

FLUORIDATION: EFFECTS ON A GENERAL POPULATION
or
WHO DUMPED THE FLUORIDE IN MRS. FEENEY'S EGGNOG?
(Originally published December 1962)

(This month the lounging space has been turned over to an editorial report from one of the Bulletin's roving investigators, who comments on fluoridation in connection with his interview of a prominent local clubwoman.)

The locally recurrent issue of fluoridation has again been in the limelight, and the news pages once more have been filled with authoritative letters that parrot suspicious statistics and spout volumes of quasi-scientific medical and chemical misinformation. It is always surprising to rediscover ignorance among the supposedly educated and to find them so eager to put their inconsistencies and petty bigotries on public display.

The facts about fluoridation are simple: adequate fluoride in water, better teeth; low or absent fluoride, poorer teeth. The problem for a community whose water lacks natural fluoride is whether to add it and improve dental health, or not add it and ignore dental health.

Apart from hardening tooth enamel, it is apparent that fluoride has some alarming secondary effects on a general population. Among city officials it has caused blurring of vision, disorientation, vacillation and procrastination. In some citizens, fluoridation has stimulated cerebral speech centers to such extent that, on a moment's notice, they will mount the nearest podium and deliver hour-long lectures on its benefits or failings. In other wilder-eyed segments, it has produced mental aberrations of paranoid nature; to these, communism lurks in every spigot, socialism in every tub, and certain slow death by rat poisoning lies ahead. It has brought suffering and frustration to dentists, doctors and public health officials, who succumb daily in exasperation.

With the holiday season upon us and in the interests of a timely discussion, we have just interviewed vivacious Mrs. Jay Feeney, devotee of good cheer and strong egg-nogs, who has become mildly alarmed lately over the fluoride controversy.

Mrs. Feeney, an outspoken advocate of immediate, massive hydrogen-bombing of Khrushchev, Castro and Mao, ("Let's blast them off the face of the earth, before they get us," says Mrs. F.), a leader in all church and civic affairs and a keen student of health through diet-control, which is her hobby.

As a fifth-grader, on discovering Bernard Shaw, Mrs. Feeney became a vegetarian

almost from the word go. One of her treasured possessions is an autographed portrait of the late Bernard MacFadden that is draped in a parachute shroud on the wall over the headboard of her oriental pallet. Long before cranberries were denounced officially by Mr. Flemming, she had scratched these from her list. ("I knew anything that grew in bogs couldn't be good for a body"), and became so stimulated by her experience that she has carried on her private investigative work into nutrition with renewed vigor ever since. Fats and cholesterol didn't stand a chance with Mrs. Feeney. She gave away her cigarettes over a decade ago, threw out snuff shortly after, and buried all of her lipsticks in her backyard lime-pit as early as 1954, the year of Mr. Feeney's mysterious disappearance. Her list of forbidden foods reads like a *Who's Who* from a student dietician's notebook.

Always well in advance of more cautious, formal medical research, Mrs. Feeney has anticipated new digestible perils and methodically, step by step, eliminated all dangerous and potentially dangerous foodstuffs from her diet. She exists now on eggnog alone and loves it.

"It gives me that Christian, Christmassy feeling all year round," she gushed when we queried her about it. "It's wonderful. A real Go thing. But I *am* careful, of course, to use the commercial eggnog that they make from the specially prepared powders. And then I add only the pure 95% absolute alcohol to dissolve the fats and fix any protein impurities that might have sifted in." Mrs. Feeney doesn't hold with the extremists and fashionable faddists who insist on the 1-to-5- or 1-to-8-part proportions, and claims that a standard 1-to-2 mixture is adequate for most purposes.

This spirited housewife, a life-long friend of the medical profession, has sacrificed nearly all of her organs on the altar of preventive medicine. The tonsils and adenoids were first to go, and over the years, were followed at suitable intervals by the appendix, thyroid, a pelvic sweep, both breasts, gallbladder and stomach.

"I just love *all* the doctors," she enthused. "But you know it's been almost two years now since I had them snatch the gas-bag. I couldn't make up my mind for the longest about that old stomach, but when I read about how many gallons of deadly hydrochloric acid it produced every year, I said to myself: 'Jay, it's got to go.' My surgeon told me he got to it just in time. Another week and it would have eaten clear through to the backbone." Mrs. Feeney confided gaily that it was almost a straight shot through and through now for the eggnog.

"I've been so rushed lately, honey, that I haven't had time to get back to the doctors." Mrs. Feeney refilled the cups, and her eager eyes sparkled. "Soon as I can make up my mind which side to put the ileostomy on, I'm ready for them to take out that old cesspool of a colon of mine. How I've put up with all those bacteria for these many years,

I'll never know. Drink up, son. You're 60 calories behind."

Mrs. Feeney darted out to the kitchen in her quick, bird-like fashion and was back in a hop with a fresh bowl of nourishment. "Lord love me," she cackled, "I looked into those artificial kidneys once, but decided it would be too confining. That machinery was too complicated for me. Besides I couldn't be bothered with all those tubes and bottle washing. Not this biddy."

Although she has remained cheerful through it all, she admitted that some of her foundations were badly shaken lately when, after reading about sprays and pesticides in Rachel Carson's new *Silent Spring*, she decided to give up all fruits and vegetables. "Well," she philosophized, "I was warned, and I should have known it was coming. But I'm no John Bircher. You can't fight progress, baby. You've got to get with it. You've got to Mooove Forward!"

To our suggestion that maybe organic farming could be an answer, she countered sharply with, "Faith preserve us! I don't dig those gemy worms, dearie." Mrs. Feeney has found now that by spacing her eggnog sustenance at shorter intervals, she misses vegetables hardly at all.

We asked if the present plan for fluoridation would upset her new dietary schedule. "Well," she laughed a little ruefully, "I didn't think so at first. Naturally, I've been hep to those halogens ever since I first saw them fuming in those flasks at high school chemistry. I got rid of salt and chlorine, and the seafoods and iodine early; then I dropped bromine and Bromo-Seltzers. Whoosh! It almost did me in to give up those Bromos." Her brow furrowed momentarily in uneasy reminiscence, but in a moment she was her bubbly self. "It's not so much I care what they do to the water here. The only water in *this* house is in my Johnny-bowl—but they tell me some of this powdered mix is made of milk and eggs from Texas cows and chickens that drink fluorinated water. They're coming at us from all sides now, fella. A body hardly knows where to turn anymore."

When we asked Mrs. Feeney how she planned to get around this present dilemma, she shook a headful of curlers defiantly. "I only worry in the mornings, sugar. By lunchtime, I say to hell with it. You've got to compromise a little these days. Have some eggnog, boy."

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Inspired by Mrs. Feeney, and filled with Yuletide spirits, we have come up with two solutions to the fluoridation problem:

1. Let the Water Board add the fluoride and, with its quarterly statements, send

trading stamps; these will be redeemable at doctors' offices for treatment of diseased livers and kidneys, arthritis, broken brittle bones, falling hair and calcified brains.

— or —

2. Instead of fluoride let the Water Board add Milltown to the waters and tranquilize everyone. The trading stamps may then be exchanged in dentist's offices for bridgework or false plates.

Meanwhile, Merry Christmas to all, and like the happy housewife Mrs. Feeney says:

“With eggnog, who needs teeth?”