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**COVER:** Migraine sufferers often report that during an attack, the sizes and shapes of their bodies and other objects appear distorted. Among well-known migraine sufferers is Lewis Carroll; these distortion hallucinations are believed to have prompted the various shrinking and stretching episodes that Alice went through in Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. Were Carroll around today, he would find that researchers are learning quite a lot about the headaches that caused his visions. See p. 237. (Illus: Alice in Wonderland Coloring Book, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, N.Y.)

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# LETTERS

## Sending them a message

With election time fast approaching it may be worthwhile for members of the scientific community and interested individuals to consider making contributions to their favorite candidates in a different sort of way. A gift subscription to SCIENCE NEWS magazine or any other worthy scientific journal would express to congressional candidates the necessity of keeping abreast of scientific events and modern technology. What better way for constituents to promote scientific interest and understanding to their elected officials.

Larry Haydu  
Solon, Ohio

## You love Beijing so you love Xi'an.

Mr. W. H. Beauman had keen eyes when he asked the correct spelling of Beijing (SN: 9/29/79, p. 211). Excuse me to give a rough answer. The Chinese word "Jing" equals to the English word "capital," "Bei" equals to "North" and "Beijing" equals to "the capital in the northern China." "Pe" and "Pei" are the misspelt words of "Bei." "Kin" and "King" are the misspelt words of "Jing."

"Ping" equals to "common." "Beiping" equals to "a common city in the northern China." Kuomintang (Guomindang), who chose "Nanjing" as his capital, changed the name of "Beijing" to "Beiping." We have restored the old name to "Beijing" since liberation.

Similarly, "Chang" equals to "permanent," "An" also equaled to "Capital" and "Chang'an" equaled to "the permanent capital of China." But at least after 1949, People's Republic of China, who choose Beijing as the capital of China, change the name of "Chang'an" to "Xi'an." "Xi" equals to "West," "Xi'an" equals to "the old capital in the western China."

Huang Chenggui  
(C.G. Huang)  
Tianjin

The People's Republic of China

## Avoiding the four c's

Before I do anything else at all, let me first congratulate you on the exceptional writing of Susan West. This lady poet-journalist today has no peer, at least, in my eyes (Science News Goes to the Mountain [SN: 7/26/80, p. 51]).

I am a private researcher. I do my work without recourse to Government, Industry or the University. When I publish, I pay the costs myself. This, I figure (after one sad brush with the University, and many with the Government), is the best and only way to avoid compromise, contamination, confusion and, eventually, the corruption which now afflicts the scientific community in the United States.

I have advice for that scientific community. If any scientist—or even any ordinary citizen of the United States—wants to see the books of the U.S. Geological Survey, it is within the law for him to demand access to these books.

The Freedom of Information Act of 1974 enables any citizen to threaten recalcitrant bureaucrats with lawsuit when public information is arbitrarily or capriciously withheld from those who actually own it. At the time he requests it, public information which is not classified for national security should be available to the person who asks for it.

But I forget. How many scientists who depend on Federal Government funds for their livelihood would risk threatening a Government Agent with lawsuit? No. Grants are more important than getting at the truth while it still means something. After all, a scientist without a grant is out of business, isn't he? As a matter of fact, a scientist without a grant isn't really a scientist at all. These days.

Frank M. Cornell  
Franklin Lakes, N.J.

## Hysterectomy in context

In "Hysterectomy and hysteria" (SN: 8/23/80, p. 122) it was somewhat comforting to learn of research that indicates that women have fewer psychiatric problems after a hysterectomy than before, contingent upon the patient's problems prior to surgery. It seems ineffectual to mention results such as these without any reference to the cultural or educational background, number of children, severity of illness, age or marital status of the patients. These are all factors that may or may not influence psychiatric problems but definitely influence a woman's approach to her sexuality and self-image. The components that comprise the female's ability to procreate are complex.

The reason for this type of surgery can differ and also be a contributive factor to her frame of reference in coping with the situation. While it is informative to know that the hysterectomy had little or no depressive or psychiatric effect on 27 of the 44 there could possibly be other physical factors that contributed to this. How much discomfort and pain was involved? Was the surgery done vaginally or by incision? Was there malignancy? How fast did the patient return to her normal daily life routine? Was the hysterectomy a surprise in that the patient was not anticipating this operation as she went under the anesthetic? (Of course this factor would not apply in a study of this type with preoperative investigation.)

Hysterectomy involves complex issues and cannot be considered as routine as appendicitis.

From a recent hysterectomy patient,

B. Snell  
Kansas City, Mo.

Address communications to Editor,  
Science News, 1719 N Street, N.W.  
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Please limit letters to 250 words.

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