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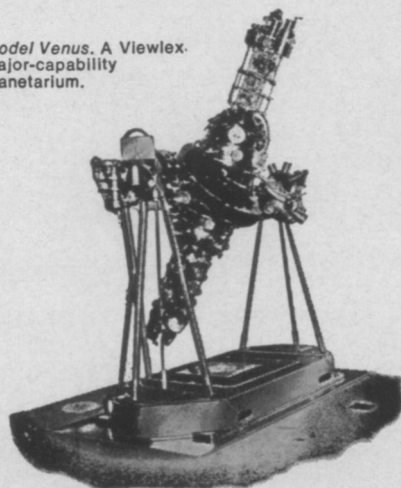
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LETTERS

to the editor

Which way is up

Sir:

Your issue of May 11, 1968, p. 447 "Clouds Rush in Toward Milky Way" states:

" . . . look out of our galaxy to the north or the south"

and again

" . . . the galaxy, which is a broad flat disk lying roughly in the east-west direction."

Universe is boundless, timeless, positionless, continuous and without direction. The galaxies revolve on their axes and spiral in the direction of one of its flat surfaces, but there is no compass direction involved. The solar system is spiraling toward Hercules which happens to be in a northern direction according to this small planet, but this is not up or down, north or south in as much as all objects of the universe are spiraling in spirals and cardinal directions are unknown.

Chapman Grant
Escondido, Calif.

(When astronomers speak of events involving the galaxy as a whole, they most commonly use galactic coordinates. The equator in this system is the mean plane of the galaxy. Directions parallel to this plane are called east and west. Perpendiculars are north and south. The plane of the galactic equator is inclined at 62 degrees to the equator of the earth, but the north and south poles are in the same hemispheres as those of the earth. North, south, east and west are common terms of references used by astronomers for either positions or direction of motion in relation to any of the three coordinate systems: celestial, ecliptic or galactic. The sense of the directions is roughly equivalent for all three. Ed.)

Naming sources

Sir:

I heartily endorse the letter titled "information please" (SN: 5/18, p. 468) by M. G. Jacobson. It's important for your readers to know your writers' exact sources of information, whether directly from the scientist himself and where he works and its approximate address, or whether from a journal and its authors. It's terribly frustrating not to know. I think that you are much better at furnishing this information than you were several years ago, and this is the chief reason why I am now a subscriber.

Joanne Ashley
Manlius, N.Y.

Latin names

Sir:

When scientific names of organisms are used in SCIENCE NEWS, they are not italicized or underlined or in any way identified as Latin terms. This is disturbing to me both as a reader, since it is difficult for me to distinguish the generic names if they are unfamiliar to me, and also as an instructor, since I have always taught my students the importance of underlining or otherwise indicating scientific names.

Is there any reason for your omission of this designation? The change would be a small, but significant one, for which many of your readers would be grateful.

Shirley Leuthner
Oregon State University
Corvallis, Ore.

(We try to avoid italics because of the conviction that they interfere with the ease of reading. Concern for precision, clarity and ease of identification have convinced us that, in cases like this one, we were being overly rigid. Our reversion to standard practice predated this comment by several issues. Ed.)

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