

## Briefings

edited by CONSTANCE HOLDEN

### Refurbishing Our Personality Quiz

Persons taking the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) will no longer be subjected to "objectionable" questions about their bowel habits or be asked to respond to the statement "I like mannish women." Nor will they be required to puzzle over what "drop the handkerchief" is.

The venerable MMPI, developed 50 years ago at the University of Minnesota, has just been reissued by its owner, the University of Minnesota Press, after 7 years of work by a committee that has restandardized the test and updated many of its 567 items.

Now the most widely used personality test in the world, the MMPI was originally developed using a sample of 700 rural Minnesotans. The new MMPI-2 has been renormed on a sample of 2600 people reflecting the country's racial and ethnic mix. According to MMPI manager Beverly Kaemmer, objectionable items, sexist wording, outmoded expressions, and

references to unfamiliar cultural material—such as, lamentably, *Alice in Wonderland*—have been eliminated. So have certain religious questions, such as whether the respondent believes in the Second Coming of Christ.

The new test also has items on disorders they didn't know about in the '40s—such as substance abuse, eating disorders, and "Type A" behavior.

The issuance of the revised MMPI coincides with a court victory for the university, which in June won a copyright suit against Applied Innovations, a small software firm that marketed software for scoring and interpreting the MMPI.

### Space Buff Quayle Seeks Spy "Master"

Bookish Vice President Dan Quayle wants to get high-tech spy thriller author Tom Clancy as an unpaid consultant to the National Space Council, which Quayle heads. But Clancy is balking at signing the required "nondisclosure" agreement, which could prevent him in the future from writing about anything that turns out to be classified information. According to *People* magazine, he doesn't want to be "at the mercy of a lot of little dinky bureaucrats who

have a TOP SECRET stamp that they put on everything from the pizza orders on up." So far, the space council has refused to waive the requirement.

### Massachusetts v. Alsabti

Elias A. K. Alsabti, the Jordanian doctor accused of pirating a number of scientific papers back in 1980, recently lost an appeal of the revocation of his license to practice medicine in Massachusetts.

The high-living and ambitious young internist, who had published 60 papers on cancer immunology by the age of 25, left a residency at the University of Virginia 9 years ago after being accused by three separate research teams of publishing their work under his name. He subsequently obtained a residency at a Dorchester, Massachusetts, hospital.

In 1984 the State Board of Registration in Medicine moved to revoke Alsabti's license. Alsabti appealed, and on 10 April the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court affirmed the Board's decision. The court decision says he is now licensed to practice in Pennsylvania, but his Boston attorneys won't say

where. The court said he has offered no articles for publication since 1979.

The Board, according to the court decision, noted that Alsabti is now well regarded by both colleagues and patients. But it concluded that Alsabti had plagiarized articles and "lacks good moral character."

### Tarheel Turmoil Re Supercomputer

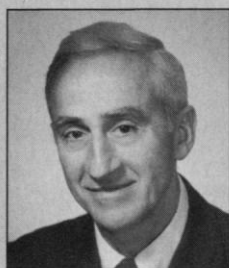
North Carolina's first venture in supercomputing hit a snag before the first cycle ever turned through the state's new Cray Y-MP.

Days before the Cray's arrival on 21 August, Gary M. Johnson was removed as executive director of the North Carolina Supercomputing Center in Research Triangle Park. On 30 August, Johnson was still staying mum about his ouster, which was announced in a tersely worded statement by the overseeing Microelectronics Center of North Carolina. Meanwhile, other members of his staff are also jumping ship.

Sources say Johnson's departure was precipitated by repeated clashes with the microelectronics center ever since it was contracted to manage the supercomputing facility. The center, which has received more than \$157 million in state funds, has been criticized by some researchers who claim it lacks direction, will interfere with the independent operation of the supercomputer, and is more oriented toward the needs of industry than those of university scientists.

### Enough Already?

The Chudnovskys have done it again. Only weeks after they announced a new record for pi digits (*Science*, 16 June, p. 1260), the Columbia University mathematicians, brothers Gregory and David, employed IBM supercomputers to double their previous feat—taking pi to 1,011,196,691 places.



Ken Heinen

**Top choices?** From left, Vagelos, Danforth, and Fauci. They head the list but may be reluctant candidates.

Cleveland Clinic cardiologist Bernadine Healy.

What is not clear at this point is whether anyone on the list will accept the job if it is offered. Several likely candidates have asked that they not even be considered (*Science*, 30 June, p. 1538). A spokesman for Merck categorically denies that Vagelos is going anywhere, and Danforth says, "If I'm a candidate, it's news to me." Will the White House have to exert some political muscle to find someone to take the job?

### Short List for NIH

The committee searching for a new director for the National Institutes of Health has sent its recommendations to the Assistant Secretary for Health, who has sent them to the Secretary of Health, who has sent them to the White House. The short list reportedly has three names:

P. Roy Vagelos, president of the pharmaceutical company Merck; William H. Danforth, chancellor of Washington University; and Anthony S. Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease. Mentioned as alternates have been IOM president Samuel Thier, Yale medical school dean Leon E. Rosenberg, and