

### PICTURE OF THE WEEK: China Launches Spacecraft

On the evening of December 29th, the Chinese National Space Administration (CNSA) successfully launched the TC-1, the first of two planned satellites called Double Star. Called 'Tan Ce 1', which means 'Explorer 1' in Chinese, the spacecraft was hurled into space onboard a Long March 2C launcher.

Planned to study the interaction between solar wind and the Earth's magnetic field, the Double Star program is the culmination of a twenty-plus year agreement between the European Space Agency (ESA) and CNSA. The ESA, citing renewed support for the 1997 CNSA/ESA Double Star compact, contributed eight scientific instruments to the Tan Ce 1, including seven remnants of the ESA's prior Cluster mission.

In association with the second Double Star satellite, the ESA hopes to survey an area substantially larger than that analyzed during the Cluster missions; indeed, the target area has been carefully defined, and the satellite orbits meticulously planned.

Professor David Southwood, the Director of ESA's Scientific Program, said: "Double Star is a win-win project. Not only will European scientists participate in a new mission, at a very low cost, but they will also see an increased scientific return from the four ESA Cluster satellites. Chinese scientists will equally benefit of this, since they already participate in the Cluster mission. These are the great advantages of an historic international collaboration."

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## WEEKLY NEWS 1: Meat Labeled Certified Humane

On Wednesday, December 31, 2003, the Humane Farm Animal Care (HFAC) urged consumers to look for meat that is labeled Certified Humane. Even though the U.S. Department of Agriculture is trying to make beef safer, HFAC is encouraging people to take this extra precaution in the supermarket.

Recently, a cow in the United States tested positive for BSE, a fatal brain-wasting disease. Evidence suggests that eating the meat of cows with BSE can cause humans to develop a similar, brain-wasting disease. Because BSE cannot be killed by heating or cooking the meat, the USDA has been taking steps to make the meat supply in the U.S. safer for consumers.

One recent safety step was the passing of a "no downer" law, which means cattle that are unable to stand due to illness will not be slaughtered for human food. The USDA also plans to enforce more rigorous testing of cattle for this disease.

But HFAC says that people should go one step further. Any farm that participates in their program can use a "Certified Humane Raised & Handled" label on their products. This lets people know that the meat, eggs or dairy products came from animals that were raised, handled and transported in a humane way. These higher standards include strict record keeping about the health of the animals, as well as rules regarding the type of feed the cattle eat.

The Certified Humane program is backed by leading humane organizations, like The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and The Humane Society of the United States.

--Written by [Carla Shives](#)

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Read WEEKLY NEWS 2: Mickey Mouse on Postage Stamps 

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## WEEKLY NEWS 2: Mickey Mouse on Postage Stamps

On Tuesday, December 30, 2003, the U.S. Postal Service unveiled four new commemorative stamps to celebrate friendship. The stamps will honor some of the most beloved characters from Walt Disney Studio, with the characters appearing in pictures that represent the friendship theme.

The friendship stamps will feature Mickey Mouse, Goofy, Donald Duck, Bambi, Thumper, Simba & Mufasa, Jiminy Cricket and Pinocchio. The 37-cent stamps will be available next summer. The stamps will feature the characters in their lifelong, loving friendships.

Mickey Mouse first appeared on November 18, 1928. His friends Goofy and Donald Duck helped make him an American icon. Bambi and Thumper are close friends in the movie "Bambi," and Pinocchio is assisted by Jiminy Cricket as he tries to become a real boy. Simba and Mufasa's loving relationship is based on both their kinship and friendship.

Disney artist Peter Emmerich illustrated the new friendship stamps. Future Walt Disney stamps will revolve around other themes, like "celebration" and "romance." There will be four stamps for each theme, and they will all display a classic Disney moment.

The U.S. Postal Service has been operating since 1775. It visits more than 141 million homes and businesses every day. It's the world's leading provider of delivery services.

--Written by [Carla Shives](#)

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Read WEEKLY NEWS 3: Earth's Spin Back on Track 

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### WEEKLY NEWS 3: Earth's Spin Back on Track

In 1972, scientists added an extra "leap second" on the last day of the year in an effort to make the world's time agree with where the Earth actually is in space. This was done because the rate at which the Earth travels through space has slowly been decreasing for millennia.

However, in 1999, scientists noticed that the Earth was suddenly and inexplicably back on track. For the fifth year in a row now, the earth has continued to be on schedule.

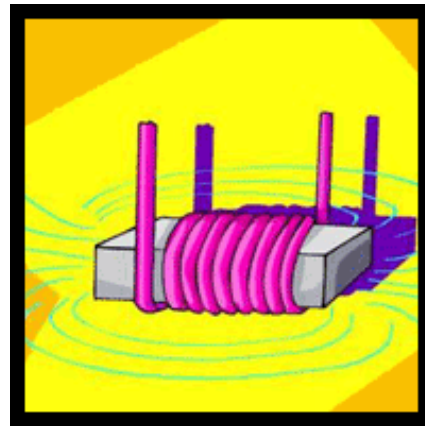
So why the sudden change? No one really knows, and scientists are baffled. Some possible explanations include tides, weather, and changes in the earth's core.

Use of the "leap second" began when Atomic-based Coordinated Universal Time was implemented. This time is based on the atomic clock, which uses the electromagnetic radiation given off by Cesium atoms to measure time. The atomic clock was invented in 1955, and it is extremely reliable.

"Leap seconds" affect many important things, including communication, navigation, and air traffic control systems.

--Written by [Amanda Tassin](#)

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Read **WEEKLY NEWS 4: New Year's Security Concerns**



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#### WEEKLY NEWS 4: New Year's Security Concerns

Since the Department of Homeland Security raised the terror level to orange (high) on December 21, extra security measures have been taken across the nation. Orange is the second-highest level on a five-tier scale.

The two biggest events--New Year's Eve in New York City's Times Square and the Rose Parade in Pasadena, California--proved both safe and successful.

On the East Coast, as many as 1 million people packed Times Square on Wednesday night to ring in the new year. Visitors had to pass through metal detectors and have their bags searched.

Helicopters monitored the event from above, and thousands of police officers provided security on the ground. In addition, all eastbound lanes of the George Washington Bridge- going into New York City from New Jersey-- were closed.

Back on the West Coast, extra security measures were implemented for the Rose Parade. The Pasadena Police Department has 227 police officers, but others were brought in from surrounding areas, making a total of 1,000 policemen on hand for the event.

Airspace over the parade and Rose Bowl was restricted to military and police aircraft. People attending the Rose Bowl were searched, and they were not allowed to bring umbrellas into the stadium.

Despite the extra precautions, police officers say the Rose Parade has always been a secure event.

--Written by [Amanda Tassin](#)

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## AROUND THE WORLD 1: Marking Territory

Usually, Israel fights with Palestine over new Jewish settlements it plans to create or existing settlements it wants to expand. Recently, however, Syria piped up against Israel's plans to expand settlements in an important area known as the Golan Heights. This land used to belong to Syria, but was taken by Israel in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

Operating with a certain amount of land and surrounded by mostly Islamic countries, the government of Israel controls its settlements - basically groups of people that eventually grow and reach large enough numbers to make an established city. But some people dislike the settlements because Israeli soldiers tend to push Palestinians, who have limited territory, off land they have lived on for generations. Israel's Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, also keeps expanding settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, two other important lands captured in the 1967 war.



The plan for Golan Heights is to give a whopping \$90 million to the settlements already there, and to bring in 900 families over the next three years. This is looking bad for Syria, who was hoping to get the land back eventually. In exchange, Syria planned to offer security to Israel, who has a strong military and received a lot of aid from the United States, but is still surrounded by angry neighbors. Mr. Sharon doesn't seem worried about peace talks and said the two countries could start from scratch instead of picking up where they left off three years ago. But clearly, giving up Golan Heights is no part of his plan.

Israel is at a constant tug-and-pull with different Middle Eastern nations, and very strict where terrorism is concerned. Some Israeli officials indicated that expanding the Golan settlement was a kind of punishment for Syria's keeping terrorists in its country. Back in October, for example, Israel attacked what it believed was a terrorist training camp in Syria.

When it comes to Palestine, the hottest Middle Eastern issue before Iraq came along, Mr. Sharon did agree to an American-backed peace plan that required him to take out all the Jewish outposts the military set up in Palestinian areas, but the promise is mostly words and little action. The Prime Minister said he will cooperate with the settlements when Palestinians stop attacks - especially the continuing suicide bombings - on Israelis. The problem may not look like it will be resolved anytime soon, but there is some encouraging news for the New Year. Just recently, eight Israelis and Palestinians publicly announced that they will climb an unnamed, unclaimed mountain in Antarctica, and that they will do it together.

--Written by [Kari Ellassal](#)

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## AROUND THE WORLD 2: What's Best for Bam

The earthquake in the ancient city of Bam, Iran, killed tens of thousands of people - some experts even say the death toll could be close to 40,000! And despite the fact that President Bush named the country as part of a so-called "Axis of Evil", no one can deny the help Iran needs in recovering from this natural disaster. And so the American flag appeared in the country for the first time in a long time as U.S. rescue squads join with those of other countries to provide medical aid.

One of the rescue squads sent to Iran, and one of the best in the country, was Fairfax County's. The total size of the U.S. relief team is 81 people. Some on the base glued American flags to their tents, which gives Iran's people mixed feelings. Many are glad for the help from the U.S., but many others are angry with the American foreign policy in neighboring countries like Iraq and Afghanistan. Some are suspicious, wondering why it took five long days after the disaster for the Americans to show up to Bam.

In any event, people are putting aside most differences for the time being and focusing on rescue and medical care. Three hospitals completely crumbled in the earthquake and nearly 11,000 wounded people were evacuated from the city to other hospitals. So why the doctors? Bam still needs to function in day-to-day medical activities - babies being born, minor surgeries, sprained joints or broken bones, and anything else that could send any of us to the doctor's office. So the U.S. and other countries made a nine-tent hospital to deal with these issues for those who are still staying around Bam, hoping rescuers might find a missing family member.

The U.S. and Iran are also making tiny efforts to work together. Iran lifted a block that made it nearly impossible for a U.S. citizen to get a visa. The U.S., in turn, lifted some blocks of its own, now allowing people to give money mostly to relief organizations in Iran. But some changes take a longer time than others do; because of the bad blood between Israel and most of the Islamic world, Iran said it would allow volunteer helpers from every country to come in except Israel.

--Written by [Kari Ellassal](#)

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## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY 1: Giant Snake Found in Indonesia

Villagers on the Indonesian island of Java claim to have captured a whopper of a snake--nearly 50 feet and about a thousand pounds--and have put it on display in a little village zoo recently.

The snake, which was actually captured some time last year, measured in at 48 feet, 8 inches (almost as long as a volleyball court), and weighs 983 pounds, making it the largest captive snake ever.

This super-sized snake is a reticulated python, a species native to southeast Asia. Reticulated pythons are known to be the longest snakes in the world, but even for a reticulated python, the one caught in Java is huge. Most experts believed they could only grow to about 30-35 feet long, and the biggest one in an American zoo is only 28 feet long.

This snake is about as long as eight tall men laid end-to-end on the ground, and eats just as hearty. Pythons swallow their meals whole, and eat any animal they can catch and fit in their mouths (usually rodents). Reticulated pythons are known to eat animals as big as sheep, and have been known to eat humans on rare occasions. But don't worry, the Indonesian python won't be chowing on children anytime soon: it eats a few dogs every month to satisfy the munchies.

--Written by [Nia Williams](#)

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## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY 2: Terrorists Are at Home, Too



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## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY 2: Terrorists Are at Home, Too

Wonder where to find terrorists and Weapons of Mass Destruction? If you think only in places like Iraq or Afghanistan, think again: try Noonday Texas.

That's where two Americans, William Krar and his girlfriend Judith Bruey, were stashing a sodium-cyanide bomb (which could kill thousands of people at once), explosives, lethal chemicals, illegal weapons and ammunition. The two anti-government white supremacists recently pleaded guilty to possessing a weapon of mass destruction.

Apparently, in 2002, Krar and Bruey sent a package full of forged ID tags for important organizations like the United Nations and the Department of Defense to a man in New Jersey named Edward Feltus. Such fake IDs could be used for all sorts of illegal activities, like impersonating government officials or sneaking into government buildings. The package was accidentally delivered to a family in New York, who opened the package and alerted the FBI. The FBI, who knew that Krar and Bruey were members of anti-government and hate groups, tracked the two down and found the chemicals, bombs and weapons last April. Krar, Bruey and Feltus have all plead guilty to various charges and are expected to be sentenced soon.

Even though the three were caught, investigators still don't know what exactly they were planning to do with all those weapons, whether they had a plan to use them or sell them to other hate- or anti-government group members. It is even possible that Krar and Bruey have already sold dangerous weapons to others who may still be planning attacks.

Surprised that terrorists are right under our noses? Don't be. Domestic terrorists, terrorists right here at home, are very common, and make up the majority of terrorist threat arrests in the US in the last few years, not foreign terrorists. Just think of the bomb set off in Oklahoma city less than ten years ago, or the person who sent anthrax through the mail two years ago--in both those cases, the terrorism was domestic.

These days, you don't hear much about domestic threats like the one in Texas. Some people think that is because the Bush administration is more focused on foreign terrorists and fighting wars abroad than on terrorism in general. Others think the fact that the domestic threat was resolved so quietly is a good sign and proves how well US intelligence is preventing threats. Either way, we should all remember that it is important to be aware of and stop terrorists no matter where they come from, and hope investigators keep doing such a good job of stopping people like Krar, Bruey and Feltus.

--Written by [Nia Williams](#)

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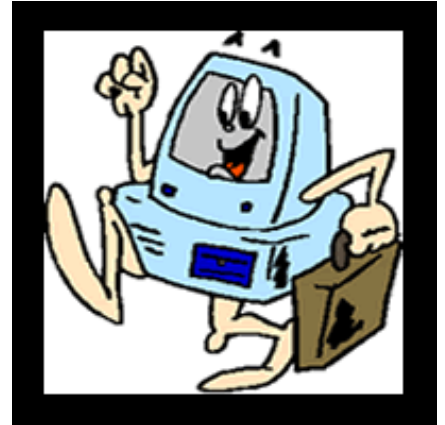
## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY 1: Giant Snake Found in Indonesia

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## THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

On January 5, 1980 the popular technology company Hewlett Packard, better known as HP, introduced its first computer. The machine was called "The HP-85." It came with a monitor, a built-in printer, and a cassette tape recorder for data storage. Hewlett-Packard entered a crowded field that already included the TRS-80, the Atari home computer, and the best-selling Apple II by MacIntosh. IBM would shortly introduce its IBM PC and immediately become the market leader.



On January 6, 1912 New Mexico was admitted into the United States as the 47th state. During the 1500s, Spanish explorers led by Francisco Vasquez de Coronado entered the New Mexico region. After years of being driven out by the local Apache people, the Spanish finally settled there, working ranches, farms and mines. The area eventually became a province of Mexico. In 1846, a war broke out between the United States and Mexico. During battle, U.S. General Stephen Kearny captured and occupied the New Mexico city of Santa Fe. Two years later, a treaty gave New Mexico to the United States, and in 1853 the territory was expanded by the Gadsden Purchase. Indian resistance ended in 1886 when the Apache chief Geronimo surrendered. Two and one-half decades later, New Mexico joined the Union, becoming the 47th state.

On January 9, 1768, the first modern circus took place in London. Philip Astley, a former cavalry officer, found that if he galloped in a tight circle, centrifugal force allowed him to perform seemingly impossible feats on a horse's back. He built a ring and on January 9, 1768, invited the public to see him wave his sword in the air while he rode with one foot on the saddle and one on the horse's head. The people loved Astley's trick riding, and he responded by building an amphitheatre and adding other riders, a clown and musicians to his show. In 1772, Astley went to France to perform his "daring feats of horsemanship" before King Louis XV. The same year, a competitor in London set up shop just down the road from Astley's Amphitheatre, calling his show the "Royal Circus," after the Roman name for the circular theaters where chariot races were held. In the 19th century, the term "circus" was adopted as a generic name for this new form of entertainment. Astley, who lived till 1814, eventually established 18 other circuses in cities across Europe.



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## MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT 1: Between a Bakers Dozen

Are you an only child? Have you always wished for an older or younger sibling? Do you have brothers or sisters that you think are a pain? At least you don't have 12 brothers and sister like in the new hit movie "Cheaper by the Dozen". "Cheaper by the Dozen," hit theaters on Christmas day and the theaters were jam packed. Several showings were sold out and people were still standing in the theater watching.

"Cheaper by the Dozen" stars all your favorite actors and actresses. Steve Martin stars as the lovable dad just trying to achieve his dreams with the belief that the experience will only bring his family closer together. Bonnie Hunt stars as the fantastic mom who has always stayed at home but has dreamed of being a writer. When she achieves her dreams she has to take the chance of leaving home to accomplish it. There are also several young actors and actresses starring in this terrific movie. Tom Welling, WB's "Smallville," Hilary Duff, Disney's "Lizzie McGuire," Piper Perabo, "Coyote Ugly," Aston Kutcher, Fox's "That 70s Show," and several more play the crazy and lovable kids.

"Cheaper by the Dozen" is about a large family that lives in a small town. Dad and Mom met in college and fell in love instantly and have always dreamed of having a large family. Although they both have large dreams for themselves, they think of their family first. When Dad gets the offer to teach his college football team in another town, he jumps at the offer. Instead of listening to his kids this time, he moves all of them to a new town, a new house, and a new life because he believes that this opportunity will open new doors for all of them and make them a stronger family.

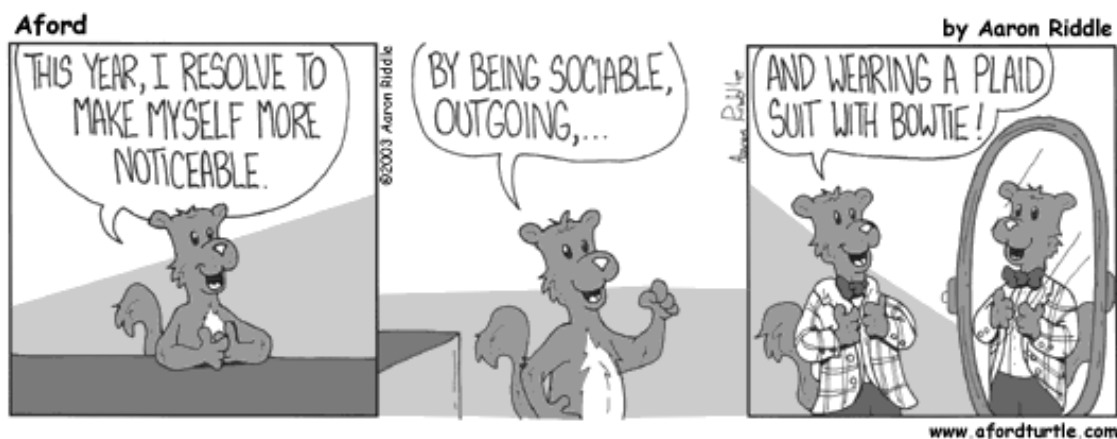
The outcome of "Cheaper by the Dozen" is so sweet. I can honestly say that I loved this movie and I would go and see it again. In fact I have seen it twice already. Don't miss out on one of the best family movies of the year.

--Written by [Tami Saslo](#)

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## COMICS & POEMS 1: Aford Turtle, Comic Strip



--Written by [Aaron Riddle](#)

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## COMICS & POEMS 2: Flowers Here, Always Bloom!

### *Flowers Here, Always Bloom!*

I sit myself down tomorrow  
In the halls of yesterday  
One hundred years have slowly passed,  
But I passed them anyway.

"The patters day," long ago has dried,  
But his love remains the same,  
The man I passed on this lonely road,  
Whispered softly and breathed my name!

"Your name sir, has much meaning,  
In this finest, where roses bloom,  
But, here in the forest, we are waiting,  
For the angels, to make more room."

The old man continued on his journey,  
His pace, was reduced to slow,  
Directions, leads us to the graveyard,  
"There is no place else left to go!"

Here, he falters, drops to the ground,  
No one will find him soon!  
But his grave top has many flowers,  
Move beautiful, as now, they are in bloom!

--Written by [Garland Day](#)

This poem is featured in [The Window of Remembrance](#), an Anthology of Poetry released by the International Library of Poetry in November 2000.

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Answer all of the questions on the quiz, then select the Score button to grade the quiz.

**There are 10 Questions total.**

**1. Which country is Iran not accepting help from for rebuilding the city of Bam?**

- Palestine
- Israel
- Iraq
- Abu Dhabi

**2. Territories Israel took in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war include:**

- The Arabian Peninsula
- Syria and the Mohabe Strip
- Golan Heights, West Bank, and the Gaza Strip
- Yemen and Oman

**3. What product is not part of the "Certified Humane Raised & Handled" program?**

- eggs
- beef
- milk
- spinach

**4. How many different types of Disney stamps will be printed to commemorate friendship?**

- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

**5. A "leap second" is added on to the**

- last day of the month
- last day of the year
- last day of February
- last day of the week

**6. The atomic clock uses electromagnetic radiation emanated from \_\_\_\_\_ to measure time.**

- Hydrogen

Magnesium

Cesium

the moon

**7. All of the following are possible explanations for the earth's spin getting back on schedule EXCEPT:**

tides

weather

earthquakes

changes in the earth's core

**8. Some of the extra security precautions included:**

restricted airspace

searches

extra police officers

all of the above

**9. How long is the longest snake ever kept in captivity?**

28 feet 8 inches

35 feet 6 inches

40 feet 10 inches

48 feet 8 inches

**10. Where were Weapons of Mass Destruction found in April 2003?**

Kabul, Afghanistan

Baghdad, Iraq

Lahore, Pakistan

Noonday, Texas

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## U.S. GOVERNMENT 1: FDA Bans Ephedra

The US Federal Government announced Tuesday a ban on the commercial sale and marketing of ephedra, a supplement used for weight loss by millions of Americans. The FDA has confirmed ephedra's influence in several deaths, and has further delineated ephedra-specific side effects from unrelated illness.

Head of the Food and Drug Administration, Mark McClellan, said his agency is notifying consumers and manufacturers that it will publish within sixty days a rule making it illegal to sell and use ephedra. The FDA is concerned about young people, and athletes specifically, looking to ephedra as a performance booster.

Approximately 150 deaths have been linked to ephedra, and ephedra-like stimulants, including the death of Baltimore Orioles baseball player Steve Bechler earlier this year. Ephedra has been known to cause heart attacks and strokes in even healthy people at the recommended dosage; it strains one's system, increasing heart rate and constricting blood vessels.

Ephedra, a herb rather than a chemically created drug, skirted US law and was allowed to sell over-the-counter with little FDA oversight, unless the FDA could prove a clear danger to public health. In 1997, ephedra manufacturers blocked an FDA attempt to restrict sales of certain dosages, and to affix warning labels on products containing ephedra. Unfortunately, the manufacturers won, arguing the FDA had insufficient material to prove present danger.

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