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greater degree among nonwhites, are cardiovascular disease, cancer, infant mortality, accidents, and homicide.

The social and economic consequences of attacking early death, Vaupel writes, are less disruptive than those of extending old age. Reductions in early deaths would be unlikely to produce major demographic changes in the population. Designing programs to deal with the problem will nevertheless be a vast undertaking, Vaupel acknowledges. New funds for "early death" research, health care, and education would require cutbacks elsewhere—a "politically difficult" and "highly charged" task.

Till Divorce Us Do Part

"Marriage, Divorce, and Living Together"
in *Interchange* (Jan. 1978), Population
Reference Bureau, 1337 Connecticut Ave.
N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The U.S. divorce rate is high and the number of unmarried couples "living together" is increasing steadily. But according to the Population Reference Bureau (PRB) the divorce rate may soon level off—and living together may be one of the reasons why.

The Census Bureau reports that 2 million Americans are living together without being married, most of them young (in the 1960s, most unmarried couples consisted of a middle-aged or elderly woman with a younger man as a tenant). In about a third of these couples, the woman is the breadwinner, with an "unrelated man" living in.

The U.S. divorce rate, meanwhile, is the highest in the world (5 divorces annually per 1,000 population). In 1976, there was one divorce for every two marriages (1,077,000 versus 2,133,000). It is estimated that of each 100 first marriages, 38 will end in divorce; 29 of the 38 divorcees will remarry; 13 of these 29 will be divorced a second time.

But the divorce rate has reached its peak, the PRB contends, and may even decline in the next two or three years. One reason: Couples are having fewer children, which tends to improve the family's economic position—a key factor in marital stability. Another: "Living together" may lead to "a more careful selection of a spouse and thus to a more enduring marriage."

Washington's Mule Program

"General Washington and the Jack Ass"
by J. H. Powell, in *The South Atlantic
Quarterly* (Autumn 1977), Duke University
Press, P.O. Box 697, Durham, N.C. 27708.

Not the greatest, but possibly the least known of George Washington's concerns when he assumed the Presidency in 1789 was the dearth of mules in the young republic. Five years earlier, on his return to Mount Vernon after a decade of war, the general had tackled the problem with singular dedication. Washington believed that reliance on horses as draft animals had produced a "ruinous" system of agriculture: Horses

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ate too much, worked too little, and died too young. The remedy, as he saw it, was to breed mules.

Seeking no ordinary mules, but "a race of extraordinary goodness," Washington, says Powell, set himself a considerable challenge. The greatest obstacle was the fact that mules, being the hybrid offspring of a male jackass and a female horse, are sterile. Washington's efforts to unite mares and asses, by turns comic and moving, remained untold for more than a century and a half after his death.

Jackasses of the size and quality Washington's vision demanded were not easily found. The best were Spanish and under export restrictions. For a time the general despaired until he received a royal gift from Spain's Charles III of two blooded jacks, one of which survived the Atlantic crossing to reach Mount Vernon in 1785. Lafayette soon sent over another, from Malta.

Breeding proved an uncertain business, but Washington persevered; so did the jacks. When he returned to Mount Vernon after his two-term presidency, drought had taken a heavy toll on his farms—but the jacks had thrived. Their offspring were numerous and healthy. Though Washington's last days were full of disappointment, they were not without some satisfaction. "He left a nation behind him," Powell observes, "and he left it stocked with mules."

Northern Myths About Dixie

"The Northern Origins of Southern Mythology" by Patrick Gerster and Nicholas Cords, in *Journal of Southern History* (Nov. 1977), Tulane University, New Orleans, La. 70118.

Feudalism, the agrarian utopia, the bigoted society—more than any other region in the United States the South has been the subject of literary mythmaking. Curiously, the most familiar myths were created by Northerners: In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe, a New Englander, molded the stereotype of "the faithful darkey." The home of composer Stephen Foster, contrary to popular belief, was not Kentucky but Pittsburgh. And "Dixie," the anthem of the Confederacy, was written by an Ohioan, David Decatur Emmett.

Gerster and Cords, historians at Minnesota's Lakewood Community College, review the work of several major historians who have tried to analyze the Northern attraction to Southern ways of life. Some scholars have argued that the creeping Northern egalitarianism of the mid-19th century sufficiently threatened Yankee property owners to provoke a "hankering after aristocracy" which eulogized Southern stability. Others have ascribed the North's envy of Southern aristocracy to "the airs of grace and decorum, secretly yearned for but never realized."

After Reconstruction, Northern writers like Melville, James, and Henry Adams contrasted the political and commercial excesses of the "Gilded Age" with the agrarian values of the ante-bellum South. These values seemed neither as hypocritical nor as unsavory as those of New York's corrupt "Boss" Tweed or the robber-baron financier Jay Gould.