



"Remember two times two is four . . . three goes into six twice and all that silly ol' stuff . . ."

Surgeons, Engineer Developing New Plastic Valve for Hearts

A plastic replacement for one of the key valves of the heart, is being developed by a team of surgeons and engineers at St. John's hospital, Santa Monica, with support from the Los Angeles County Heart Assn.

Rodney T. Smith, M.D., chief of cardiovascular surgery at St. John's hospital, and his associates, James A. McEachen, M.D., Jack Cannon, M.D., and Paul Roos, engineer, have received a grant of \$4800 to perfect a valve design for the intake on the left side of the heart.

Faulty valves sometimes occur in patients who have had rheumatic fever, Dr. Smith explained. If the damage to the

valve is relatively light, it can be repaired by surgery, with the patient's own tissues. If there is serious stiffening of the valve flaps, however, the patient must have a total replacement to survive.

THE MOST serious valve problems occur on the left side of the heart that pumps the blood to the general circulation under strong pressure. A number of artificial valves have been recently designed and are now in use as replacement for the aortic valve which lets the blood out of the pumping chamber.

At present, however, there is only one design for an intake valve that lets the blood into the left ventricle, a ball-in-a-cage arrangement that is workable but cumbersome. Dr. Smith and his associates are experimenting with a simplified valve construction.

BEFORE SETTING to work on the research project, Dr. Smith and his associates did a survey of experience reported in medical and scientific journals with artificial valves. They found that some investigators had tried to duplicate the natural valve, including the cords attached to the inner wall of the pumping chamber that keep the natural valve cusps from buckling. In an artificial valve, however, the cords tend to pull out.

Other investigators had tried a simple flap valve, hinged at one side. The hinge, however, wore out under the constant stress of the blood flow. Still other valves, once they were set in the hearts of experimental animals, were found to have minute pockets where the valve was attached to the heart tissue, which allowed for the formation of dangerous blood clots.

IN VIEW of this experience by other medical scientists, Dr. Smith and his associates are working on designs made of semi-stiff tygon plastic which have no cords or hinges, and which cover the stitch line with a smooth surface on which clots will not form.

Once the investigators get the design perfected, it will be tested on experimental animals to assure its durability and safety.

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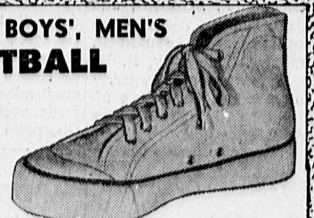
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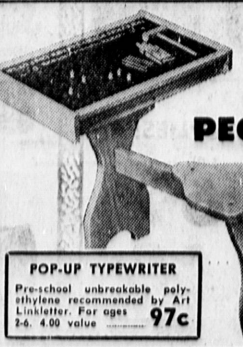
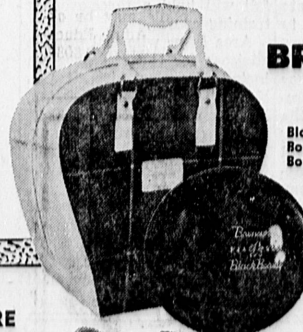
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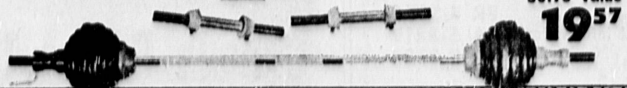
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