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Thursday, Jan. 2, 1997

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Young local couple gets crash course in matters of the heart

When James and Melissa Myers, both 20, married, they joined their hearts. When they had their son, Andrew, in July, those hearts were overflowing.

Two months later, they learned more about hearts than they ever thought they'd need to know.

Andrew, now five months old, was born with only one ventricle in his heart, causing blood to flow into his lungs and making him weaker than other babies.

The problem was diagnosed after Andrew's two-month checkup, said his mother. Doctors, who noticed Andrew had a heart murmur at birth, discovered then that the murmur was louder.

The couple and their son were sent to Hope Children's Hospital in Oak Lawn for an Oct. 1 echocardiogram. "Two days later, the doctor called," Mrs. Myers said. "He told us 'I want you guys up here in two hours.'"

Over the next several years, Andrew will undergo up to five operations as doctors build the missing

part of his heart. He has already had one operation, on Nov. 6, when doctors did a pulmonary artery banding, to stop the blood flow into Andrew's lungs.

That procedure will have to be repeated as Andrew grows because as he gets bigger, the band will tighten and interfere with his breathing, Mrs. Myers said.

Operations may be more frequent for Andrew than for other infants with heart problems, she said. "Most babies with heart problems don't grow very fast," she said, "but he's almost tripled his weight since he was born."

At six to nine months old, doctors will start building an artificial wall in the heart, a procedure expected to take three and a half hours.

Andrew is now on two drugs and will be for the rest of his life, Mrs. Myers said. One drug slows the child's heart rate while the other is a diuretic.

Even when his heart is repaired, Andrew must still

Laws for medicinal use of marijuana may be going up in smoke

My crystal ball is a little hazy for predicting events in 1997, probably a result of the smoke from the vision of patients lighting up joints in Arizona and California.

A brouhaha has developed between the Clinton administration and some members of the medical community in those states after voters approved referenda allowing doctors to prescribe marijuana for medicinal use.

The administration has vowed to invoke sanctions against doctors who prescribe pot. Sanctions could range from the Drug Enforcement Administration revoking its registration of doctors who prescribe

marijuana to the Department of Health and Human Services withholding money it pays for patients treated under Medicare and Medicaid.

All things considered, threats from the administration seem rather pointless.

In the first place, some studies indicate pot smoking does help in some medical situations. It has been shown to decrease the nausea associated with chemotherapy and the severe pain of some cancers and has been successful in relieving the stress of some eye ailments.

Obviously no one in the Clinton administration has
See SMOKE on other side



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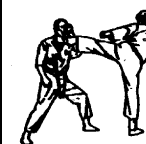
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Smoke continued from other side

ever had a relative terminally ill with painful cancer or this tempest in a ...bong would never have happened.

Several years ago when my father was dying of cancer and, towards the end of his struggle, morphine provided less and less relief from the pain. That was before I'd heard that some medical experts recommended smoking the killer weed or, in extreme cases, the use of heroin, as pain control measures.

Had I known these things, would I have tried to get

See HEART on other side

Heart continued from other side

lead a more sedate life than other boys. "When he gets older, he won't be able to do sports," Mrs. Myers said. "He won't be able to take p.e. like normal kids do."

Doctors are unsure what caused the problem, but have told the couple it is fairly common. "They see it so much in babies," Mrs. Myers said. "The day he had his surgery, five other little babies had surgery."

Andrew is recovering well from his surgery, but his parents financial state is not so healthy. Mr. Myers works at Schumacher Electric in Hoopeston and has insurance which does not pay the entire bill.

Each surgery will cost approximately \$90,000, not including hospital stays, and the drugs cost approximately \$150 monthly. Each test done so far has cost about \$2,000.

The Myers have applied for Social Security disability for their son and were turned down for

either for my father. You betcha! I mean, the man was dying. I should worry that he's going to become a heroin addict?

In the second place, it makes no sense to me that we will allow Dr. Jack Kevorkian to help end people's lives when their pain gets too great but we won't allow doctors to prescribe marijuana to help people live through pain that is great.

Thirdly, other drugs, such as cocaine, have

Medicaid coverage because they have insurance. Meanwhile, the bills continue to mount. Each time a bill comes, "you just go crazy," Mrs. Myers said. "You just want to pull your hair out of your head."

A fund has been established to help the family defray medical costs. Donations may be sent to the Andrew Myers Fund, c/o Community Bank, 221 S. Bank St., Hoopeston, IL. 60942.

Mrs. Myers admits her son's medical condition has strained more than their finances. "It's a strain on our relationship," she said. "We've only been married about

medicinal uses. Why exclude marijuana?

What is equally bothersome as the government butting its nose into one more area it has no business being in is the hypocrisy surrounding Clinton's stand on this issue.

Clinton admits to having smoked pot and has changed his moronic "I didn't inhale" stance, but now, because of his position, he's posturing. His position smacks of the "do as I say, not as I do" mentality.

a year, but we love each other so we're working it out."

She is able, too, to look at the bright side. For example, she saw a report an 18-month-old Florida baby who needed a heart transplant. "I thank God every day that my son didn't have to go through that," she said."

The couple is also focusing on this coming June or July, when a new baby will come into their family.

And, of course, they focus on Andrew. "Andrew is so happy all the time, unless he's hungry or needs his pants changed," Mrs. Myers said. "If he's happy, I'm

Someone really should tell him he won the election and he can quit campaigning now.

Just because marijuana is considered an illegal street drug doesn't mean it is of no benefit. And in this instance, the administration's judgment is as clouded as my crystal ball.



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Court dispositions



Dec. 19: Juan Guitterez, Hoopeston, criminal damage, carrying a concealed weapon, continued.

Jerry Hargrove, Hoopeston, loitering, pleaded not guilty, trial Feb. 20.

Kathy Hilliger, Rossville, deceptive practice, \$131.18 restitution, failed to appear; summons issued.

Kinser Hathaway, Henning, deceptive practice, \$92.67 restitution, failed to appear; summons issued.

Ray Lazarich, Hoopeston, leash law, pleaded guilty; \$95 total.

Cherich Lambert, Rankin, to pay \$45 fine, \$120 restitution; failed to appear.

Norma Montez, Hoopeston, to do 29 hours public service work, converted to fine, \$95 total.

Joey Miles, Hoopeston, third offense, leash law, pleaded guilty; \$95 total.


Joey Miles, Hoopeston, to pay \$45 and \$45; continued 30 days.

Charles Richardson Jr., Hoopeston, to pay \$75 fine and costs and \$110.25 restitution; failed to appear.

Norman Smith, Hoopeston, rule to show cause hearing, to pay \$32.50; \$65 total to be paid by Jan. 10.

Trent Savage, Hoopeston, trespassing, pleaded guilty; \$45 total.


In the hospital



Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital
Dec. 30, 1996

Admitted: Charles Wheeler, Rankin.
Discharged: Helen Henry, Milford.

Weather



Mostly cloudy today and tomorrow. Highs near 55, lows near 44.

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Last winner: **Jackie Johnson**
Last answer: **Wassail is an old English greeting or a holiday drink.**

