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COVER: Man tries to stabilize the seashore in many ways, but nature will have none of it. The ocean always wins. This groin, on Bogue Banks, N.C., will eventually prove a washout according to students of barrier island ecology. See p. 236. (Photo: Jim Page/N.C. Dept. of Natural and Economic Resources)

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OCTOBER 11, 1975

LETTERS

Stereotype Who?

"When I think of a scientist, I think of . . ." ("The Scientist as a Stereotype," SN: 9/13/75, p. 167). To state my opinion, a scientist is someone who works with one base of fact—Nature. He/she interprets, based on this fact, how nature behaves. Of course there are failures and victories in this endeavor, but the key to success is this accurate base fact interpretation.

But unlike the scientist, the nonscientist must speculate, guess, and predict on almost unpredictable odds. The base fact is non-existent, but is replaced by previous interpretations and on previous interpretations and on forever backward.

How can a scientist who is logical and works with predictable events cope with a random unpredictable society? I hope the main consensus will be to educate or else this question will lie in the annals of social ignorance.

John W. McSherry
Emory, Va.

I was especially pleased that in your article about our survey on the image of the scientist you included the points on enthusiasm of young would-be scientists and that you carefully point out the respondents are a self-selected population. Both of these I think are extremely important.

P. J. Hills
Institute for Educational Technology
University of Surrey
Surrey, England

The experience of birth

I must comment on the article "Changing the Face of Birth" (SN: 8/16/75, p. 106). In particular, I wish to tell Frederick Leboyer that I was overwhelmed by how beautiful my two children were at birth. My husband would describe with considerable warmth and enthusiasm all the infants in the nursery to me as if each one was just as marvelous as ours, which they were, of course. I never have had an experience that has given me as much a feeling of wonder as that of the birth of my children. So you can guess, I am glad the lights were on, as well as I appreciate the gentle and knowing voices which urged me to push.

Sandra D. Meier
Philadelphia, Pa.

Computers 2

Inspired by "Computers 2" (SN: 9/13/75, p. 172):

*In 40 million bits
the Bible compressed.
How can one be
but duly impressed.*

*40 million bits
or 1 million words.
Logic and Logos?
The spirit demurs!*

*Moses and sine i?
Joseph's sons' junction?
Spirit abiding
In analytical function?*

*In spite of the numbers.
In spite of the fact.
The Bible contains
A BIT more than that!*

Heartfelt thanks for the fine work you do in concisely keeping us all up to date.

K. Nealy
San Francisco, Calif.

Structure of soap bubble

I want to tell you how pleased Jean Taylor and I both are with the "Great Bubble Mystery" article by Lynn Arthur Steen (SN: 9/20/75, p. 186). The accuracy and quality of the exposition about a rather difficult and intricate subject were the best I have seen anywhere in articles written for nonmathematicians.

Frederick J. Almgren, Jr.
Department of Mathematics
Princeton University
Princeton, N.J.

Floral triage

There is an incongruity in the Aug. 9 SCIENCE NEWS that bothers me. I refer to the articles, "The thirsty Capital" and "Botanocrats and the Fading Flora." The botanocrats are moving slowly, but because they are afraid of losing their law. It seems to me the law needs revising, it's potentially too powerful.

The history of life is the development of new species and the extinction of old. While we shouldn't unnecessarily cause extinction, as we have in the past, should we try to protect all endangered species? Should we try to control the population by denying the water stored in a reservoir, or should the esoteric endangered species be risked?

It seems to me that at least sometimes the highest and best use of a piece of land may be the dam, the superhighway, and the parking lot. With proper modifications in the law there would be no need to move slowly in declaring a species endangered. There must be exceptions.

P. M. deLaubenfels
Corvallis, Ore.

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