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COVER: Georgetown University surgeons Peter W. Conrad, Mario N. Gomes and Charles A. Hufnagel perform a kidney transplant. Although 18,325 kidneys have been transplanted during the past 30 years, organ transplantation still presents a lot of problems. See p. 314. (Photo: Richard Thompson/Georgetown)

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November 16, 1974

To the Editor

Let nature take its course?

I cannot hold back a bitter comment on the remark ascribed to Philip Handler (SN: 11/2/74, p. 278) concerning the world food emergency. This respected scholar is supposed to advocate letting nature take its course in South Asia, which is a genteel way of saying that the population should naturally reduce itself by famine, pestilence and war.

How sad. Money was no object when we were led to believe that South Vietnam was on the frontier of democracy. The bombs and weapons were needed to protect our way of life. Now that we have defoliated the once verdant countryside, we can sit back and say, "let nature take its course." Before this unfortunate war, it was a virtual food basket, producing rice for export.

Robert J. Di Pietro
Professor of Linguistics
Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.

Quakes and planetary lineup

A long-time protagonist in the correlation between seismicity of the earth and planetary configurations, I have read with interest the article on the "Jupiter Effect" (SN: 9/28/74, p. 197), concerning the book by J. Gribbin and S. Plagemann about the syzygy [nearly straight-line alignment] of all the planets in 1982. The effects of different syzygial configurations are discussed in my paper, a summary of which was published in the TRANSACTIONS OF THE AMERICAN GEOPHYSICAL UNION, 1944. In 1964-1965 the correlation between the rate of the earth's acceleration and the frequency of earthquakes of 5.9 magnitude were studied under the title of *Astroseismology Project*. A positive correlation coefficient of 0.64 was found for the years of 1903-1965. Ephemerides of seven decimal figures were used in 1965. The ten decimal ephemerides of the JPL were used in 1972 for checking the 1965 data, giving the correlation coefficient of 0.68 and 0.73. According to my theory, the chain of events associated with a strong syzygy is this:

(1) The combined effect of some planetary syzygy produces a strong and rapidly increasing or decreasing gravitational force on the earth.

(2) This "jolt" of the earth produces elastic and elastic-plastic strains and stresses in the asthenosphere, lithosphere, and the crust of the earth, and displaces

the core from its normal position.

(3) If, prior to complete syzygy, the stresses in the earth were accumulated, the "jolt" would release them in faults, earthquakes, and tectonic movements.

For checking the Gribbin and Plagemann conclusions and to determine the effect of 1982 syzygy on the earth seismicity, behavior of E and D ionospheric regions, and some other related phenomena, ten-decimal ephemerides of the sun, moon and the earth, computerized from recently determined masses of the sun, the moon, and the planets, and their heliocentric and geocentric distances for six-hour intervals of time are needed.

Anatol J. Shneiderov
Washington, D.C.

Edible (?) wild plants

Edible wild plants is a sick information field and study of it should center on its dangers rather than on vitamins and minerals (SN: 10/19/74, p. 252). Classical edible wild plants are not always healthful, many causing subacute poisoning of unknown nature and damage. On top of this survivalists and writers have glorified what they call "emergency" foods (better called poverty foods) and have judged themselves competent to determine for themselves and us too whether a given wild plant is healthful to eat. Out of this situation has come some incredibly incompetent recommendations on edible wild plants. One local publication on survival lists chokecherry leaves and appleseeds as emergency foods. Both are high in cyanide, the first being a classical stock poison and the second a known cause of human death. Local lore also has it that false hellebore is an emergency food. The Indians used it for suicide and it causes horrible birth defects in lambs and calves, including one-eyed monsters.

The state of the subject is such that pregnant women should avoid edible wild plants altogether and others should be cautioned to beware of their lives.

Volney Wallace
Dugway, Utah

Our scientific wealth

I see more and more people criticizing pure research in your letters to the editor. If they can't see a dollar or a faster car in a scientific investigation they label it wasteful. But it's nothing new. They did it at Kitty Hawk, and at Bell Labs, and at Cape Kennedy. They are the really poor people of our times. They struggle for money and waste the only real wealth our species ever had—knowledge. They would sell our scientific birthright for a mess of pottage.

Louis J. Bookbinder
Millbrae, Calif.

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