

Remedies We'd Rather Forget

Webbed Fingers

IN THE 1940S, my grandmother would put kerosene on a finger cut and wrap a cobweb around the finger to stop the bleeding. In 1960, while attending nursing school, I found out that cobwebs have a blood-clotting ingredient.

Living on a farm, I loved to roam the fields and hot, dusty grounds in the summer and somehow got ringworm on my arm. To cure it, my grandfather would apply the white juice of a milkweed plant that grew wild.

—Gregoria S., San Benito, Texas

Penny-Ante Transfer

A CURE for warts on the backs of my brother's hands was given to him in the 1940s.

My brother was told to count the number of warts. Then, for each wart, he was to line up a penny on the sidewalk. The person who picked up the pennies would get the warts, and my brother's would disappear.

We have no idea who picked up his pennies or whether they got his warts, but my brother's warts healed and never returned.

—Dayle R., Beaver, Pennsylvania

Taste of Her Own Medicine

I WAS a skinny, 10-year-old kid growing up on a farm near Roanoke, Virginia.

One day, my father's German housekeeper, Mrs. Brown, gave me a dose of a thick, brown tonic that was supposed to "put some meat on [my] bones." The stuff tasted awful, but every morning, I would be given a tablespoon of it.

On the fifth day, I found the bottle in the cupboard. I poured out the contents and replaced them with vanilla extract, molasses and a little gravy I found in the icebox.

For the next few days, I still made a fuss over my dose, but it wasn't as bad as the original—until it began to go bad. Finally, it became so putrid that I couldn't swallow it, and I threw up in the sink.

Shortly afterward, Mrs. Brown tasted the phony tonic. I feared a good whuppin' for wasting her medicine, but to my great surprise, she apologized, saying she was sorry for having almost poisoned me. She thought her medicine had gone bad.

—John V., Wilmington, Delaware

**These remedies are shared for fun and
are not recommended for use.**