

MS. FEENEY REVISITED
(Originally published December 1976)

It has been almost five years now since the much-married Mrs. Jay Feeney appeared in the *Bulletin's* pages. Ms. Feeney (as she insists on being labeled), although getting on in age, remains active and, in fact, is now pursuing a new career as a sports announcer. Her ultimate goal is to become a co-anchorperson with Howard Cosell.

"Hell," she says, "If Barbara Walters can make it big, ain't no reason why old Jay Baby cain't. At least, I pwonounce my 'Ar-ruhs'."

We indicated earlier that during 1976, our Bicentennial Year, we would repeat an occasional article from past *Bulletins*. Now, for the Christmas Season, in order to acquaint the new members of our medical community with Ms. Feeney and her background, we publish again (slightly edited) her first interview, from the December issue of 1962. The burning medical concern at the time was with fluoridation, and the article that follows appeared under the heading:

FLUORIDATION: EFFECTS ON A GENERAL POPULATION
or
WHO DUMPED THE FLUORIDE IN MRS. FEENEY'S EGGNOG?

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.

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 an 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 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, a born-again Christian from Down Home, is 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, which she keeps 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 diet. ("I knowed 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 her sixth husband's (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 lovely, Christian, Christmassy feeling all year round," she gushed when we asked 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 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 altars 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 ain't had time to get back to my doctor." 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 inside me for so many years, I'll never know. Drink up, son. You're sixty 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 eggnog. "Lord love me," she cackled, "I looked into them artificial kidneys once, but decided it would be too confining. The machinery looks complicated, and besides I can'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 cain't fight progress, baby. You've got to get with it. You've got to Mooove Forward!"

To our suggestion that maybe she should look into organic farming, she countered sharply with, "Yuk! I don't dig them gerymy worms, dearie." Mrs. Feeney has found 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 ruefully, "I didn't think so at first. Naturally, I've been onto them halogens ever since I first seen them fuming in them flasks at high school. I dropped salt and chlorine, and seafoods and iodine early; I even gave up bromides and Bromo-Seltzers. It's not so much I care what they do to the water here—the only water in *this* house is in the Johnny-bowl—but they tell me some of this here powdered mix is made from milk and eggs from Texas cows and chickens that drink fluoridated water. They're coming at us from all sides now, fella. A body hardly knows where to turn anymore."

When we asked about tooth decay and how she planned to get around her 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. You're way behind again."

Meanwhile, Merry Christmas to all, and like Mrs. Feeney, the well-preserved, happy housewife says, "With eggnog, who needs teeth?"