

GENERAL SCIENCE

Antivivisection Letters

➤ THOSE WHO think antivivisectionists are humanitarian or, at most, "harmless crackpots," are invited to judge for themselves from samples of antivivisectionist letters published by the National Society for Medical Research in Chicago.

Reason for publishing these letters is given by Dr. A. J. Carlson, University of Chicago physiologist and president of the National Society for Medical Research, as follows:

"The recent murder of an 18-year-old secretary in the offices of the American Physical Society brought home to many of us that the so-called 'harmless crackpots' are not always so harmless.

"Several years ago an antivivisectionist shot at, but did not hit, Dr. Harry Goldblatt, world renowned heart specialist of the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital in Los Angeles.

"Recently," Dr. Carlson stated, "antivivisectionists have threatened the lives of the vice president and two members of the faculty of the University of Illinois."

The most violent of the antivivisectionist letters could not be published, Dr. Carlson said, because "the language is so vile that the resultant publication could not be sent through the mail."

Here is a sample from those published: "As the beautiful Xmas season rolls around why don't you do the world a favor, go in a corner and cut your throat you degenerate and perverted old Bitch. We scan the death notices daily hoping to see your name . . ."

Another antivivisectionist wrote: "You fancy yourselves men; I am a woman. But my great pleasure would be the experiment to end all experiments, and this would be made on you. I know a number of places on your bodies, which might be most sensitive to pain. I wonder if you would react to my satisfaction? Would you feel pain as horribly as it is possible to know pain? Would you remain conscious the correct length of time? Would we learn anything new in the art of torture . . ."

Science News Letter, September 6, 1952

GENERAL SCIENCE

Clock Ticks Twice a Year

➤ A CLOCK that "ticks" only twice each year was one of the objects entombed in a "living cornerstone" laid in Chicago on Sept. 3 in a building that was constructed in 1893 without a cornerstone.

The cornerstone was put in place by Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry, in an opening ceremony of the Centennial of Engineering.

Dedicated to the future, the cornerstone houses several objects that may reveal answers to questions now perplexing scientists. A hundred years from now, the cornerstone will be opened and the answers will be noted.

Meanwhile, a clock inside will tick off the years. The clock is built to "tick" once when Chicago's temperature rises above 85 degrees Fahrenheit. It will tick again the following winter when 15-degree winds are chilling Windy-City residents. A thermocouple acts as the clock's "pendulum."

Made of granite, the cornerstone also contains small amounts of dry hydrogen and oxygen in the proper proportions to form water. Some scientists say no reaction will take place in a hundred years because no catalyst will be present. Others believe a violent reaction will occur.

Oriental lotus seeds, noted for their ability to germinate after a long storage period, occupy one capsule. Future scientists should be able to predict more accurately the ability of seed to maintain germination qualities depending upon what the lotus seed does when planted in 2052.

Atomic scientists of the future will be interested in a lead block entombed in the cornerstone. It is coated with a thin layer of radioactive lead isotope. How deep will the radioactivity penetrate the block in 100 years? This question and others will be answered by time.

Science News Letter, September 6, 1952

AGRICULTURE

Airplane Spray Kills Mesquite for More Beef

➤ BEEF PRODUCTION jumps from 40% to several hundred percent when mesquite and other undesirable shrubs are removed from the grazing land, Dr. B. W. Allred of the U. S. Department of Agriculture told the Sixth International Grassland Congress meeting in State College, Pa.

A mixture of diesel oil and plant hormone sprayed from airplanes is giving "encouraging results" in wiping out the mesquite that has invaded over 100 million acres of the Southwest.

The plant hormone used is 2,4,5-T. The special mixture works either when sprayed on the foliage by airplane or when sprayed on the lower tree trunk, he reported. Ranchmen now rely on mechanical equipment, such as dozers, pushers, rooters and cables and chains, or kerosene and diesel oil poured around the tree soil to get rid of the pesky shrubs, but these methods are time-consuming and expensive.

Control of mesquite, he said, is difficult because so many birds, wild animals and livestock eat the woody plant's ripe bean pods and spread the seed widely.

The invasion of undesirable shrubs, such as mesquite, sagebrush and oak has taken place mostly within the last 100 years, when livestock grazing became widespread and wiped out native grasses. Woody plants such as mesquite, which then took over, use more water than does grass in producing a pound of dry matter, and they provide much less in the way of erosion protection for the soil.

Science News Letter, September 6, 1952

SCIENCE NEWS LETTER

VOL. 62 SEPTEMBER 6, 1952 No. 10

The Weekly Summary of Current Science, published every Saturday by SCIENCE SERVICE, Inc., 1719 N. St., N. W., Washington 6, D. C., NORTH 2255. Edited by WATSON DAVIS.

Subscription rates: 1 yr., \$5.50; 2 yrs., \$10.00; 3 yrs., \$14.50; single copy, 15 cents, more than six months old, 25 cents. No charge for foreign postage.

Change of address: Three weeks notice is required. When ordering a change please state exactly how magazine is now addressed. Your new address should include postal zone number if you have one.

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Printed in U. S. A. Entered as second class matter at the post office at Washington, D. C., under the act of March 3, 1879. Acceptance for mailing at the special rate of postage provided for by Sec. 34.40, P. L. and R., 1948 Edition, paragraph (d) (act of February 28, 1925; 39 U. S. Code 283), authorized February 28, 1950. Established in mimeographed form March 18, 1922. Title registered as trademark, U. S. and Canadian Patent Offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, Abridged Guide, and the Engineering Index.

Member Audit Bureau of Circulation. Advertising Representatives: Howland and Howland, Inc., 393 7th Ave., N.Y.C., Pennsylvania 6-5566, and 360 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, State 2-4822.

SCIENCE SERVICE

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