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NEWS

GEOGRAPHY: THE FORGOTTEN SUBJECT

... "Name the country drained by the Amazon River, American college students were asked in a 1950 survey, and 77.5% of them correctly said Brazil. The same question was posed last fall in a statewide college exam in North Carolina, and this time only 27% of the students got it right. The apparent deterioration of geographic knowledge evident in the North Carolina survey and in similar tests around the nation has prompted [the Natl. Council for Geographic Education and the Assn. of American Geographers] to devise a set of guidelines for the teaching of geography in elementary and secondary schools. . . . The North Carolina exam, which involved 2,200 students in eight schools of the state's university system, used about 25% of the questions given in 1950. Others were no

longer applicable because of changes in world geography. When asked the approximate 1980 census population the US within a margin of error of 5 million, only 8.4% of North Carolina college students came close to the correct figure—226 million, the report said. Answers ranged from 100,000 to 236 billion. Asked to name the two largest states in area, less than 50% came up with Alaska and Texas; only 21% knew that Rhode Island and Delaware were the two smallest."

[(Theodore Shabad in *Geotimes* 30(4):6, Apr 85 (From *New York Times*) (Reproduced with permission from Press Digest, *Current Contents*[®], No. 22, June 3, 1985, p. 14. Published by the Institute for Scientific Information[®], Philadelphia, PA, USA.)]

NEW WAY TO PREVENT GONORRHEA?

... "A potential vaccine against the contagious venereal disease gonorrhea has been developed by a group of investigators at the Stanford U. Sch. of Medicine. The candidate substance, a synthetic protein fragment, appears to work by blocking the first step in the process by which gonococcal bacteria infect the cells lining the human urogenital tract; the adhesion of the bacteria to the cell walls by means of the hairlike filaments called pili. According to Gary K. Schoolnik [Stanford U.], the potential vaccine stimulates the immune system to seek out and inactivate the pili, thereby preventing the bacteria from binding to the cells. . . . Previous attempts to develop a vaccine to protect against gonorrhea have failed because the

protein molecule that makes up the pili, called pilin, has a tendency to change its configuration continually, enabling the gonococcal bacteria to elude the body's highly specific immunological defenses. The key to the new vaccine's preliminary success, Schoolnik and his co-workers report, is that it stimulates immunity to a part of the pilin molecule that remains unchanged, even in different bacterial strains."

[(In *Scientific American* 252(4):76, 80, Apr 85) (Reproduced with permission from Press Digest, *Current Contents*[®], No. 22, June 3, 1985, p. 13. Published by the Institute for Scientific Information[®], Philadelphia, PA, USA.)]