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COVER: Bundles of collagen provide strength to many types of connective tissue. Using the new techniques of molecular biology, scientists are discovering the precise abnormalities in collagen, and in other elements of connective tissue, responsible for a variety of human diseases. See p. 124. (Photomicrograph of rat tail collagen fibrils courtesy of Dr. Karl A. Piez, NIDR, NIH)

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LETTERS

Thank you

I am just a subscriber writing in commendation of your magazine. I have no degrees or titles qualifying me to make an opinion; I am still in high school. But I would like whoever reads this to be aware that people like me appreciate SCIENCE NEWS.

I find the articles are impressive in two ways: they are well-written and they are short. Obviously designed by experienced professionals, they have had the fat and water removed, so to speak, leaving only the substantial information that people want to read. The longer articles at the back are written much the same way, except that they provide more in-depth information and express a greater amount of research. The articles I have read are consistently diligent in exposing the absurdities of the new administration regarding scientific research and development funding.

I am certain that I will continue to subscribe to SCIENCE NEWS as long as it remains available. Thank you for listening.

*Rebecca Woodruff
Austin, Tex.*

An eye-opener

Kendrick Frazier's report of naked-eye sightings of Jovian moons (SN: 1/23/82, p. 59) was a real "eye-opener" to me. During spring to autumn of 1981, I spent many night hours in my yard with telescope and friends.

On one such summer night, while observing Jupiter and its moons (when Jupiter and Saturn were in relatively close alignment), a sharp-eyed friend boasted that she could see an object unaided by the telescope. Closer observation by the others showed that this was so.

While it is possible that this object was a background star, at the time we were confident that it was indeed a Jovian moon. The claims by those for the same time period, as cited in your report, seem to lend credibility to our theory. They also greatly encourage me to continue my celestial observations with increased zeal.

*Jean Rogers
Duncannon, Pa.*

Nuclear waste storage

I want to thank SCIENCE NEWS for its recent series on the storage of nuclear wastes (SN: 1/2/82, p. 9; 1/23/82, p. 60). I find it very encouraging that the scientific community is concerned about humanistic questions of health and safety.

Also, in a time when the overwhelming majority of our nation's scientists work on projects for the military, because that's where most of the money is, scientists are having to face difficult ethical questions. No one *wants* a nuclear war, and yet billions of person-hours of work are going into scientific research and development of technology leading to such a war. I'm proud of SCIENCE NEWS for daring to bring up these difficult issues. (This you have done over the years.)

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We need all the help we can get in deciding what to do and how to live, ethically, and how to plan for the future of the human race. I personally think that scientific journals *should* encourage moral and political questions about the uses of science in our world; I think that we've learned since 1945 that we can't afford to separate scientific development from socio-political awareness.

Until recently, the great scientists were also great humanists, philosophers, medical doctors, historians, artists and teachers. A little dab of social awareness is not going to interfere with the scientific purity of SCIENCE NEWS. It may even enhance our scientific growth by helping us gain a clearer vision of the golden future we are all working for.

*Susan T. Miller
Norwich, Vt.*

In defense of zoos

Generalizations are dangerous statements to make about groups of people, their beliefs, and even their zoos. I agree, to some extent, with several points made by Ms. Herrington (SN: 1/9/82, p. 19). It is true that people have destroyed countless habitats and hastened the extinction of numerous species of animal and plant life. It is also true that many zoos are unforgivably poor examples of educational, or even entertaining, institutions.

Zoos, however, were not originally built to save our collective conscience. Perhaps that is why the physical plant of most older zoos is less than exemplary. But good zoos have evolved, along with the public's environmental conscience. Their new exhibits copy natural habitats, and their educational programs serve multitudes of children and adults yearly. As long ago as 1905, New York's Bronx Zoo was instrumental in saving animals from extinction. The American Bison was bred in captivity there, and subsequently released in wildlife reservations.

In the year 1982, it is really too late to reverse everything people have done to the environment. We cannot tear down housing, de-industrialize, or reduce consumerism enough to make a big difference to those species already endangered. Good zoos, like the Bronx Zoo, the San Diego Zoo, the Brookfield Zoo (and there are many more), are trying, with the help of other conservation organizations, to breed wildlife in captivity for eventual release in protected areas in the wild. At the same time, they are developing and executing educational programs to help the next generations understand their environment and make a commitment to protecting and preserving it.

The New York Zoological Society, among other organizations, has done important research which has prompted legislators, in this country and abroad, to set aside refuges for endangered wildlife.

People *do* need to feel their responsibilities toward the natural world, and to work to establish some kind of balance once again. Good zoos can help us to accomplish this goal, and can reeducate the public so we can preserve that balance once it has been achieved.

*Susan Goldberg
Short Hills, N.J.*