

SCIENCE NEWS

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

A Science Service Publication
Volume 123, No. 8, February 19, 1983

E. G. Sherburne Jr. Publisher
Joel Greenberg Editor
Dietrick E. Thomsen Senior Editor/
Physical Sciences
Judy Klein Assistant Editor
Wray Herbert Behavioral Sciences
Joan Arehart-Treichel Biomedicine
Linda Garmon Chemistry
Cheryl Simon Earth Sciences
Julie Ann Miller Life Sciences
Janet Raloff Policy/Technology
Ivars Peterson
Jonathan Eberhart Space Sciences
Joanne Silberner Assistant to the Editor
Ileana Mendez Art Director
Allan Chen Science Writer Intern
Jane M. Livermore Books
Donald R. Harless Business Manager

Scherago Associates Advertising
Fred Dieffenbach, Sales Director
1515 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10036

Copyright © 1983 by Science Service, Inc.,
Editorial and Business Offices,
1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.
Republication of any portion of SCIENCE NEWS
without written permission of the publisher is
prohibited.

Subscription Department
231 West Center Street, Marion, Ohio 43302

Subscription rate: 1 yr., \$27.50; 2 yrs., \$47.50; 3
yrs., \$67.00. (Foreign postage \$5.00 additional per
year.) Change of address: Four to six weeks' notice
is required. Please state exactly how magazine is to
be addressed. Include zip code. For new
subscriptions only call (1) 800-247-2160. Printed in
U.S.A. Second class postage paid at Washington,
D.C. Title registered as trademark U.S. and Canadian
Patent Offices. Published every Saturday by
SCIENCE SERVICE, Inc. 1719 N St., N.W.,
Washington, D.C. 20036. (202-785-2255)
ISSN 0036-8423

Letters

Bothersome statements

I was bothered by two statements made in
"Shrinking the insanity defense" (SN: 1/29/83, p.
68).

First, it seems natural, after the embarrass-
ment it suffered due to the conflicting testi-
mony given by psychiatrists in the John
Hinckley case, that the American Psychiatric
Association should issue a statement to its
members to limit themselves to expressing
medical opinions in future cases and not to give
an opinion concerning "whether a defendant
was able to distinguish right from wrong, ap-
preciate the criminality of his behavior, or con-
trol his behavior." But if these issues "cannot be
answered by behavioral science," how can one
expect "regular people" on a jury to reply?
Shouldn't they at least be entitled to hear all the
"expert" medical opinions and other concomi-
tant opinions that are available? Appropriate
complex decisions involving someone's life
cannot be made with inadequate information.

Second, I do agree with the APA that hospital

This Week

- 116 Soviet Psychiatrists Make Preemptive Bid, Quit World Body
- 117 Diabetes as a smoldering disease
- 117 Viking: Still no word from Mars
- 118 Getting wind of air model errors
- 118 Meteorite study stirs debate over earth's amino acids
- 119 Crystal whiskers of interplanetary dust
- 119 Honoring the heart of an invention
- 119 Light conversations New York to D.C.

Research Notes

- 125 Biology
- 125 Biomedicine
- 126 Behavior
- 126 Physical Sciences

Articles

122 Depo-Provera Under Scrutiny

Cover: The injectable contraceptive Depo-Provera can prevent pregnancy for at least three months with each shot. But animal and human trials of the drug have failed to quiet fears that it causes cancer and birth defects in humans. Now the Food and Drug Administration must decide if the evidence justifies its sale to women in the United States. (Photograph by Marty Katz)



Departments

- 115 Letters
- 124 Commentary
- 127 Books

Science Service Institution for the public understanding of science founded 1921; a nonprofit corporation.

Board of Trustees — *President*, Glenn T. Seaborg; *Vice President*, Gerald F. Tape; *Treasurer*, Milton Harris; *Secretary*, Julius Duscha; Joseph W. Berg Jr.; Edward Bliss Jr.; Bowen C. Dees; David A. Goslin; Hilleary F. Hoskinson; Elizabeth F. Neufeld; O. W. Riegel; Willis Harlow Shapley; H. Guyford Stever; John Troan; Deborah P. Wolfe.

Director: E. G. Sherburne Jr.; Assistant Director: Dorothy Schriver; Business Manager: Donald R. Harless.

psychiatrists should not have to play the roles of jailor and judge, too, to the criminally—and violent — insane. However, contrary to what Leonard Rubenstein says, a tightening in the release procedures from hospital for these criminal patients would shift the burden of proof of their future dangerousness from hospital psychiatrists, *not* to the patients, surely, but to their parole boards, which would continue to have the benefit of medical opinion in making release decisions.

Joan Brittain
New York, N.Y.

It's not new

That clouds may be seeded by airplanes ("Super-seeder?" SN: 11/20/82, p. 333) is hardly news to observational astronomers! I myself have observed a perfectly clear sky evolve to become completely overcast by jet contrails that not only persist but *grow*. This seems to require certain atmospheric conditions and usually occurs during cold weather after the passage of a frontal system.

Daniel B. Caton
Boone, N.C.

Editor's note:

Several lines were inadvertently dropped from the final paragraph of last week's story "Zapping Pain: Hot Prospects for the Cold Laser" (p. 100). According to Joseph Kleinkort, cold lasers are in use at the Wilfordhall Air Force medical center and Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio, and at the Andrews Air Force Base and the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in the Washington, D.C., area.

One further note. Although FDA knows of no institution other than the Harvard Medical School that has the investigational-device exemption (IDE) necessary to legally study the use of cold lasers on humans, there may be others. Unless an institution volunteers the information, FDA will not know whether the sponsor of a research study has been granted an IDE by its institutional-review board.

Address communications to
Editor, Science News,
1719 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
Please limit letters to 250 words.

FEBRUARY 19, 1983

115