

to the editor

Review of FDA science

Notwithstanding its brevity, the report on our Ad hoc Science Advisory Committee's final document "FDA science activities get mixed review" (SN: 6/5/71, p. 383) was the most informative and balanced I have seen to date. The editorial comment was quite gracious and I hope accurate.

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Study of altruism

In the article, "Is altruism dead?" (SN: 6/5/71, p. 387) I feel one factor in the determination that seminarians stopped to help a "young man coughing and groaning" more often when they "had time to spare," might have been overlooked: How good of an actor was the "young man?"

At least one other factor was not studied. What if it had been an attractive young woman? Or would we have to suspect non-altruism in the latter case?

E. John Schoneberger Jr.
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Eliminating the White Plague

I read with interest your article on the President's program to treat the "White Plague," heroin addiction (SN: 6/26/71, p. 433).

How about this as a proposal? Since the world is overpopulated, and will soon reach the "human body saturation point," can society tolerate these poor leeches, who contribute nothing, and sap our resources, building up our crime debit? So, let us begin by giving them all the heroin they want, and more, seeing to it that they finally expire from overdose. My suggestion is more possible, and perhaps more humane, than those in your article.

Lionel L. Taylor
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With the sticks

Re: the letters on dowsing (SN: 6/12/71, p. 396). Last summer I met a well-digger, hired to dig a well in the company picnic area. When asked how he intended to locate water he replied, "With the sticks." The sticks consisted of two brass rods shaped like the letter L, each about 24 inches by 6 inches. In operation the rods were held by the fists by the short arms with the long

arms parallel and pointing straight ahead, waist or breast high. When the right spot was reached the rods crossed. They actually rotated in the fists and could not be restrained by grasping them as tightly as possible. I was utterly astonished by their action, and the spot was verified by the well-digger.

I believed dowsing was foolishness until this experience, but I certainly cannot explain it.

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Cell repair

I was flattered by the excellent article on cellular and molecular repair (SN: 6/19/71, p. 415), which described work of Dr. J. Lett and myself. The correspondent did a fine job in presenting our work in a popular and accurate manner.

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Detecting tornadoes

Miss Purrett should be congratulated on the excellent presentation of the work on the electromagnetic radiation produced by tornadoes (SN: 7/3/71, p. 12). The findings of Drs. Stanford, Lind and Takle will be of great practical significance.

While "the human eye is still the best tornado detector," one wonders if the method of the late Prof. Robinson of Technion in Haifa could not add another important "alerting" factor: determination of the marked changes in the concentrations and polarities of air ions prior to the unusual meteorological events. Hurricanes, tornadoes and the Western Chinook generate large amounts of ions which could be metered and recorded hours before the disaster strikes. This would give the people living in this sector ample time to seek appropriate shelters.

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films OF THE WEEK

BIRTH OF LAND. 16mm, color, sound, 16 min. A volcano, a stream of molten rock, the wind and waves cutting a sea cliff, water rushing down a gorge; all are events in geologic time. This is the "Birth of Land," really a myriad series of tiny events that contribute to the creation of continents, mountains, and deserts on our earth. Using the formation of an island mass as a basis for discussion, the film begins by showing the formation of land, and from that, the changes resulting from volcanism, erosion, and sedimentation. Slowly, the land takes a definite, recognizable shape, only to change again with time. Thus the process continues; events in time shaping and reshaping our planet. The film uses models, animation, and shots of actual geological events. Audience: general. Purchase \$225 or rental \$25 from American Educational Films, Dept. SN, 331 North Maple Dr., Beverly Hills, Calif. 90210.

CHICANO. 16mm, color, sound, 23 min. Explores the manifestations of bias, oppression, and discrimination which affect the Mexican-American. It also presents the goals of the Chicano movement and the various organizations which represent the Mexican-American community. Most Mexican-Americans do not want to give up their language and cultural heritage. They want to be recognized as bilingual, bicultural Americans. They want to be visible and have a voice in decision-making which affects their lives. The open-endedness of the film will stimulate discussion about one of the central questions of all minority groups: Must they deny their cultural identity to have equal education, social and economic opportunities, and meaningful participation in our society? Audience: elementary, secondary, college, adult. Purchase \$315 or rental \$25 from BFA Educational Media, Dept. SN, 2211 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica, Calif. 90404.

SLEEPWATCHERS. 16mm, color, sound, 25 min. In the last 15 years, the discovery that different types of sleep can be monitored has precipitated a research explosion. New information is pouring in about what happens during that one-third of our lives we spend sleeping. The film presents an in-depth report on current research being done to answer such questions as: How much sleep do we need?; What happens if you deprive a man of his sleep or only his dreams?; What is sleep like for the mentally ill?; What causes sleepwalking and can it be cured?; How much time each night is spent dreaming? Audience: general. Purchase \$300 or rental \$16 from McGraw-Hill Films, Dept. SN, 330 W. 42nd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

TENNESSEE RIVER: CONSERVATION AND POWER. 16mm, color, sound, 14 min. In the Tennessee Valley, a now historic program has proven that man can advantageously alter his environment and correct past ecological mistakes. The development of this area by the Federal Government has resulted in benefits to the people in the immediate area and to those beyond the valley. The Tennessee Valley Authority has instituted and carried out programs for flood control, power production, agricultural improvements, housing developments, and for development of recreational areas. Industrial growth resulting from the availability of inexpensive transportation and power has increased employment. The quality of life in the area has been greatly improved by the wise use of this river resource. Audience: elementary, secondary, adult. Purchase \$195 or rental \$10 from BFA Educational Media, Dept. SN, 2211 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica, Calif. 90404.

Listing is for readers' information of new 16mm and 8mm films on science, engineering, medicine and agriculture for professional, student and general audiences. For further information on purchase, rental or free loan, write to distributor.