

of hours.

The Mall of America is hardly the consumeristic horror that Popkin described it to be.

**Al Sandvik, Minneapolis,
visiting Treasure Island**

■ ■ ■

It is unfortunate that your readers did not get a balanced view of this shopping center. While the caption stated, "To some shoppers, the largest mall is a dream," nowhere in the article does Popkin try to assess actual shoppers' reactions to the mall. There were many references to the problems caused by the mall's overwhelming success, especially during opening week.

My own experience with the mall has been very good. Twice a week I join hundreds of others using the mall hallways before business hours to get our walking exercise. The mall and the city of Bloomington have a program to assist the walkers, such as monthly speakers, daily coffee and roll service, and a record-keeping system.

It took me three visits to orient myself to the layout of the stores, parking, etc. Now I can go directly to the store and department I want. Contrary to Ms. Popkin's article, the ramps are well laid out with wide stalls, wide aisles and abundant lighting. Each area is identified with a state for easy remembering and for association with the many enclosed skyways from the ramp to the main building.

**Martin J. Timmons, Minneapolis,
visiting St. Petersburg**

Challenge still exists

Re: *Christian Science leader charges disharmony mocks church tradition*, Jan. 23, about the decision to publish a controversial biography of the founder of the Christian Science church, a prominent member spoke of "the deception and dishonesty practiced at the Mother Church in the name of Christian Science. The members are increasingly realizing that they have been manipulated and betrayed on a massive scale."

I wonder what she, and the rest of the flock, would say if they were to discover that the entire premise of the church, i.e., that prayer alone can miraculously

and spontaneously heal medical injuries and disease, is based upon flimsy evidence that could not withstand the critical scrutiny of skeptical investigators. How many more tragic deaths (especially of innocent children of church members) from such treatable diseases as diabetes will it take before that realization begins to set in?

The Tampa Bay Skeptics' "\$1,000 Challenge" for proof of any paranormal phenomenon remains unclaimed after more than three years. A single unambiguous case of faith-healing would suffice.

**Gary P. Posner, M.D., Founder,
Tampa Bay Skeptics, St. Petersburg**

Five former presidents

Re: *Transfer of power is a moving experience*, by Howard Troxler, Jan. 20.

An otherwise excellent column about the intricacies of the transition of presidential power contained one small error which I would like to correct. Troxler said, in part, "As of noon today, we'll have five former presidents running around: Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan and Bush. This has never happened before."

I respectfully submit the following historical fact. When President Abraham Lincoln took his oath of office on March 4, 1861, five ex-presidents of the United States were alive: Martin Van Buren, John Tyler, Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan, who attended the ceremony as Lincoln's immediate predecessor.

Also among the 30,000 spectators were four other men who were destined to become president: Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield, Chester Alan Arthur and Benjamin Harrison.

Seaford F. Jackson, Tampa

Curious Canadian

As a Canadian, I'm curious.

Our medical support staffs make more money per annum than yours.

We pay more for our drugs than you do.

Our building costs are greater than yours.

We buy or make under licenses to you most of our



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WILSE B. WEBB, Ph.D.
Univ. of Florida Psychology Dept.
Gainesville

February 15, 1993

[Redacted]

Treasure Island, FL 33706

Dear Mr. [Redacted],

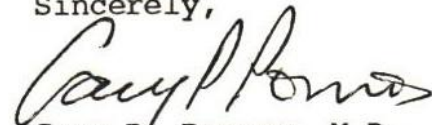
Thank you very much for your letter of February 9, written in response to my letter in the St. Petersburg Times.

I'll accept your point that Christian Science may not claim "spontaneous" healing. However, in cases such as a child in diabetic coma moments away from death, the claim that prayer alone is satisfactory treatment certainly would seem to imply "near-spontaneous" healing.

I agree that it is best not to be in a hospital unless absolutely necessary. However, an extremely high percentage of patients in diabetic coma (to continue with that example), if aggressively treated medically before irreversible metabolic damage occurs, will recover from that crisis. In contrast, an extremely low percentage, if any at all, will recover if medical treatment is withheld.

Having assisted James Randi in a small way in the research for his book *The Faith-Healers* (Prometheus Books, Buffalo, 1987), I have no plans to seek out a book containing anecdotes of alleged miraculous healings. However, if you wish to send me a photocopy of what you believe to be an accurate account of a documented case of faith-healing, I will be happy to evaluate it.

Sincerely,


Gary P. Posner, M.D.