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Sunday, November 15, 1981



The unconventional San Francisco household of Maria Eitz is always alive with children, visitors, animals, packages and phone calls. Above, Eitz, who directs Medical Volunteers International, a life-saving effort in famine-ravaged Somalia, packs medical supplies to be airlifted there. Right, she directs her four adopted war orphan children at packing their lunches. From the front are Mishka, Moki, Jonathan and Nicholas.

By Dan Silverman
Tribune Staff Writer

THE LIFE STORY of Maria Eitz sounds like an adolescent's fantasy. She has smuggled children out from behind the Iron Curtain, flown orphans out of war-torn Vietnam, infiltrated a youth gang in Brooklyn, taken abused children into her home for brief periods until their parents got their lives together, and adopted four children who were war orphans.

"I have always had children crawling out of my pockets," she says with a wan smile, "ever since I can remember."

Eitz, who now directs Medical Volunteers International, a life-saving effort in famine-ravaged Somalia, is fiercely protective towards children, perhaps because of her own childhood.

Born into an aristocratic Christian German family that was destroyed because of their resistance to Hitler, she spent several years in orphanages. When World War II was over, she ran away, handing together with about 30 other runaways, most of them boys. They were known as "the hill children."

Eitz was only 12 then, but she was two years older than any of the others and became their leader. Some were nameless infants, she remembers, handed to her by women who feared keeping them because their husbands — not the babies' fathers — had returned home after the war.

"The hill children lived in the cellar of an old bombed-out estate. Eitz milked the cows in exchange for being allowed to have milk for the children. The second oldest, who was 10, delivered bread every morning and was paid in bread. They grew their own vegetables, and gathered nuts, berries and mushrooms in the woods. Sometimes local farmers gave them meat."

Eitz made two rules — that they attend the village school and that they never lie.

When she was 18, she went to Berlin, determined to pursue her education, and earned a college degree in psychology.

But she was also part of the underground for two years, risking her life to smuggle children out of East Berlin.

For her activities — "stealing the property of the state" (the children of political refugees were considered state property) — she was charged with 400 counts of high treason.

She escaped to England, where she worked a year as a governess. She came to the United States in 1964 and earned a doctorate in theology from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wis.

Why theology? Her earliest memories are of her grandmother's home, where God or Jesus were never mentioned, she says. But her closest friend in the underground was a devout Catholic, with whom she had great arguments: Horrified by her experiments, she vowed to "prove there is no God."

But after intensive study, some in Greek and Hebrew, she ended up "believing in one who held all beginnings in his hand." She converted to Catholicism.

"I promised myself if I found the

She believes in shouting out the goodness in mankind



belief was right, I would devote my life to it."

"I was not raised by a father and a mother," she says, "but I was helped by thousands of people who believed in things not even Hitler could destroy. This is what I seek to preserve, and what I will follow wherever war and famine threaten."

In the U.S., she lived in inner cities, starting a street school for shoeless boys.

In the slums of Brooklyn, she used her skills with young people to defuse a volatile youth gang. Then she went to Appalachia, where she found thousands of people — she calls them the shame of America, the poorest of the poor — people who never came down from the mountains, some with vocabularies of only 100 words, "people with no songs, no stories."

The project she started there is being carried on by the Glenmary Fathers in North Carolina.

In the late '60s, Eitz came to California. She taught at Oakland's College of the Holy Names and later at several San Francisco Catholic High Schools.

By now, the Vietnam war was on, and her heart went out to its innocent victims. Unmarried, she adopted four orphans, one by one.

Her two sons are Nicholas, now 11, from Vietnam, and Jonathan, almost 11, from Cambodia. Her two daughters are Moki, 7,

from a Vietnamese hill tribe, and Mishka, 6, whom Eitz rescued from a Saigon orphanage.

Mishka weighed a pound-and-a-half at birth and would probably not have survived if Eitz hadn't strapped her to her body and fed her hourly with a syringe.

Moki was five months old when Eitz first saw her, so emotionally scared, she never cried, never made a sound. But, she says, the infant "bonded with me almost immediately and learned to walk."

Eitz has an uncanny rapport with children, no matter where in the world they come from.

In 1975, she organized the Orphan Airlift, a bold plan to fly orphans out of Saigon before the Viet Cong takeover.

Helping her were Ed Daly, president of World Airways, and his daughter, Charlotte. World ran them flying regularly in and out of Saigon, and Daly agreed to transport the children.

But first, Eitz had to cut through reams of red tape.

In desperation, she wrote to another refugee, Henry Kissinger, then U.S. Secretary of State. He returned a letter to smooth her way. Tucked inside it was another letter, signed by then-President Gerald Ford, and the private White House telephone number, to be used only in an extreme emergency.

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Some in the world of ballet may be doing a dance of death

By Janice Ross
Times Staff Writer

They are doing a new dance in the world of classical ballet. It's called anorexia nervosa, and for some it threatens to become a dance of death.

Every day in dance studios across the country, adolescent girls stand before the mirror and scrutinize their every curve and bulge. And every evening after a day of dancing from five to eight hours in classes, rehearsals and performances, some of them go home to fast or vomit.

Although a major ballet company or school is likely to deny the presence of anorexia nervosa, the problem does seem to be becoming a real and very serious one for dance organizations throughout the country.

The problem, in fact, has provoked New York physician L.M. Vincent to write a book about it, "Competing With The Slyph." As the only book of its kind, Vincent's book has become the unofficial bible on the subject in the dance world. Dr. John N. Callender, an orthopedic surgeon and the San Francisco Ballet's company physician, says he recommends the book to his dancer-patients.

"A very significant problem in the dance world is the recognition of potentially dangerous eating disorders," Vincent writes. "Not only are anorexia nervosa and similar problems more prevalent in the dance world, but in the midst of 'naturally thin' women, dancers with problems may well be camouflaged."

Anorexia nervosa (self-imposed starvation) and bulimia (compulsive eating followed by self-induced vomiting) are medical terms that are becoming as common in the dance world as pile and pinocite.

Richard Cammack, director of the San Francisco Ballet school, estimates that as many as 8 to 10 percent of the 13- to 18-year-old girls in the school are flirting with anorexia nervosa.

"We shall call her 'Alice,'" he says. "She is a composite drawn from case studies of several anorexic dancers reported in Vincent's book and from the first-hand observations of a professional Bay Area dancer who doesn't want to be identified. Her situation is, in fact, what can happen when a dancer's quest for physical perfection slips out of control."

She was a promising teen-age dancer from another western state when she arrived in the Bay Area to study as an apprentice dancer at a prominent ballet school. At 105-4 and 114 pounds, Alice was nicely proportioned and had a good chance of someday being taken into a leading dance company. But along the way something went wrong.

She wanted to be seen, to attain that slenderly pared-down profile that permits one's feet to fit neatly into the squeezed-together fifth position unadorned by muscled thighs. Alice began to diet. At first she began eating less of the carbohydrate- and protein-rich foods her body needed, replacing them with raw vegetables, diet sodas, and glass after glass of water.

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Jogging may be injurious to health of the family dog

By Mike Granberry
Los Angeles Times

SAN DIEGO — San Diego is a runner's paradise. Parks by the dozen, firm, sandy beaches and ever-present sunshine all combine to create almost idyllic conditions. And the runners are great in number.

So are the dogs.

Veterinarians here are noticing that more and more runners are taking their dogs with them on six, seven, eight-mile runs — sometimes daily. Some runners are going even farther — with the faithful canine following close behind for even 10 or 15 miles.

As runners develop problems — sore feet, shin splints, heat prostration — so do their dogs. "I remember one dog that came in," said

See DOGS, Page E-3

The common cold Researchers still looking for a cure, can only offer suggestions for relief

By Patricia McCormack
Times Staff Writer

It is safe to kiss when you or the kissable has a common cold?

Will chicken noodle soup make the common cold go away? Vitamin C? Wearing a muslin pendant full of cooked onions?

The questions come up every year around this time when the chill winds start to blow and millions of Americans come down with common colds — chills, fevers, runny noses, sore throats, coughs, congested sinuses.

All these things interfere with love, life, work and studying styles — and even speech sometimes, as evidenced by people calling the offices and telling the boss: "I had a cold in de bed."

What about kissing and the common cold? Kissing is okay as long as the smoocher or smoochee has a cold caused by a rhinovirus. So

says Dr. Owen Hendley, professor of pediatrics and director of infectious diseases at the University of Virginia Medical School Center, Charlottesville, Va.

Hendley, a long-time grantee of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, made the statement in reporting at the Canadian Hospital Infection Control Association as reported in the newsletter "Hospital Infection Control."

Hendley came to this conclusion after putting rhinovirus into the eyes, nose or mouth of volunteers. It was found one virus particle could cause infection if placed in the eye or nose. But 1,000 particles would not cause an infection in the mouth. Conclusion: the rhino-type virus, which is linked to perhaps as many as half of the common colds, does not enter in the mouth and probably

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E-4 Dancers

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To start with, Alice had little, if any, fat to lose. As with many young dancers, her body weight had already dropped below the 17 percent body fat level of normal women. So Alice's body gradually began to cannibalize itself, destroying healthy tissue in an effort to keep weight.

When this restricted diet failed to shrink her body, Alice resorted to more drastic measures learned during the pre-class chatter in the dressing room. She started drinking great quantities of water to trick her stomach into feeling full. Later she began taking diuretics to squeeze out more of what she called "water weight" from her body. A few days later Alice added laxatives, a technique passed on to her by a cadaverously thin dancer two years ahead of her.

Her method was to take one laxative before each meal and two afterwards. She sometimes took as many as 40 pills a week. But it wasn't until Alice started plotting herself with food, and then swallowing an emetic or sticking her finger down her throat to make herself vomit, that her roommate realized Alice's anorexia nervosa was real. During these periods Alice would eat as much as a gallon of ice cream, a whole tray of brownies and six candy bars in one sitting, then force her body to give up the food it so desperately needed.

At an unannounced weigh-in at the school one afternoon, designed to catch those students who had gained a pound or two, Alice's teachers were horrified to discover that her weight was now around 83 pounds. It had been months since Alice had had a menstrual period, and she was finding it increasingly more difficult to stay warm, but she didn't know that these were warning symptoms from a starving body.

Parental chats, teacher counseling and the threat of being kicked out of the ballet school could not persuade Alice to change her self-destructive course. Each day in class she admired her bony figure, ignoring the dizziness and constant sense of exhaustion.

Eventually Alice's health broke down altogether, and she began looking bloated and swollen despite her almost total abstinence from food. She left the school and dance altogether, finally entering therapy in an effort to find a way out of the feast-or-famine eating patterns she had developed.

It seems odd to many people inside and outside dance that the art form that capitalizes on the beauty and elegance of the human body should also foster eating (and non-eating) habits that flirt with malnutrition and starvation.

But Dr. James Garrick, director of St. Francis Hospital's Center for Sports Medicine in San Francisco, says that dancers have the most "var-

ied ideas about diet of any group I know."

What began as a trend toward streamlined classicism in the dance boom of the '60s and '70s has now become an obsession with weightless women who can be lifted and manipulated like beach balls. By present day standards, the chubby thighs and ample bosoms of most 19th century Romantic ballerinas would make them candidates for Weight Watchers.

Cammack acknowledges that anorexia and bulimia are problems confronted by the San Francisco ballet school. Periodically the school holds unannounced weigh-ins, and those considered too thin are told to gain at least a pound a week (the same rate at which the fatter dancers are told to reduce) until they reach a proper weight. The punishment for disobedience is dismissal from the school — a threat Cammack had to follow through on with one recalcitrant non-eater recently.

"Fourteen is a really bad time in girl's life to starve herself," Cammack says. It is the really dedicated and disciplined dance student who is attracted to anorexic habits. "I think it's a personality problem. Anorexics are high achievers and they are very hard on themselves."

In his book, Vincent agrees, quoting a New York City psychiatrist who is an expert on this disorder. "In the kind of person vulnerable or predisposed to anorexia, dancing is the kind of experience that is likely to bring out that vulnerability or pre-disposition... a dancer is so into her body, so attuned and sensitive to her body that somebody whose body image is precarious to begin with is obviously going to be much more vulnerable."

Garrick agrees. "I think anorexia nervosa is a psychological problem. It's an expression of 'I can do something no one else can.' In his work at the Center for Sports Medicine, Garrick sees a cross section of athletes and dancers, but it is the dancers and the gymnasts who are most likely to become anorexic.

"At least 10 percent of dancers are into some kind of aberrant dieting practices," he says. "But I sympathize with them, because as great as they are, they simply can't make it."

The dance world's emphasis on youth intensifies the pressure to be thin, says Dr. Callender: dancers diet to prolong their youthfulness.

Callender says that he doesn't know of any anorexics currently in the San Francisco Ballet, but many dancers, he says, "knock themselves down to the point where they get dizzy, nauseated and dehydrated. They don't realize that muscle energy comes from glycogen."

When Callender sees a dancer to dinner, he recalls, "She looked at the meat aghast. Do you realize if I eat this I can't eat for the next two days," she asked.

Callender was shocked when he realized that she meant it.

Eitz

Continued from Page E-1

The American people responded in the desperate waiting days of the war, and in a period of 48 hours, Eitz was able to mobilize some 600 doctors, 1,800 nurses and 3,600 laboratory technicians. Seven international organizations helped find homes for the orphans.

Eitz met the arriving planes in San Francisco and kept the children until they could be sent to adoptive parents, Charlotte Daly remembers.

"Maria is one of the few persons who has put most of the world behind her in order to devote herself to children and refugees. It is a sacrifice few people are willing to make. I have the highest regard and esteem for her."

Eitz says whenever she has an innumerable problem, things somehow work out. Two years ago, she recalls, she had "a house full of Vietnamese children" and no shoes for them to wear to school.

I walked around Stowe Lake, talking to God," she says with a smile. "I bumped into a former student who asked why I appeared so distraught. I told her. Half an hour after I got home, my doorbell rang. There was a load of shoes for my children. I knew they would fit, and they did."

Eitz begs praise upon the people of the Bay Area, who, bearing of desperate human need in Cambodia or in Somalia, offer their time, medical equipment, food or money.

She was in Somalia in June, visiting the doctors and nurses of Medical Volunteers International at camp Bobo. Then, some 45 children were

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dying every week. Today, she says, it's down to 3 a week.

"Without the Emergency Relief Fund of San Francisco, which funds MVI," she says, "we couldn't have maintained the Somalia program at all."

Two years ago Eitz married Donald Hesse, a San Francisco human rights lawyer, who helps with her work and is, she says, "a wonderful father."

He has added new dimension to her unconventional household which is always alive with children, visitors, dogs and cats, hallways filled with packages for Somalia and the phone constantly ringing with calls for help.

Four years ago, Eitz began her affiliation with San Francisco's TALK-line (Telephone Aid Living with Kids), a 24-hour hotline (415-KIDS) for harassed parents. She takes children into her home to give families respite from desperate situations.

Eitz explains, "In the meantime, the mother can do something for herself — think out her life, get a job, find better housing, see a doctor." Eitz gets a small grant from the state and is also assisted by five Foster Grandparents, part of a project to utilize the skills of older Americans.

"Basically," says Eitz of her remarkably isolated life, "I'm convinced there is more to life and mankind than can be destroyed by acts of violence. I believe it's better to call out the goodness in man, to shout out that goodness as loudly as you can. It gives heart to people, and reason and meaning to life."

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