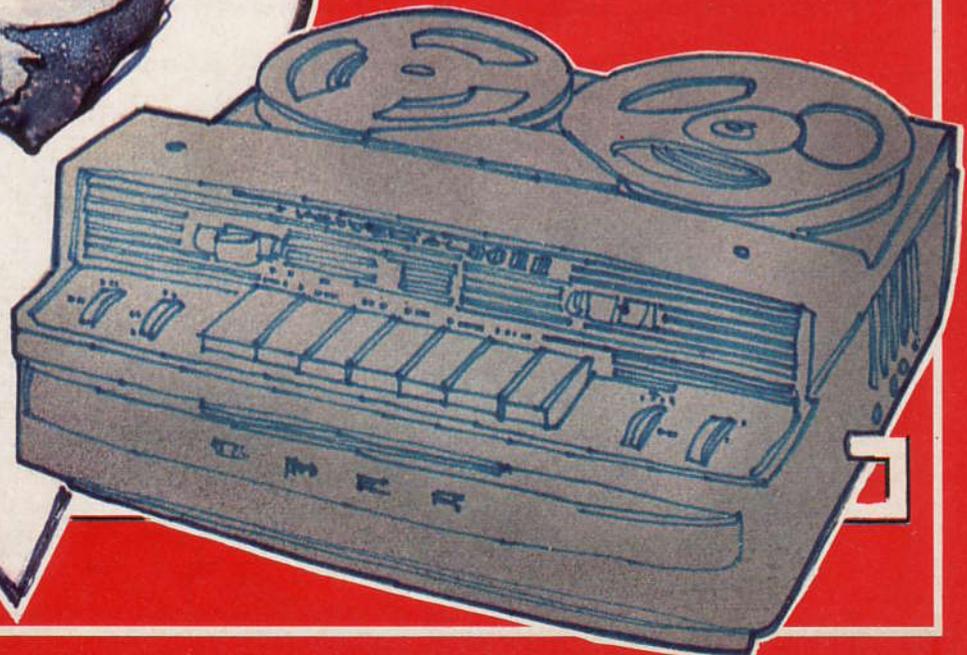
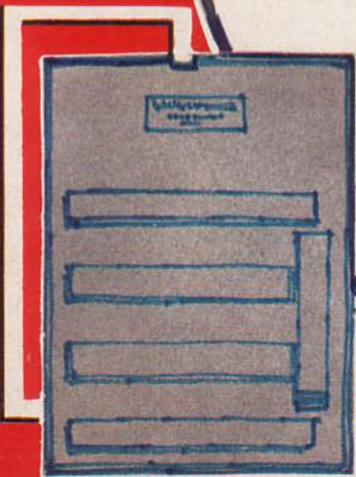
DECEMBER 10, 1973

**The Secretary
and the Tapes**

TIM



**Rose Mary
Woods**



Progress Against Cancer

Doctors are becoming increasingly certain that immunology—the study of the body's natural defenses against illness—will eventually provide the key to understanding and controlling cancer. Last week that conviction was strengthened when some 2,000 of the world's foremost medical scientists met in Manhattan under the joint sponsorship of the American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute to report their progress in human cancer research. Among the most recent findings:

► There is new evidence that the main cancer villains are viruses, submicroscopic packets of nucleic acids that can invade cells and take over their genetic machinery. Using immunological techniques to identify antigens (the substances that trigger the body's defenses), Dr. Donald Morton of the University of California at Los Angeles has found signs of viral activity in human sarcomas, or cancers of connective tissue. Drs. Werner and Gertrude Henle of the University of Pennsylvania have studied an intruder known as the Epstein-Barr virus in cells from victims of Burkitt's lymphoma, a tumor of the lymph glands. They have also studied the virus in cells of patients with nasopharyngeal carcinoma, a malignancy of the nose and throat. Joseph Melnick of Baylor College of Medicine has determined that antibodies formed by the body to combat the herpes Type 2 virus*, which often causes sores in the genital area, are found more frequently in women with cervical cancer than in those who are free of the disease. Previous research has already revealed that women who have had genital herpes are eight times as likely to develop cervical cancer as those who have not.

► Ever since virus-like particles were first observed in the milk of women with family histories of breast cancer, many women with similar family histories have worried about whether they can breast-feed their infants without transmitting the disease. Their concern is apparently unwarranted. Laboratory studies have so far failed to disclose the presence of antigens or antibodies that would prove that the particles were indeed viruses. Nor has research established that the particles cause malignancies. Dr. Brian Henderson of the University of Southern California reported at the Manhattan meeting that he had studied 317 women with breast cancer and a carefully matched control group. He found that the number of women who had themselves been breast-fed was about the same in each group.

► Doctors have been experimenting with immunotherapy—stimulating the immune system to recognize and combat

cancer—for several years. Dr. Carl M. Pinsky of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York injected BCG, a live-bacteria anti-tuberculosis vaccine, directly into the lesions of 39 patients with malignant melanoma, a rare form of fast-spreading cancer that starts on the skin. In eight of the patients, there was noticeable regression of at least some of the treated lesions; twelve others had regression in all of the sores injected with the vaccine. Two others fared even better. They have experienced complete regression of all lesions and have been completely cancer-free, one for a full year, the other for two.

Horror Story

"The drama played out here was not a fantasy contrived to satisfy a casual fancy for morbid amusement; it was real, permanent and tragic."

This was the presiding judge's description of the five-month trial that concluded last week in his Sacramento, Calif., courtroom. The plaintiff was Albert Gonzales, 32, a former grocery clerk, who charged that his doctor, Orthopedic Surgeon John Nork, 45, had performed a back operation that was not only unnecessary but has prevented successful treatment for a cancer that is slowly killing him. As a result of Nork's admission of guilt, Judge B. Abbott Goldberg awarded Gonzales a huge malpractice judgment. He ordered Mercy Hospital, where the operation was performed, and Nork to share in payments of compensatory damages of \$1.7 million and directed Nork alone to pay punitive damages of \$2,000,000.

Gonzales testified that he had gone to Nork in 1967 with spondylolisthesis, or forward slippage, of the fifth spinal vertebra. Often, this condition requires no treatment at all. Surgery is considered only if there are persistent troublesome symptoms. Nork recommended a lumbar laminectomy, an extremely delicate surgical procedure that involves removing a portion of a vertebra and fusing the adjacent vertebrae.

Upon returning home from the hospital after a four-hour, unsuccessful operation, Gonzales spent most of his time in bed and complaining of pain in his back. He kept his children away from him for fear they would bump him and increase his pain; he became a heavy drinker and made three attempts at suicide. Because of his emotional anguish, Gonzales was unable to accept drug treatment for a testicular cancer discovered three years after the operation. As a result, doctors say, he now has only a 10% chance of surviving three years.

Nork, who has already lost previous malpractice suits for \$495,000 and \$595,000, acknowledged that he had performed the operation badly. He also tes-

tified that the reason for his incompetence was his dependence from 1963 through 1970 on "uppers and downers." He popped stimulants to relieve the depression that followed an illness, then took tranquilizers to calm himself down. Somehow he kept his habit hidden from both his wife and the hospital personnel. He also confessed that he had lied in his two previous malpractice cases. He did so, he claimed, at the urging of attorneys for his insurance company.

He apparently covered up his incompetence as well. Because his operations involved skeletal repair rather than removal of diseased organs, hospital pathologists had no indication that he was performing unnecessary surgery.



DR. NORK AFTER VERDICT
A permanent tragedy.

In fact, in an inadvertent comment on the medical profession's ability—or willingness—to police itself, several colleagues testified at the trial that Nork had a fine reputation.

Judge Goldberg made no attempt to conceal his dismay. In a 196-page decision (which will probably become final on Jan. 30), he branded the doctor "an ogre, a monster feeding on human flesh," who performed unnecessary surgery and did it badly "simply to line his pockets." He characterized the trial as "a Grand Guignol of medical horrors." He also criticized the hospital, which, he said, "has a duty to protect its patients from malpractice by members of its medical staff." Nork is under investigation by the state board of medical examiners, and action is being taken to revoke his license to practice. He also faces many more months in the courtroom. Some 30 suits, asking \$20 million, are still pending against him.

* A variant of the virus that causes cold sores.