

reduce cigarette consumption to zero, we will have built the kind of landmark that Luther Terry would have wanted.

I personally came to know Dr. Terry relatively late in his career, when he came to the University of Pennsylvania as Professor and Vice President for Medical Affairs. But, like many other people, I had "known" him for many years before that, as the champion of public health in America.

Dr. Terry will be sorely missed.

C. Everett Koop, MD, ScD
Surgeon General

In the Absence of Santa Claus—

No, dear *Public Health Reports* readers, there is no Santa Claus. At least not in the world of Government publications.

That kindly old gentleman, in whose spirit *Public Health Reports* has been sent free of charge every 2

months to readers, is forced finally to bow to the exigencies of economics.

Because of efforts to control government spending and staff restraints, we have had to remove from our mailing list hundreds of individuals and institutions that have been receiving free copies for some time.

The only way these recipients of our former largesse can continue to receive this venerable publication is to transfer their affections to the list of paid subscribers for the nominal fee of \$21 a year. (Subscription blanks are thoughtfully provided elsewhere in this issue.)

There has been an official publication of the Public Health Service since 1878. And *Public Health Reports* in its more or less current format dates from 1952.

Public Health Reports continues to be too valuable to anyone engaged or interested in public health to do without, even if Santa Claus is indisposed.

Marian Priest Tebben
Executive Editor

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Minimizing the Risks of Swimming

The article by Koplan, Siscovick, and Goldbaum on the "Risk of Exercise: a Public Health View of Injuries and Hazards" in the March-April issue indicates a total of 7,000 persons reportedly died in 1980 while swimming. We do not know if these deaths occurred by drowning (suffocation in the water) or if they were the result of other causes. This figure compares with the average figure of 7,000–8,000 deaths by drowning per year reported by the American Red Cross as taught in the Water Safety Program. The American Red Cross also indicates that *more than half* of the drownings occur in individuals who have no intention of going in the water in the first place.

The founding father of the aquatics safety network and the "water proofing" of America was Commodore Wilbert E. Longfellow, who established the Life Saving Service of the American Red Cross in 1914. A public health hero in the truest sense, he mobilized national resources to see drowning deaths reduced from 10.4 to 3.0 per 100,000 population, in spite of a tremendous increase in participation in water activities since the turn of the century.

As Koplan, Siscovick, and Goldbaum indicate, the frequency of unreported, minor, and trivial swimming injuries would be difficult to measure. But the ultimate injury of death by drowning can be prevented in most situations by following a few safety measures:

- Learn how to swim if you don't already know how. Remember, more than half of drowning victims never intended to go in the water. As the Commodore said, "Everyone a swimmer, every swimmer a lifesaver."
- Never, never swim alone.
- Plan ahead for personal water safety each and every time you go near or use the water for recreation or other purposes, including boating, fishing, swimming at home pools, farm ponds, or beaches.

For additional information, contact your local chapter of the American Red Cross.

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