

SCIENCE NEWS®

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Incorporating Science News Letter

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COVER: Spectacular colors belie the minuscule variations in earth's magnetic field, as mapped from data provided by three Polar Orbiting Geophysical Observatory satellites. Contour lines (not continental outlines) represent 2-gamma intervals. See p. 340 for color key and story. (Map: Regan et al/JOURNAL OF GEOPHYSICAL RESEARCH/©AMERICAN GEOPHYSICAL UNION 1975)

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LETTERS

Positions in astronomy

It isn't that it is more difficult for astronomers to enter other fields than for other scientists to enter astronomy because astronomers are more narrowly trained, as you stated in your article on employment of astronomers (SN: 3/15/75, p. 206). Astronomers are trained no less broadly than other scientists; it is just that a chemist, physicist or even biologist can continue along on his main line of work and simply call it astronomy because of its application to astronomical bodies.

You also fall into the fallacy that, if corrected, would alleviate the problem. An astronomer can teach an elementary physics course just as well as a physicist can teach an elementary astronomy course—perhaps even better, for the astronomer has at least studied the physics in college but the physicist is probably picking up the astronomy as he goes along. To say that a physicist can follow an astronomy text and keep ahead of the class is not to think that he has the breadth of understanding or feeling for the subject to teach a proper elementary survey.

Anyway, there are too many graduate students in the pipeline, which is why Dr. Kraft sent out his statistics to a group that included chairmen of undergraduate departments (not just graduate departments, as you wrote). You didn't mention one additional point—many of us feel that the proliferation has taken place largely in newer degree-granting departments. The major graduate schools in astronomy, with the best departments, have severely cut back on the numbers of their students.

Jay M. Pasachoff
Chairman, Astronomy Department
Williams College
Williamstown, Mass.

Sexist therapists and masculine ego

I have always experienced a sense of relief at not being born female; women's liberation struggles around the world have made me conscious of how fragile the masculine ego really is. Now, after reading the article "Sexist therapists: An APA report" (SN: 4/26/75, p. 270), I am beginning to realize that to be a woman in this world requires a sturdy character indeed.

Why do men fear women? Traditionally, men have suppressed women, and now it appears that even the best-educated men are

doing their best to perpetuate the myth of the inferior status of women. I have a B.A. degree in psychology and can sympathize with those females who seek aid from professionals only to find themselves degraded even further by the fragile masculine ego of a psychiatrist, who should know better.

That more than half the human race has been relegated to second-class citizenship is the greatest sin in the universe. If females had been encouraged to develop their potentials, it is not inconceivable that a moon landing would have occurred on July 20, 1869; that there would have been an Alberta Einstein, a Johanna Stuart Mill, or an Adolpha Hitler. I ask that all male psychiatrists bow their heads in shame, for if psychiatrists and other professionals do not stop debasing women, we will wake up one day to find that we have debased humanity most of all.

Mr. Claire C. Kenner
Sacramento, Calif.

Mystery cover

Upon receiving the April 19 SCIENCE NEWS, our chemistry class, in a heated discussion, could not come to a conclusion as to the identity of the animal on the cover photograph. The majority of the class believed it to be some species of whale, while others thought it could possibly be a type of turtle or dolphin. We took the question to the head of our science department, who believed it to be a flying oyster; whereas our biology teacher identified it as a German submarine. However, on a closer examination they both felt as though it most likely was a type of whale.

We would greatly appreciate it if you would clarify the identity of the animal.

Steve Wilde and Dan Chovan
Copley Senior High School
Copley, Ohio

I wasn't sure what the animal on the April 19 cover was so I asked a lot of my friends. Some said whale, one said seagull, one said dolphin. Some said a turtle or piece of wood. Our biology teacher thought it was a whale, our accounting teacher said it was a duck or goose. So I thought I would write you and ask what it is.

Sue Sassaman
Pender, Neb.

(It's a humpback whale . . . although the flying oyster does have a certain charm.—Ed.)

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