

# SCIENCE NEWS

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## Letters

### Misleading maps

Wray Herbert's article ("Getting From Here to There," SN: 3/19/83, p. 188) on misaligned you-are-here maps reminded me that many hotels have added floor/room location maps in their rooms with the intent of aiding patrons to find the closest exit in case of fire. Unfortunately, many use a single format for display in all rooms, which means half the rooms along a corridor are located "upside-down" relative to the viewer's orientation. This could easily mislead one to turn the wrong way when exiting. What was intended as an aid may actually be the opposite.

Joseph D. Browne  
Pottstown, Pa.

Many thanks for Wray Herbert's article, "Getting from Here to There." I always before thought I was a little deficient because I had difficulty with upside-down maps.

And more thanks for the accompanying Ziggy cartoon: it describes what my life has felt like for years, and I laughed and laughed.

Thanks again for your excellent magazine.

Patricia Williams  
Covesville, Va.

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## Depo-Provera: Freedom of choice

Thank you for your informative article on the status of the controversial contraceptive Depo-Provera-150 ("Depo-Provera Under Scrutiny," SN: 2/19/83, p. 122). I would like to comment on a point in its favor not mentioned in the article. The side effect of possible increase in risk of cancer with the use of Depo-Provera seems mild to me when compared with the risks of blood clots, stroke and numerous circulatory disorders associated with the use of oral contraceptives. The other side effects listed for the new drug are also often seen in women who use the pill. These include disrupted menstrual cycle, time lag between discontinuation and return to fertility, water retention and mental depression. In view of the widespread safe use of oral contraception today (despite the risks), women deserve the freedom to choose, with the help of their doctors, the manner by which they prevent pregnancy. I believe that Depo-Provera-150 should be among the choices.

Nancy L. Scott  
Baton Rouge, La.

## A needed levee extension

In "Dammed If They Do and Dammed If They

Don't" (SN: 3/26/83, p. 205) Allan Chen deftly achieves a very comprehensive and objective summary of views on a most complex subject. The article is easily the best of a spate produced over the past couple of years. There is, however, one small point: It is not true, as I appear to be quoted as saying, that "... it hasn't been determined if there is a need for the [Avoca Island Levee Extension] yet...." Just as deltaic activity has elevated flood levels against the other levees and required that they be raised, so too has deltaic activity elevated flood levels at the gulfward terminus of the East Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee, thus subjecting Morgan City and other localities to the east to higher stages from floodwaters "backing" around the end of the levee. The need for the levee extension — if the level of backwater protection envisioned under the project as originally designed is to be maintained — is clearly there. What has not been decided is whether the benefits of the extension justify the large investment required to build it, and the acceptance of what some allege would be major environmental damage.

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