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COVER: The pitch pines of southeastern New Jersey are not as majestic as Marin county's redwoods, but they could qualify as mellow. Put on your fundoshi and sit in the tall prickly grass under one of them and contemplate the huckleberries ripening. But you had better do it fast. The Jersey Pine Barrens are the last open stretch in the Bos-Wash megalopolis, and nibble, nibble, crunch, crunch, the bulldozers are coming. See p. 220. (Photo: Jack McCormick)

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LETTERS

Visual therapy: It works

I have read with interest your article on major causes of blindness/amblyopia and strabismus (SN: 5/20/78, p. 328). I was also interested in the editorial feedback, first from Merrill J. Allen, O.D., Ph.D. (SN: 6/17/78, p. 387), and secondly Allen D. Allen (SN: 7/29/78, p. 67). Since you have the opinions of a doctor and a parent, I feel it is time you hear from a patient.

I was strabismic and amblyopic. I have had seven surgeries beginning between the ages of one and two. I was diagnosed as strabismic at six months. At the age of twenty-two, I was still strabismic and amblyopic as well as terribly insecure and visually confused to the point that normal activities were difficult and in some instances impossible. All through the process, it was never explained to me or discussed with me what was happening, what was wrong, or how I felt. My family was concerned with cosmetics and convincing me that I was "normal." My parents were very distressed over the situation and certainly well meaning.

At twenty-two, I embarked on three years of visual training. The end result is that I am no longer strabismic or amblyopic. I have the rudiments of binocularity and function the majority of the time with binocular vision.

Surgery improved my social acceptance, but never solved the visual problems I was experiencing. It should also be noted that in nine out of ten cases, surgery fails to give binocular vision even after two or three surgeries. Visual training is a fairly long process and, for me, was at times emotionally painful, since I was confronting the end results of my seven surgeries.

Surgery is a quick, painless answer which is appealing to distressed parents. I question its widespread use and the end effects on the patient. I would hope in the future that parents and doctors concentrate less on cosmetics and more on the functional aspects. Visual training is long and can be tedious, but it works!

*Rachel Onion
Toledo, Ohio*

The human trap

The author of your article on "Taming the tsetse" (SN: 8/12/78, p. 108) states that "it is most unfortunate that large-scale cattle raising is not feasible where the tsetse fly abounds." I think he is only looking at one side of the coin. Wherever man has undertaken extensive livestock raising he has left a trail of environmental disasters, for example, North Africa and the American Southwest. Your magazine has already carried articles about desertification—the land is overgrazed and the native animals can no longer survive.

The tsetse fly is therefore the guardian of central Africa from the ravages of livestock raising. Your article itself mentioned the destruc-

tion of wild animals simply because they were carriers of the parasite and the clearing of woodlands—habitat destruction that will affect countless other animals besides the tsetse flies.

Ironically, the elimination of the tsetse fly will eventually work against man also. Picture the scene in a few decades when the enormous numbers of cattle alive because of the opening of tsetse fly country are now starving because the land is now barren from being overgrazed and consequently the enormous numbers of new human beings formerly supported by these cattle are themselves starving. The effect will be the same as taking the situation in North Africa today and multiplying it 100- or 1000-fold, a massive intensification of human suffering.

The eradication of the tsetse fly is blind progress; it should be stopped. Let us try to save at least a little bit of this planet from the depredations of mankind.

*Bernard Murphy Jr.
Champaign, Ill.*

Greek whimsy

The "big bang" theory of the origin of the universe, described by Dietrick Thomsen in the special Astronomy issue (SN: 8/26/78, p. 138), contains an interesting footnote. The original paper describing the theory was published in *PHYSICAL REVIEW* and lists Ralph Alpher, Hans Bethe, and George Gamow as authors. But according to Timothy Ferris, in his book *The Red Limit*, Hans Bethe had nothing whatever to do with the paper. His name was added by Gamow, whose sense of whimsy was evidently tickled by the thought of a paper on genesis written by "Alpha," "Beta" and "Gamma"!

*Simon Edkins
Philadelphia, Pa.*

Summer-solstice speculation

The article "Solstice-Watchers of Chaco" (SN: 8/26/78, p.148) is very interesting.

The pictures of the petroglyph seem to show an embossed dagger extending from the center toward the left hand corner of the picture.

By extending the argument pertaining to the origin of the petroglyph, a person might expect that the originator embossed the dagger to coincide with the path of the dagger-shaped beam.

The fact that the two daggers do not coincide may indicate that a point of comparison exists for calculating the change in position of the North American continent since the date of the petroglyph.

*Lee Smith
Farmington, Mich.*

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